



# Runaway Weekend

By  
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## Chapter One

*“Oh shit!”* What did I run over? Driving through an Interstate construction zone, God only knows. Everyone drove like the hounds of hell nipped at their tires. The digital reading on my dashboard was edging eighty in a seventy mile per hour speed zone as I tried to keep with the flow of traffic.

My car started to shimmy. There was no doubt in my mind that I had a blown a tire. Great! Now all I had to do was get over three lanes of fast moving traffic to the tall concrete construction dividers so I could stop.

I hit my turn signal and the flashers, glanced into the rear view mirror, and went for it. Amidst screeching breaks and honking horns I at last came to a safe stop. My heart was pounding so hard I felt like I was going to vomit.

Both hands once again gripping the steering wheel, I leaned my head back against the headrest, closed my eyes, and took deep calming breaths.

Ever want to pack a bag, get in the car, and run away from home? To get away from everything and everyone you know, at least for a little while? That was my plan when I headed out. After working seven days a week for more than a year without a break, I'd reached total burn-out. I'd lost the spark, my enthusiasm for my job, and it was translating into flagging sales.

I desperately needed a change of scenery. The way I saw it, I had two options; I could go someplace exciting, or someplace peaceful and quiet where I could blow away the cobwebs and sooth my soul. I chose the latter. I didn't have the energy for excitement or a fast pace and to be honest, who wants to go someplace exciting alone?

I'm a thirty-five year old divorcee and a real estate agent trying to make a living in an area hard hit by the flagging economy and the relocation to Mexico of our major source of employment. With more homes on the market than buyers, I have to work harder and put in longer hours to latch onto my share of the market. My days consist of phone calls starting as early as seven AM to sometimes as late as eleven PM. I begin scheduling showings around nine AM to as late as potential purchasers want to see a home. In between showings, I'm at the office making calls, taking calls, doing paper work, and everything in my power to see that my pending sales run smoothly, without falling apart before closing. Meals consist of grabbing something quick to eat between appointments. I have no children and no man in my life. Hell, I don't know where I'd find the time to fit a relationship in. My friends have stopped asking me to go out because I'm always working. Quite simply, I don't have a personal life.

So there I sat, barely fifty miles from home and I already had more than enough excitement, thank you. To make matters worse, I had a sudden mental flash of my cell phone, plugged into the charger on the counter top at home where I'd left it in a fit of rebellion against being a slave to the bit of technology that was never far from my reach.

Assuming I could make the next two hundred miles in one piece, I was even more ready for the peace and quiet I'd set out to find.

I don't know how long I sat there, part of me hoping some chivalrous knight would come to my rescue, or at least a cop. I saw two blow past without a backward glance. That figures. Cops were always there when you didn't want them to be, like when I'm running late for an appointment. I've had a few tickets to prove it. And now when I need a cop...

I've been on my own for a long time now, not that my ex-husband was much help when he *was* around. I'm intelligent, independent, and self sufficient. Changing a tire shouldn't be that difficult. "I can do this," I told myself as I pressed the button to open the trunk. I opened the door and got out.

*Holy crap!* The wind created by a passing eighteen wheeler nearly knocked me off my feet. The tires on the driver's side were okay. I rounded the back and found the flat on the rear passenger side which was against the concrete divider wall. *That was a good thing, right?* At least I wouldn't be attempting to change the darn thing on the side where I'd be a crouching target for side-swiping projectiles on wheels.

Vehicles were zooming past creating a wind tunnel effect that had my hair whipping around my head and face. I was forced back into my car to retrieve an elastic band from my purse so I could pull my hair back and secure it to the nape of my neck.

Okay, I admit it. I was stalling. While it *was* necessary to control the Medusa effect with my hair so I could see what I was doing, I was still hoping someone would stop and change the damn tire for me. Didn't happen. As much as I hated to accept it, chivalry did in fact appear to be *dead*.

"You can do this," I said, preparing myself to open the door and once again step out to face the perils of high speed Interstate traffic.

I got all the necessary equipment out of the trunk. The jack is a pretty straight forward tool so jacking up the car and getting the hubcap off wasn't too tough. Cars keep whizzing past, including another cop, this one a State Trooper. Next came the lug nuts!!!! Ever wonder who came up with the term "*Lug Nut*"? It has a masculine ring to it and stimulates all kind of images about the masculine personality. I decided the term was most likely devised because some big lug put the things on so tight that only a man has the strength to get them off. (*Tip, loosen the lug nuts before you jack up the car so the tire won't keep turning to hamper your efforts*).

After a lot of pushing, straining, and extreme frustration, the lug nuts were at last off. I muscled the blown tire off. Next, the little donut thingy that passes as a tire went on. All but one of the lug nuts are back on, loosely. After the trouble I had getting them off, it didn't take brilliance on my part to know that I needed to lower the jack to keep the tire secure so I could tighten the nuts enough to keep the tire from falling off when I got back on the road.

By God, I did it! The knuckles of my right hand were bleeding where I scraped them on the pavement while turning the handle of the jack, but I changed a tire...by my myself. And feeling pretty darn good about myself I might add.

"Need some help?"

You got it. My hero to the rescue.... The first words out of my mouth were,

"Now, you show up?"

He was awfully cute, though, and had a sheepish grin that revealed perfect pearly whites as he apologized. "Sorry. I went past so fast I couldn't stop."

He'd pulled off the Interstate onto the first access road and climbed up a hill to reach me. You have to give the guy credit. And of course his killer smile didn't hurt. Anyway, he tightened the infernal nuts, and put the blown tire and jack in the trunk.

Naturally, I offered to drive him back to his vehicle. We were ready to get back in my car, and, yep, you got it again. A cop finally pulls over, lights flashing. Big and muscular, this State Trooper looked as if he could have lifted the car without the aid of a jack. "You need assistance?" he asks.

*"Yeah, about forty-five minutes ago."*

Next on the agenda--get off the Interstate and find a place to get a new tire so I didn't have to drive too far on the donut. Shouldn't be too difficult.

They say that no good deed goes unpunished. It was my reward for the mistake of stopping in at the office before I left town. I stopped in to change my voice mail message, referring my calls to a friend who was covering for me while I was out of town. The phone started ringing the minute I sat at my desk. One buyer was getting cold feet and wanted to back-out a week before closing his purchase. That was one fire I couldn't leave without putting out. Then a buyer to whom I'd been showing homes for the past six months wanted to write an offer...on the first house I'd shown her ... now ... before someone bought it out from under her. This client had a tendency to flit from real estate office to real estate office, agent to agent, and there was no doubt in my mind that if I didn't jump when she said jump, she'd call an agent from another office to write the offer. It was a \$200,000 sale and a nice commission I couldn't afford to lose. Needless to say, I left town much later than I'd planned.

I stopped at two tire stores only so be told, gallantly, by the men who were standing outside the open garage doors putting on tires, "Sorry, we just closed." Of course they kindly directed me elsewhere. After ten miles of teeth grinding, bumper to bumper, Friday evening traffic, I finally made it to a tire store, with fifteen minutes to spare before they too would have closed.

I can't deny that after the flat and the trouble I had finding someplace that was open to purchase a new tire, I was wondering if maybe *someone* was trying to tell me something. Maybe the trip was a mistake. Maybe I should just turn around and go back home. I knew damn good and well there was probably already half a dozen messages on my voice mail and I'd be back at work tomorrow morning. I left the infernal cell phone behind in the first place, so I wouldn't be tempted to check my messages.

\* \* \* \*

By the time I turned the key in the lock of the charming redwood cabin I'd rented, the sun was already beginning its descent behind the mountains. Not wanting to miss my first spectacular sunset, I dropped my luggage beside the front door, my keys on the table, and continued through the combo living/dining/kitchen to the French doors that opened to the covered deck which overlooked the river.

I'd done an online virtual tour of the cabin before making my reservation, so I knew what to expect, including the welcoming porch swing with its thickly padded

cushions. I knew I should get the few supplies I'd brought along from the trunk of my car and unpack my luggage before I settled in to relax and enjoy my surroundings, but this was my escape from organizing my time. Four whole days to myself to do what I want to do, when I want to do it ... or not. Well actually, I had the rest of today, Saturday, Sunday, and had to head home on Monday. So, I planted my rear on the swing, resting my back against the cushion on one end, propped my feet up on the other, and felt some of the tension drain from my body for the first time in a very long time.

Just the reddish glowing tip of the sun was now visible above the mountains which had become darkened silhouettes against a crimson and amber backdrop. It was an awe inspiring view amplified by its reflection upon the smooth, clear surface of the river.

The early-October air was refreshingly cool without being chilly. It was a perfect evening in a perfect setting. For the life of me, I couldn't imagine why I had waited so long to visit the place my friend Connie and her husband escaped to a couple of times a year for a romantic getaway.

From what I could see, the only thing with the potential to mar the perfection of the location was the neighboring log cabin, or rather log home, when I'd anticipated absolute peace and quiet. While the cabin appeared to be unoccupied, I also knew that it was Friday and, for many, the weekend was just beginning. From the size of it, it could probably sleep a dozen people. It would be just my luck for it to be leased out for a family reunion or something, complete with a herd of unruly kids running around the entire area. It isn't that I don't like children. I do. I still have hope of having a couple of my own and have considered artificial insemination if Mr. Right doesn't come along ... soon. The hands on my biological clock were definitely turning faster as each year passed. But for the purpose of my getaway, a group of screaming kids did not equate to peace and quiet.

I have no idea how long I sat there reveling in the undisturbed peace of my surroundings. Like my cell phone, my wrist watch had been another act of rebellion against routine, schedules, and appointments. I'd removed it and dropped it in my handbag at the first stop sign outside the city limits.

I watched as the vivid hues of the sunset faded to a dark, star studded sky. I listened to the water washing upon the shore, heard the occasional splash of fish jumping to the surface to feed on insects, the sound of crickets and tree frogs, and the occasional hoot of an owl. My only regret was that I didn't have a significant other with whom to share it.

The pure night sounds of nature were disturbed by the intrusive hum of what sounded like an engine in the distance, followed several minutes thereafter by a narrow beam of light upon the water. The beam widened and became more distinct as the engine drew nearer to my location. First one, then two, three, four, five, and six, light surrounded, flat beds of a barge appeared, followed by the tug boat pushing them. I watched until they were out of sight, the hum of the engine fading, wondering why they called it a tug boat when it pushed instead of pulled.

## Chapter Two

Sunrise the following morning found me right back out on the swing with a steaming cup of coffee, wearing my warm, if somewhat worse for wear old bathrobe. It seemed that some habits could not be left behind. I awoke just before sunrise in the warm, cozy bed in the loft with a ceiling fan whirring above me. No phones. No appointments. I knew I could have snuggled down and slept in for an extra hour or so. I could have slept the whole day away if I'd wanted, but hell, I could sleep at home.

There was a definite fall chill in the air that morning, nippy without being cold. Early morning mist was rising from the mountains on the other side of the river while what looked like steam rose from the river itself.

One car door slammed, then two. So much for hoping that whoever had leased the neighboring cabin would be forced to cancel at the last minute and I'd have the relatively secluded area to myself. I heard the murmur of voices. Masculine? Then a hearty laugh. Definitely masculine. I decided it was a good time to warm up my coffee and maybe peak out the loft window on that side of my cottage to see if I could determine just how many people were about to descend upon my hideaway.

I refilled my cup and carried it up the narrow stairs to the loft and went to the window. *Oh my.* I'm not a car person by any means but even from above there was no mistaking the black sports car below. The second vehicle was a silver SUV with what looked like a ski boat attached. I thought it was a bit late in the season for skiing, but then what did I know? Anyway, whoever had arrived in the vehicles was now inside so I would have to wait a bit longer to get a glimpse of my temporary neighbors.

It's one thing to get out of bed, slip into a sloppy old robe, and go outside with a cup of coffee knowing there is no one around to see you, and quite another to want someone, anyone, to see you at your worst. It had nothing to do with vanity, or the Porsche outside. *Of course it didn't.*

At least I didn't dress to impress. A quick shower, hair blown dry, and a bare minimum of make up, an old T-shirt and faded jeans was all the effort I put into my appearance. I returned to the deck, a fresh cup of coffee in hand. My plan was to finish my coffee then head into town for breakfast and to pick up enough groceries for the next few days. Then later, maybe check out one of the hiking trails in the national forest or go for a leisurely drive to take in the fall foliage.

That was until I discovered that the most compelling scenery was right next door. Not one gorgeous man, but two. One light, a blond, tanned surfer type, and one dark with longish dark hair, and a bad boy look. They were currently walking back up the hill from the river bank and headed toward ... my cabin.

"Hey neighbor," the blond said looking up at me from the lower level of the three tiered deck. "I'm Josh and this is Colin. We hate to impose, but my buddy here," he emphasized his statement with an elbow to the ribs of his friend, "remembered the booze

but didn't think to bring coffee. Would you be able to spare enough for a pot, until we can get into town to pick up a few supplies?"

They were even better looking close up ... every woman's fantasy. Tall, tanned, blue eyed blonde – the good guy. Tall and dark with beard stubble adding to the ruggedly masculine appeal of the bad boy. I thanked God for blessing me with my coffee addiction, pulled my tongue from the roof of my mouth, and had to swallow before I could speak.

"Sure, come on up," I said, amazed at myself. At home, especially on the job, I am extremely cautious and aware of the possible risks I take every time I meet a total stranger in an empty house, sometimes vacant, often after dark. I always cover my back by letting someone know where I'll be, when, and with whom. Yet there I was, in the middle of nowhere, throwing caution to the wind by inviting two unknown men into my rented cabin.

When they joined me on the main deck, I led the way inside. They followed. Retrieving one of the zip lock bags I'd seen in one of the drawers in the kitchen, I began spooning in enough coffee for a couple of pots.

"You vacationing alone?" Josh asked.

I saw little point in denying it. Living next door they'd soon realize I was alone anyway. "More like running away from home for a long weekend," I admitted. "I needed a change of scenery and a break from the pressures of work for a few days."

"You picked the right place for it," Josh said. "Colin and I rent the place next door for a week, the same time every year."

I slid the red zipper across to seal the bag. "Here you go," I said offering the bag to Josh.

"Thanks. We really appreciate this...."

"Beth," I supplied.

"Look, Beth, if you need anything, we'll be right next door," Josh offered.

"Thanks, I'll remember that."

As they were leaving, Colin turned around and shot me a grin that nearly made my knees buckle. Clearly a man of few words, "Thanks," was all he said. And then they were gone.

\* \* \* \*

It took me more than half an hour to get to the nearest town where I had a hearty breakfast in a small café on Main Street. I couldn't believe how hungry I was. At home, breakfast usually consisted of a convenience store donut or muffin and coffee, or at best orange juice, coffee, and a breakfast sandwich from a fast food drive-thru.

After breakfast I walked off a few of the calories I'd consumed by exploring the antique and gift shops the riverside tourist town had to offer, doing my best to keep my mind off the two gorgeous men occupying the cabin next to mine. Also, more than a bit annoying was the intrusive memory of my friends constantly telling me that I worked too much, that I needed to get out more and enjoy life. In short, "Get a life." And of course I couldn't forget the ever popular, "Geeze Beth, you really need to get laid." Good Lord, was I wearing a neon sign on my ass that said, "*I haven't had sex in more than two years?*" What did they expect me to do about it? Do the bar scene and pick up a man for



a one night stand? No thank you. The very thought made me cringe. I admit it, maybe they did have a point, to a degree. Which would explain why I was obsessing about Josh and Colin, and yes, doing more than a bit of fantasizing.

When I returned to the cabin a few of hours later, the SUV and the boat were gone, and there was no sign of the men. A fresh pot of coffee brewed while I put away the few groceries I'd purchased. In short order I was headed back out to the deck, my coffee and another addiction of mine in hand ... a book, the best mental escape known to man.

I pulled a small wooded table within easy reach for my coffee mug and settled into the swing. This is what I'd envisioned for my getaway when I reserved the cabin. I'd barely gotten past the prologue when I heard the sound of an approaching boat, followed closely there after by the slam of a car door.

Josh rounded the corner, looked in my direction and waved, then continued down the hill to the river and on to the pier. The sleek ski boat with Colin at the wheel slowed and pulled along side. Josh leaped onboard, and they headed off upriver.

I don't know where the afternoon went. I spent it reading and just staring at the river, losing myself in the serenity of my surroundings. As the afternoon wore on, the temperature began to drop. I went inside to get a heavy zippered sweatshirt. The sky was beginning to cloud up, reflecting gray upon the river which was becoming choppy. I looked up and down the river as far as I could see from my location on the deck and saw no sign of the boat with the Josh and Colin onboard.

They were grown men. Surely they knew what they were doing and would no doubt return soon. Even wearing a sweatshirt, it was getting cold enough to force me inside.

I turned up the heat, popped one of the CDs I brought with me into the portable player on the entertainment center, and fixed myself a can of vegetable soup and a grilled cheese sandwich. It was a rather blah meal, yet I couldn't remember when the ordinary combination had ever tasted so good.

Before curling up in the recliner in front of the TV with my book and the comfortable chenille throw, I decided to go outside one last time before dark for some fresh air and to check out the weather. It had nothing to do with my concern about whether Josh and Colin had returned.

The dark clouds rolling in above the mountains had a boiling ominous quality which was reflected in the river that the wind had whipped into treacherous white capped waves. Just as huge rain drops began to hit the uncovered portion of the lower deck, I heard the roar of an engine approaching at a fast rate of speed. Lightning flashed in the distance followed not long thereafter by a low rumble of thunder.

I took that as my cue to go inside. While I might like a good storm, find them exciting even, I can't deny that I felt more than a bit uneasy at the prospect of experiencing one in an strange location, in a small, unfamiliar cabin. I switched the television to the evening news hoping to catch the weather and took a quick tour of the cabin for the location of candles, oil lamps, and matches should the power go out. I found a high powered flashlight under the counter and put it on the side table beside the recliner.

As I settled back in the recliner with my book, a can of soda, and a bag of pretzels on the side table, I heard Josh and Colin's laughter outside before it was drowned out by a rolling rumble of thunder.

Relieved that they'd made it back safe and sound, I became so lost in the surprise plot twists in the novel written by my favorite thriller author that I nearly missed the severe storm watch report on the television.

The storm broke in earnest. I could hear the wind pelting the window with rain that sounded more like small pebbles than water. Lightning flashed with a strobe-light effect, and thunder crashed and rolled overhead. The lights flickered. I reached for the flashlight. They flickered one more time then went out.

My little escape was no longer enjoyable or relaxing. I didn't know what to do. I debated the possibility of grabbing a few things, making a dash to my car, and driving into town to get a motel room for the night, an idea I immediately rejected. If it took me more than half an hour to make it to town with the sun shining, what would the unfamiliar mountain roads with treacherous hairpin curves be like after dark, in the midst of a severe storm? At that point, I had few options, and the wisest course seemed to be to make myself as comfortable as possible, hunker down, and ride it out.

I lit the oil lamp on the bar separating the kitchen from the dining area and one on the table separating the dining room from the living area. Then, flashlight in hand, I headed upstairs for the quilt and pillow from the bed I'd slept in the previous night. If the pounding rain and thunder were so loud it was unnerving on the lower level, there was no way in hell I was going to attempt to sleep upstairs directly beneath what sounded like a tin roof.

The sofa was actually a sofa-bed for extra sleeping space, but I wasn't in the mood to hassle with opening it. I couldn't believe how quickly the temperature was dropping inside the cabin. I dropped the quilt and pillow on the sofa and moved the oil lamp from the bar to the side table.

I curled up on the end of the sofa, snuggled beneath the old fashioned quilt fully clothed, and attempted focus on my book in the dim light from the oil lamp.

I nearly jumped out of my skin when someone pounded on the door leading out to the deck.

"Beth, it's Colin. You okay in there?"

I was never so glad to hear the sound of another human voice. I was off the sofa, across the room, and had the door opened before I realized what I was doing. Colin stood there on the deck, holding a high beam flashlight. He was drenched to the skin. Water was dripping from his dark hair that wind and rain had whipped into curls.

The roof covering the deck offered little protection from the blowing rain. "No point in standing out there in the cold, Colin. Come on in." I can't believe how tempted I was to go all frightened female on him and throw myself into his arms. Not my style ... unfortunately. Once he was inside and the door closed behind him, I said instead, "I'm fine. I can't believe you came over here in this storm."

"Josh and I were concerned," he explained. "We stayed in this cabin our first year here, so we know it doesn't have a fireplace or any other means of heat in a power outage."

“Yeah, I discovered that.”

“If the weather report holds true, the storm could hang on through the night. Josh and I talked it over, and we think you should come over and stay at our cabin for the night. We have plenty of room and a fireplace with a warm fire burning. It’s going to get pretty cold in here before the night is over. What do you say?”

What did I say? Here I’d been facing the prospect of spending the night riding out a nasty thunder storm alone, cold, and more than a little frightened. And I’d just been invited to spend the night in a warm and cozy cabin, in front of a fire, with two incredibly gorgeous men. Was there any question as to what my answer would be? It didn’t even occur to me that it might not be the wisest course of action.

“Thanks, Colin. I really appreciate the offer. Are you sure I won’t be intruding?”

“Since when is the company of a beautiful woman an intrusion?” he countered.

It had been so long since a man said I was attractive, much less beautiful, that I felt myself blushing.

Based on Colin’s soaked condition, there was little doubt that I’d find myself in the same condition by the time we reached the neighboring cabin and would need something dry to put on. “Give me a minute to grab a few things?”

“Take your time.”

“I’ll just be a minute.” I grabbed my flashlight and made my way up the stairs to the loft. As I went through the drawer for something to sleep in I found myself groaning inwardly. At home I had a drawer full of sexy lingerie and sleepwear, not that I’d had a reason to wear them in some time. When I packed for my trip it was with the idea being alone in a secluded cottage, so I’d packed for comfort. My choices left much to be desired and were decidedly un-sexy. Not that I expected anyone to see them. It was more of a feminine confidence thing. Unfortunately, the best I could do was an oversized t-shirt and a pair of leggings. What difference did it make anyway. I was going next door to wait out the storm and the return of power, not to seduce or be seduced by one of my rescuers.

Downstairs in the bathroom I grabbed my brush, comb, tooth brush, and toothpaste which I dropped into my purse. Back in the kitchen, to protect my clothes and purse from the rain, I pulled a trash bag from the box on the shelf beneath the bar and dropped the lot inside.

“The rain is wicked. Unless you have rain gear stashed somewhere, you might want to grab another trash bag to cover your head,” Colin suggested.

I didn’t. I had an umbrella in the trunk of my car but would be drenched before I could get to it. Once again I quickly assessed my options; my head covered with a trash bag the time it took us to cover the roughly two hundred feet separating the two cabins, or looking like a drowned rat until my hair dried. I pulled a second trash bag from the box.

“I guess I’m ready,” I said.

“You get the oil lamp on the table, and I’ll get the one by the sofa. No point taking the chance of burning the place down.”

Colin waited until I extinguished the lamp on the table and moved to the door before he blew out the other, throwing the cabin into darkness except for the flashlights we both held.

“Here, let me take that,” Colin said then took the trash bag containing my

belongings. He reached for the door knob then hesitated. “You know, it might be wiser to go out the side door and around the front. It’s the long way round and we’d have less cover, but we’d avoid the wet steps on the deck.”

“Good idea. Knowing my luck I’d slip on a step, take a nose dive, and end up bruising something more than my pride.”

“Can’t have that,” Colin said as he found the front door with the beam of his light. When we reached the door he shined the light on the extra trash bag in my hand and waited until I’d covered my head with it. “Okay, time to make a run for it.”

## Chapter Three

It was worse than I expected. The minute we stepped outside the wind nearly knocked me off my feet. The rain hurt. It was hitting my face with such force it felt like pellets of ice. Colin put his arm around my waist for support as we ran. I'm sure he would have covered the distance much faster without me slowing him down. Lightning flashed, and thunder crashed. I instinctively drew closer to him.

"We're almost there," he shouted to be heard over the roar of the wind that ripped the trash bag from my clenched fist and carried it away as if it was no more substantial than a falling leaf.

By the time we reached the door Josh was holding open, there wasn't a dry spot on my body. When we were safely inside, Josh closed the door behind us and tossed Colin a towel, "Here you go, buddy."

He then proceeded to wrap a warm fluffy towel around me. As wonderful as the towel felt, I couldn't stop shivering.

"Good Lord, you're freezing," Josh said, leading me to the warmth of the fireplace.

"The power hasn't been off long enough for the water to get cold in the water heater. Why don't you go run her a hot bath, Josh. We need to get her warm or she'll end up sick," Colin suggested behind us.

"That isn't necessary," I protested. "I'm fine, and you've been wet and cold longer than I have, Colin. You should be the one to use the last of the hot water to get warmed up."

"While the two of you argue over which one is going to soak in a hot tub, I'll go run the water before it does get cold," Josh said. He then bent down and whispered in my ear. "Don't waste your breath, sweetheart. He's a defense attorney. You don't have a prayer." With that, he turned and made his way to a door at the far end of the spacious great room. Leaving me to face Colin whose t-shirt was plastered to his skin revealing a well defined, sculpted chest and masculine nipples puckered to pebble hardness from the cold.

Clearly aware of the direction my wayward gaze had taken, Colin responded in kind. I didn't have to look down at my breasts to know what he saw. I could feel my own nipples tingle and pucker even tighter under his inspection.

Colin arched one dark eyebrow, and his eyes met mine. "There is no room for debate here, Beth. The only way I'm going in there and take a hot bath while you're out here cold and wet is if you pick me up and put me in there yourself. And we both know that isn't going to happen. Where as I *am* perfectly capable of putting you in that tub. On the other hand, I'd be more than happy to share it with you."

I gasped. Not so much from shock at his suggestion but from the realization of just how much I'd enjoy doing just that.

Misinterpreting my response, Colin chuckled. “I didn’t think so.”

He walked past me to the bar and poured himself a drink which he downed in one gulp before pouring himself another which he carried back to the fireplace and placed on the mantle. “I don’t know about you, but I intend to get out of these wet clothes, dry off, and get warm. You’re more than welcome to stay and watch, or join me. Your choice.”

To make his point he reached for the hem of his wet t-shirt and slowly peeled it off. His biceps bunched enticingly as his arms crossed over in front of his face to reveal washboard abs and well defined pecks covered with dark chest hair that arched downward into the waist band of his jeans. Jeans the rain had plastered to his clearly muscular thighs and calves, leaving nothing to the imagination, except.... If cold was supposed to have a shrinking effect on a certain part of the male anatomy, if what I saw straining against the damp cloth was shriveled, what would it be like in all it’s glory?

*Oh Lord!* So once again I had to remind myself that I was human, and I hadn’t been up close and personal with one in a very long time. Much to my chagrin, our eyes met, leaving me in no doubt that he was aware of the direction in which my gaze had strayed.

Colin reached for his belt buckle.

Thank God he had no idea how hard it was for me to lean down and grab the trash bag with my belongings from the floor where he’d dropped them, turn, and head for the door Josh had entered. Even muffled by the sound of thunder there was no mistaking the sound of Colin’s laughter behind my retreating back.

Josh was in the process of lighting candles when I entered the spacious bathroom complete with a huge garden tub. I couldn’t help thinking that both Colin and I would fit comfortably within its depths. If not for Josh’s presence, would I have had the courage to call Colin’s bluff, or better yet, counter with an offer of my own?

“I take it my friend won the argument,” Josh said with a chuckle betraying the fact that he’d had no doubt as to the outcome.

“Let’s just say, he made his point.”

“Tactfully, I hope.” Josh said.

“I think I’ll take the fifth on that one,” I countered.

“Oh Lord, I’m not even going to ask,” Josh groaned. “I’ll leave you to your boudoir, my lady. I’d tell you to take your time and enjoy, but with all the lightning, I wouldn’t dawdle if I were you.”

I was so cold I hadn’t thought about the risk of bathing during a storm. “Now I know why Colin insisted that I get the bath. He was too big a chicken shit to risk getting fried himself.”

With a hoot of laughter, Josh turned to leave me to my bath. “We’ll be in the great room by the fire whenever you’re ready to join us.”

Lightning be damned. I was freezing and wanted to get warm. I quickly peeled off the wet clothing plastered to my body and stepped into the tub. Sinking beneath the surface, I laid back and closed my eyes as the warmth of the water seeped into my pores, chasing away the chill that felt as if it went bone deep. Immediately, my mind began to wander into territory best ignored. Okay, I already admitted that I’m human. I was naked in a tub in a candle lit bathroom with two gorgeous men in the next room. I began to

fantasize that Colin came in to check on me and unable to help himself, he stripped out of his clothes and joined me in the tub. I rested my head against the back of the tub and closed my eyes. As I allowed my hands to slide over my breasts and down my stomach, I imagined the hands caressing my skin were stronger, masculine hands. Fingertips brushed the hair between my legs ....

Thunder exploded overhead. Fantasy shattered, my eyes popped open, and I sat up in the tub. I admit to making some poor choices in my time, but stupid I'm not. I didn't need a second warning. As good as it felt to soak in the warming bath, I was out in a flash. Once out, it was so cold in the room that I was once again chilled. I couldn't dry fast enough. Unfortunately, rummaging through the trash bag with my clothing I discovered that the bra I'd thought I grabbed was *not* there, which left me with flesh colored, French cut panties, gray leggings, and a gray Corporate Challenge T-shirt that had become thin from numerous washings ... and no bra. I picked up the bra I'd removed. It was soaking wet and cold. There was no way I was going to put it back on. Oh well, there was something to be said for *not* being well endowed in the breast area and the shirt *was* large. Maybe they wouldn't notice. *Yeah right! With my nipples so hard from the cold they threatened to poke a holes through the threadbare material, no one was going to notice.*

At that point, I wanted nothing more than to get to the other room to the warmth of the fireplace. I quickly dressed and went to the sink where I washed my face. I then rummaged through my purse for a free sample I had of a tinted moisturizer for my face and added a bit of lip gloss. With no electricity for a hair dryer, the minimal light supplied by the candles and the occasional lightning flash, a quick comb job was the best I could do.

Before leaving the room, I flipped the switch to drain the water from the tub and decided it would be a good idea to leave the candles burning in case one of us needed to use the room.

I found Josh and Colin sitting on the overstuffed sofa in front of the fireplace. Along with the flames dancing in the fireplace, several oil lamps and numerous candles cast a warm, romantic ambiance throughout the large great room. Colin had changed into dry jeans and a gray sweatshirt. If I'd been smart, in my hasty effort to exit my own cabin, I'd have grabbed a warm sweatshirt myself.

"That had to be the fastest bath in history," Josh said.

"As great as the warm bath felt, electrocution didn't fit in with my plans for a relaxing getaway."

"That would definitely put a damper on things," Josh responded with a chuckle. He patted the sofa cushion between them. "We've been keeping a spot warm for you." Rising to his feet, he added, "Make yourself comfortable while I fix you something to warm you up. We have beer, scotch, and brandy. Name your poison."

"Whatever you're having is fine," I said, not wanting to impose more than I felt I already was.

A close lightning strike and a crack of thunder loud enough to vibrate the cabin windows, coupled with my desire to feel warm, banished any discomfort I might otherwise have felt at joining Colin on the sofa.

Orange and yellow flames were leaping and dancing around the crackling flames in the fireplace. I've always loved a fireplace. There is nothing like a cozy fire to make a house feel warm and homey. My own home doesn't have one because my ex thought they were too much bother.

"Beth..." Colin began, then hesitated an instant before continuing, "I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable earlier."

"It was effective."

"As I knew it would be," he confessed. "Still cold?"

I pretended not to notice the direction his gaze had strayed. Whether it was from the cold, the situation, or the company, I felt what he was seeing. Once again I mentally chastised myself for forgetting the bra. Though my nipples were so hard I'm not sure a bra would have hidden much.

"Yeah, a bit," I answered. "But the fire feels wonderful."

Colin reached behind me and pulled the throw on the back of the sofa down around my shoulders. "Better?"

"Much. Thank you." I'd seen a similar faux mink throw in a wholesale catalogue that circulated the office on a regular basis. I personally thought they looked a bit tacky, but I had to admit that the warmth of the soft fur felt heavenly. "This thing *is* fake, right?"

"I can't imagine honeymooners leaving it behind if it was real," Colin answered.

"How do you know it was left behind by honeymooners?"

"Josh and I get a kick out of reading the notes left by other occupants in the guest book. A couple who stayed here for their honeymoon left a note saying they left it behind hoping someone else enjoyed it as much as they did."

"Oh." What else could I say? Considering the wayward direction my mind had been straying since meeting Josh and Colin this morning, Colin's explanation conjured all sorts of mental images of what the honeymooners did upon the throw ... in front of the fireplace. I was beginning to realize that while I had nothing to fear from Josh and Colin, instead, they should probably be worried about harboring a sexually deprived female.

"Here you go," Josh said, offering me a glass with my drink.

In an effort to get myself and my resurrected libido under control, I took a larger drink from the glass Josh had given me than was wise.

"So, what are we going to do to occupy our time until this thing blows over?" Josh asked.

I choked. Both Josh and Colin reached out to pat me on the back. I felt as if I'd just taken a gulp of liquid fire. It burned my throat as it went down and settled like molten lava in the pit of my stomach. The heat radiated to points south then went straight to my head.

"You okay?" Josh asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I just didn't expect it to be quite so strong," I answered when I was able to speak. "It did the job though. I certainly don't feel cold any longer."

"Sorry about that. I thought about adding a bit of club soda to your drink, but you said to fix what we were having." He reached for my glass. "I'll go tone it down a bit."

"No, this is fine," I insisted. "So, what would you be doing to pass the time if I



weren't here?"

"Probably play chess or cards. How is your poker?" Colin asked.

"I can hold my own, but I don't have much extra cash with me," I admitted. The truth is, I've been working so much that I haven't spent much time with my friends who play cards on a regular basis.

"Just playing for money is easy," Josh said. "We up the ante a bit."

"Such as?" I asked, not sure I wanted to know.

Colin answered. "The winner gets to ask a question to the person with the lowest hand. That person has to give an honest answer or match the amount in the pot. You game?"

Okay, that didn't sound too bad. Depending on how personal the questions got, there wasn't much about my non-life that I wasn't willing to be honest about, and, of course, I *could* lie. They had no way of knowing if I was telling the truth or not. The way I figured it, I could enjoy my time with Josh and Colin, maybe learn a bit about them, and it didn't have to cost me a penny.

"You're on." I mean honestly, what else could I say? These two guys had come to my rescue, sharing their guy time with a perfect stranger, and a female to boot.

"I'll get the cards and poker chips," Colin said.

"I'll get the goodies," said Josh.

Colin returned and cleared everything from the large coffee table in front of the sofa. He tossed a large pillow from the end of the sofa onto the floor at the end of the coffee table to my left and sat down. "White chips are a dollar, blue chips are a five, and the red are ten," he explained. He then began dividing the chips three ways.

A large plastic bag of popcorn fell onto the sofa beside me. "One of Colin's vices," Josh explained. "Movie theater popcorn purchased from an actual theater." He put a tray with a bottle of scotch on the end table and grabbed the pillow from the other end of the sofa, he tossed it on the floor opposite Colin. "Okay Pal, deal."

As Colin dealt the first hand, I placed my drink on the tray on the end table. Josh won the first two hands, and, having the lowest, he asked me the questions. My age and my marital status were simple questions to answer. For the next hour I guess you could say I held my own. I learned that Colin and Josh had been next-door neighbors from the time they were born and best friends all their lives. Colin was now an attorney in Atlanta Georgia, and Josh a psychologist in Chicago. They met for a week together every year and chose this location as a half-way point between them. Colin was still single because establishing his career came first in his life, Josh because his fiancé confessed she wasn't ready to get married just three weeks before their wedding. There was a lot of laughing and talking as we shared the popcorn from the bag and in general got to know each other. I honestly began to feel as if I was sheltered from the storm that continued to rage outside in the company of two new friends.

I didn't *think* I had much to drink, but I couldn't say for sure because every time I reached for my drink the glass always seemed to be full. I do know that each sip from my glass went down smoother, and I found myself telling them more about myself and my life than I normally would have confided. Talk about alcohol loosening the tongue as well as the inhibitions.

So far no actual money had changed hands, and the pots were growing larger with each consecutive deal, which was probably why the tone of the questions began to change, became more personal and harder to answer honestly.

Colin won a hand, looked me in the eyes, and asked, “How long has it been since you’ve had sex?”

I could have lied or be the first to refuse to answer and pay up. I looked at the chips in the center of the table and wondered if Colin would take a check. But only for an instant before I met his gaze squarely and said, “Two years.”

“Two years?” Josh gasped.

“Damn,” Colin groaned. “I really thought you’d balk on that one.”

“Did you now?” I asked, rather proud that I had the courage to honor the spirit of the game. “I believe it’s your deal Colin.”

As I sat there looking at a King high straight and pretty sure I had a winning hand that round, I was wracking my brain trying to come up with a really tough question to ask when I won.

“I bet twenty-five,” Colin said tossing two red and a blue chip into the pot.

“You’re bluffing,” Josh accused. “I’ll call and raise you fifty,” he said as he tossed seven red and one blue chip into the center of the table.

Both Colin and Josh looked at me. With that bet and my call, I estimated nearly five hundred dollars in that one pot. If I won, which I was pretty sure I would, and assuming I could ask either Josh or Colin a question they didn’t want to answer, I could win enough in that one hand to pay the rent on my cabin and still go home with a profit.

“I call and raise another fifty,” I challenged, tossing in the necessary chips.

Colin studied my expression, toying with the chips in front of him. “Think you have me beat do you?”

“You’ll have to ante up to find out,” I responded calmly.

Colin picked up an additional fifty and tossed them in. It was now up to Josh.

“I’m in,” he said, tossing his fifty into the mix. “Okay, Beth, show us what you’ve got.”

*Good grief.* That was an additional hundred and fifty dollars. “Read’em and weep boys,” I said as I laid my cards face up on the table.

“Damn. That beats my three aces,” Josh groaned and tossed his cards on the table.

“But not my four of a kind,” Colin inserted with a sly grin.

At least my hand wasn’t the lowest.

Colin turned to Josh. “So, Buddy, you told me about this girl you were seeing after your breakup. How she suggested a threesome with her friend. But, you didn’t tell me whether you did it or not. Did you? Did you have a threesome with the two women?”

Josh studied the pile of chips on the table then looked at me before answering. I knew that if I hadn’t been there, he’d have had no problem discussing the subject in detail with his friend. My presence was Colin’s trump card.

Casting an apologetic glance in my direction, Josh answered, “Hell yeah, I did. It’s every man’s fantasy to have two women at once. What about you?”

Colin chuckled, and he pulled his winning chips toward him. “I won the hand. I don’t have to answer that.” He looked at me and then Josh. “But since I know damn good

and well that will be the next question I get, I'll save you the trouble. Yes, I have too. Years ago, when I was at the University.”

“And you didn't tell me!” Josh accused.

“No more than you would have, if you weren't so damn tight with your money,” Colin countered.

Both Colin and Josh turned to look at me. I knew what was coming, and I shocked myself by answering the question before it was even asked. “Like men, women also have their fantasies. About being with two men, not two women. And no, I haven't.”

“Would you ... if the opportunity to fulfill the fantasy was offered?” Josh asked.

My heart was pounding. I could already feel myself getting wet. Who the hell was I kidding? I'd been hot and bothered since meeting Colin and Josh. I knew where this could lead and also that I should stop it before it went any further. I knew I should say no, but the words that came out of my mouth were an uncertain, “I don't know.”

## Chapter Four

Card game forgotten, there was no mistaking the look that passed between the men before Colin rose to his feet and sat beside me on the sofa. He reached out and caressed the side of my face before moving his thumb beneath my chin and forcing me to meet his dark gaze.

“The opportunity to experience the fantasy *is* being offered, Beth. The choice is yours.” He lowered his lips, almost but not quite touching mine as he whispered, “I’ve been wanting to do this all night.”

I knew I should push Colin away, but at that moment I couldn't think why. I was hoping he wasn't going to kiss me, that he was bluffing yet again, and at the same time praying he would. My lips parted, but to this day I don't know whether it was in denial or invitation. When his mouth met mine, it was a mere whisper of a caress across my lips, a soft slide of his lips against mine to test my response. It was a tantalizing appetizer calculated to make me want more.

I heard a faint hungry whimper of desire, barely recognizing that it came from me.

Taking my instinctive response as consent, Colin settled his mouth firmly upon mine, teasing my lips open with his tongue. Changing the angle of the kiss, he slid his tongue deeper into my mouth. His flavor was as dark and rich as sin, as intoxicating as the scotch I could taste on his tongue. It went straight to my head, sending molten fire through my blood stream and points south with as much impact as my first unwise gulp of straight scotch from my drink. I didn't even realize that I had reached for him until I felt the texture of his thick dark hair between my fingers. Colin nipped at my bottom lip, and the small pain sent pleasure to my core. He laved the tiny wound with his tongue, and I moaned.

As Colin continued his heady assault on my mouth, I could do nothing but respond. The thought of protesting crossed my mind only briefly and was immediately banished when I felt Josh's lips against the back of my neck. His gentle nips moved up to my ear where he whispered, “Your fantasy Beth. While you're here, it's all about your wants, your needs, satisfying your desires.”

Colin's lips released mine, and, before I could catch my breath, I found myself in Josh's arms, his lips claiming mine in a kiss so demanding I went up in flames.

And then it was Colin at my back, whispering in my ear, “Don't be nervous, Beth. We won't do anything you don't want to do,” he assured me. “If at any point you want to stop this, just say the word.”

Josh pulled back and held my gaze. There was no mistaking the desire in his eyes as he said, “He's right Beth. We can stop it right here, or at any point that you feel uncomfortable, and still do what we can to make your getaway as enjoyable as possible.”

I'd like to say that as someone who rarely drank, I'd had too much to be responsible for my actions. Or, that Josh and Colin had it planned all along, had set me up

and deliberately tried to get me drunk. But neither would be true. While the alcohol had lowered my inhibitions, I knew exactly what I was doing. At that point, they had both kissed me without touching me in any inappropriate way, and they were giving me the option to stop it before it went any further. I didn't recognize myself as the wanton woman contemplating having a threesome with two men. That woman was someone who knew what she wanted, as opposed to the real me who was so afraid of getting involved and hurt again that she denied her own sexuality and desires. I did know that I was also hotter than I'd ever been in my life.

Colin rose to his feet and reached out his hand to me. "It's your fantasy, Beth. Your chance to experience it."

I hesitated only an instant before I placed my hand in Colin's. I didn't resist as he pulled me to my feet and into his arms. His dark eyes held mine, searching for any sign of hesitation before he once again lowered his lips to mine. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Josh rise from the sofa and approach us before I closed my eyes and gave myself up to the insistent demand of Colin's kiss and probing tongue which turned my knees to jelly. If I didn't have my arms around his neck and if he hadn't been holding me so tightly, I'm sure they would have given out.

Colin's hands slid downward where he cupped the cheeks of my behind and pulled me tighter against the erection pressing into my abdomen.

As lost as I was in Colin's kiss, I felt my hair pulled aside before Josh's lips settled on the back of my neck. With Colin's hands fastened to my behind, there was no question whose hands slid beneath my t-shirt and around to cup my breasts.

My body was on fire, my nerve endings alive and tingling. Colin's hands rose to grasp the hem of my t-shirt then proceeded to pull it up, over my head, and off. Josh's hands moved to my back, beginning a sensual massage, leaving my breasts exposed to Colin's gaze.

Colin reached out and cupped my breasts in his hands, his thumbs rubbing my already hard nipples. "These have been driving me crazy all night." His eyes met mine. "Are you sure?"

"No.... Please don't stop," I heard myself whimper.

I felt Josh's lips and tongue burn a heated trail across my shoulder blade and up the side of my neck. "Tell us what you want, Beth."

"I don't know," the insecure Beth answered. "Yes I do," the Beth that was so turned on she wanted to scream countered. "I don't want to think about what's right or wrong. I just want to feel."

I opened my eyes and drew my breath sharply before settling into the ecstasy of being caressed by Colin and Josh while lightning flashed and rolled and rumbled outside. Colin released my breasts, took a step back, and asked, once again giving me the opportunity to back out, "Are you sure that's what you want?"

"Yes." Yes, just this once I wanted to explore my sensual side that I hadn't known existed. I wanted to experience the ultimate feminine fantasy. For this once, I would worry about what tomorrow would bring when it got here.

Taking me at my word, Colin once again reached out and began stroking my breasts, playing with my nipples, gently pinching and rolling them with his fingers as

Josh reached around me to unsnap and unzip my jeans. My breath caught when Josh bit gently into the side of my neck as he hooked his thumbs into the waist band of my jeans. I didn't have time to catch my breath before Colin sucked one of my nipples into his mouth. Josh nipped and kissed his way down my back as he lowered my jeans and panties. Colin switched from one breast to the other, sucking forcefully as his hand manipulated the other breast, alternating between tugging then soothing the nipple with his thumb.

The sensations rioting through my body were so intense I felt I would have an orgasm on the spot. It was too much, yet not enough. My fingers tangled in Colin's hair, holding him more securely to my breast. Josh eased each leg up and pulled off my pants and panties, leaving me nude.

I was so lost in the sensual havoc Colin's lips and hands were creating in my body that I wasn't even aware that Josh had moved the coffee table out of the way and had spread the throw from the sofa on the floor in front of the fire. Colin scooped me up into his arms, walked to where the fur had been spread out, went to his knees, and laid me upon the soft warm fur.

Colin stood and pulled off his sweatshirt, once again I was treated to the sight of him reaching for his belt, only this time I wasn't about to turn and run. I looked to my left, and Josh was one step ahead of him, in the process of pushing his jeans down his legs.

As I laid there watching the two men quickly shed their clothing, I was once again stuck by how different they were. Colin was all hard, well defined muscles, clearly a man who worked out regularly, but he was not overly muscled like a body builder. Josh on the other hand had the trim body of a swimmer. And both, in their own way were incredible, without an ounce of spare flesh anywhere on their bodies. Their bodies reflecting the flickering flames, with a backdrop of lightning and rumbling thunder, the scene took on the surreal quality of an erotic dream that held me firmly within its grip.

I had barely an instant to question what the hell I was doing before they joined me on the fur cushioned floor.

I could feel the heat of two bodies pressed up on either side of me, the sensation unlike anything I'd ever imagined. I gasped when Colin and Josh each began gently stroking a shoulder. I laid my head back and closed my eyes, savoring their soothing massage designed to help me relax. A warm and sensual glow built up within me as each hand grew slightly bolder in its movements. Suddenly four hands were stroking up and down my body, only just avoiding my breasts and between my legs where I most needed their attention.

Reaching out, I felt a hard tugging sensation deep inside me as my hands each closed around a hard erection. Hearing a soft moan in each ear encouraged me to begin stroking up and down their lengths. One was so thick I could barely close my fingers around it, Colin, and Josh not as thick but longer.

I would never have thought it possible to be almost paralyzed with lust. I couldn't separate who's hands were who's between the two men still pressed up close on either side of me. Their caresses were smooth and soft, soothing yet arousing wherever they touched.

A hand slid down each arm and pulled my hands from the erections they held.

“Easy sweetheart. We have all night. Now is all about you,” Colin whispered in my ear. They raised my arms above my head and pinned them to the floor. I lay passively while the two men worked my body in unison. I wondered how feeling a hard male penis pressing against each hip felt as right and natural as if I was with only one man.

My eyes snapped open when I felt both nipples sucked into a hot mouth at the same time. I looked down to see a dark head at my right breast and a blonde one at my left. My orgasm hit me at the same instant that a bright flash of lightning seemed to send an electrical charge through me as thunder crashed overhead, making the world vibrate around me. My body went rigid with the intensity of the sensation, taking control of my body. I was only vaguely aware of a hand sliding down my stomach and a finger manipulating my clitoris to draw out my orgasm.

When my orgasm subsided, I barely had time to catch my breath before Colin slowly made his way down the length of my naked body, leaving a hot trail of kisses on the way down. Finally his head nestled between my legs then moved forward to take me fully into his mouth. He worked his tongue around the edges, teasing my clit with little flicks of his tongue. Pleasure wracked through my body as he worked the tip of his tongue inside me. His hands ran around the back of my body where he gripped my naked buttocks to hold me firmly against his mouth.

It felt so incredible that I couldn't breathe. I opened my mouth to gasp for air. Josh swooped down to capture my lips and slid his tongue into my mouth, kissing me passionately as his hands continued to manipulate my breasts and nipples.

Just when I felt another orgasm building, Colin pulled back, leaving me hanging. And then they switched places. Back and forth they would swap, taking left and right sides of me and then top and bottom. The feel of four soft warm hands, and two hot mouths fuelling my burning desire had me to the point that I would do anything to find relief.

Pure frustration and need compelled me to once again reach out for what I felt I would go crazy unless I felt one or both inside me. I smoothed my thumbs over each smooth tip, spreading the pre-cum I felt there.

“Ready for more?” Josh asked.

“Please,” I responded, the pleading quality in my voice sounding unfamiliar to my own ears.

Colin went to his knees beside me, his erection a mere inch from my lips. I didn't hesitate before I rolled to my side, reached out, and cupped him then slid my hand up his rigid erection. I was thrilled when I heard the deep moan of pleasure my action drew from him. Encouraged by his response I leaned forward and slid my tongue across the soft tip then ran my tongue down the length of him, then back up to the tip where I placed a kiss before I looked up at him. His eyes burned with passion, and his jaw was clenched as if he were fighting for control.

Wanting him to feel as out of control as I felt, I slid my left hand around him to grip his clenched behind and pulled him closer as my lips closed around the tip of his engorged erection. Sliding my lips downward I took as much of him as I could comfortably take into my mouth, then slid back up to the tip, and then down again. It

didn't take long to find a rhythm between my head movements and the gentle sucking that had him moaning above me.

Josh stretched out behind me, his left hand reaching around to cup one breast as his erection slid between my legs. Like a heat seeking missile, the tip found my hot, wet entrance. Whether Josh had somehow given Colin an unspoken signal of his intent or it was a masculine instinct to protect his manhood, Colin pulled himself from my mouth the instant before Josh thrust into me from behind, his length reaching places deep inside me that had never been touched before. Another orgasm hit with the intensity equaling the storm that continued to rage outside.

"That's it, honey. Just let it take you," Josh whispered in my ear as his hand slid around my hip until his talented fingers found and began a slow stroking motion against my clit to mimic his long deep thrust inside of me.

*"Let it take you,"* he'd said. As if I had a choice. He pushed me to the precipice then over. I didn't see stars. I saw silver neon fingers of lightning slithering across a dark sky as the world exploded around me.

When I was once again able to breathe and remember where I was and what I was doing, Josh leaned up and turned my head to face him before his lips found mine in a kiss so gentle I felt my heart clench at the sweetness of it.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Mumm," I responded.

"You're incredible," Josh said.

"Had enough?" Colin's asked.

I turned back to look up at Colin who was still on his knees with a raging erection pointed at me, and Josh was still buried deep inside me. Neither man had found satisfaction, yet I knew they were willing to stop if I said the word. I wasn't.

Any doubt and inhibitions had been vanquished. This was a once in a lifetime, never to be repeated experience, and I intended to make the most of it. "Not nearly enough," I boldly told them. "I've got two years of celibacy to make up for." To prove my point, I wrapped my fingers around Colin's penis, pulled it toward my hungry lips, and slid my mouth down on him as deep as I could take him.

The storm outside matched the intensity of the one building within. The sensation of two men pressing into me was overwhelming. Closing my eyes I surrendered the incredible pleasure being penetrated by two penises.

Josh's thrusts were coming harder, faster and deeper, his moans of pleasure indicating that he was nearly there.

Determined to make them both come at the same time, I pulled up on Colin, took a deep breath then went down on him, swallowing when I felt him hit the back of my throat. It felt as if a lightning bolt hit the cabin, sending an electrical charge through the three of us simultaneously. I heard both men groan, their bodies go stiff as they released into me, sending me over the edge into an orgasmic frenzy.

I'm amazed that there aren't more reports of sex induced heart attacks, probably a lot more than are known. My heart was pounding so hard I was afraid it was going to explode.

At my back, Josh resumed his soothing massage to help me relax. Colin eased



himself down at my front and leaned in for a gentle kiss.

“You okay?” Colin asked.

“I’m not sure yet,” I gasped. “Either of you up on your CPR?”

I dosed off after that first exhilarating yet exhausting round. The men woke me to get up so they could make a more comfortable bed on the floor in front of the fire. Two unrolled sleeping bags piled on top of each other topped with a quilt then the fur throw made a soft pallet upon the hardwood floor. We then settled in with me lying between Josh and Colin, covered with a second warm quilt.

I awoke during the night to Colin stroking my breasts and raining soft kisses upon my lips. The storm outside was still raging. It was also obvious that the storm inside had just settled into a temporary lull before escalating into gale force intensity. Looking up to see Colin leaning above me, his dark features illuminated by the flickering firelight behind him was all it took to fill me with a fierce desire to pick up where we’d left off earlier.

Reaching up to slide my hand behind his neck, I pulled his lips to mine. I didn’t want or need foreplay. I wanted Colin with a wild, uninhibited passion. He didn’t disappoint me. He took me fast and hard, bringing me to one explosive orgasm after another until he collapsed spent upon me.

“Damn,” Josh, who had been watching, said then groaned on the other side of me. Colin rolled off and settled in beside me with a sigh of contentment.

I looked over to see that Josh was sporting a very healthy erection himself. Under the circumstances, I could hardly play favorites. “Looks like you have a rather large problem,” I commented.

Josh chuckled. “You could say that. Know anyone with the energy to help me out?”

“I know someone who could probably be persuaded.”

## Chapter Five

Waking the following morning was a bit unsettling. I just lay there with my eyes closed, trying to remember if the night before had been real or an incredibly erotic dream, until I felt the faux fur against my back. I know I should have felt ashamed of my behavior, or at least embarrassed. Instead, I found a satisfied smile curving my lips as I recalled details from the night before.

The last thing I remembered before falling asleep was Colin's promise that they'd take care of my second year of abstinence tomorrow.

It was now tomorrow.

I smelled coffee. I opened my eyes, tried to sit up, and fell back with a pained moan. Muscles that had grown lax from lack of use were groaning in protest. I hurt in places I didn't even know I could hurt.

The storm was over, and the sun was shining through the wall of windows overlooking the river.

"I thought this would bring you around," Colin said as he approached with a steaming cup of coffee.

"It smells wonderful. If I can get my body to cooperate, I'm sure it'll taste just as good."

"Your body felt pretty cooperative to me."

"Yeah well, you go without sex for two years and see how you feel the morning after a night like we had last night."

No words were necessary. Colin's appalled expression left me in no doubt what he thought about trying to remain celibate for two years. He sat down beside me on the pile of sleeping bags and quilts. "Here, let me help you." Sliding his hand behind my back, he eased me into a sitting position.

I secured the quilt to my bare breasts with my left hand while I reached for the coffee cup with my right. I knew it was a bit late for modesty. While I had no regrets, at least not yet, things looked a bit different in the light of day with the sun streaming through the windows.

"What you need is to get up and moving to work out the kinks," Colin suggested, then added, "Will an hour give you long enough?"

"Long enough to...?"

"Eat breakfast, which is ready to go on the table and time to get ready to hit the river. It's a bit cool, so you'll want to dress warm, but otherwise, a beautiful day."

I couldn't believe that they were including me in their plans for the day. I took a sip of my coffee thinking I needed the shot of caffeine to wake me up. My thoughts and surprise must have been easy to read because Colin placed a finger beneath my chin and forced me to meet his gaze.

"Look, Beth, although we both think you were incredible last night, it's also

obvious that you aren't the kind of woman who does that sort of thing."

I can't deny that part of me was wondering what Colin and Josh must think of me the morning after. What kind of woman has sex with not one but two men she just met?

Both at the same time.

"I know we just met, but we like you. I like you," Colin continued. "Today is your last day here, but we have the rest of the week to do our thing. We'd like to make your last day all about you. If that's what you want, of course."

Of course it's what I wanted, but... Last night with the storm, everything had taken on a surreal quality. Although I had been doing more than a little bit of fantasizing about Colin and Josh, I never in a million years thought what happened last night would actually happen, that I would be capable of doing what I did. Would they expect a repeat performance? Did I want a repeat performance? Would I? Could I?

"All about you Beth. What you want or don't want. You call the shots," Colin assured me.

Was he reading my mind? "I thought Josh was the psychologist."

"He is."

"Then you must be damn good defense attorney."

"I am."

It hadn't escaped my attention that Colin and I seemed to be alone. "Where's Josh?"

"If the weather report is accurate, it should be a nice evening to grill outside. He ran into town to pick up a few groceries so I could fix you some breakfast and we could talk without you feeling ambushed. He should be back any time now."

I couldn't believe how thoughtful and considerate they were being about my feelings. The truth is, I'd spent so long comparing the men I met to my ex-husband that I never gave anyone else a chance to get close to me, until now, with two perfect strangers who I'd never see again. Was I going to pass up what could be a wonderful, fun filled day with two gorgeous men because the old, timid Beth was trying to fill my head with doubts? I could spend my last day here sitting alone on the deck of my cabin with a book as I'd originally planned, or, I could go for it.

"Did you say something about breakfast? I'm starving."

\* \* \* \*

I can't remember when I had a nicer day or when I've enjoyed myself more. Never had the fall foliage on the hills looked more beautiful or the colors more vivid than from the view from a boat cruising on the river, the wind in my face, savoring the fresh mountain air.

The guys knew of a narrow channel that lead to an isolated, small lake, or a large pond depending on which you choose to call it. To Colin it was a pond, to Josh a lake. We dropped anchor for a while and just talked and laughed. It was in that beautiful, isolated setting where we had the belated safe sex talk. Much to their relief I assured them that I was on the pill and that I'd been tested after my divorce from my philandering ex-husband. And I was relieved that they too tested regularly even though they practice safe sex, except for last night which I discovered caught them by surprise as well.

When a mother deer with two fawns wandered from the trees to drink at the

shoreline, I was afraid to breathe for fear of frightening them away. Sitting there upon that small body of water, surrounded by so many vividly colored trees that the opening to the channel was barely visible, I felt as if I was no longer *only* two hundred and fifty miles from home, I had been transported to another time and place where the real world had ceased to exist, a place where the fiercely responsible, often uptight Beth had been transformed into a free spirit who would no longer suppress her sensuality.

From there, with Josh at the wheel, we continued upriver. Although it was a tight squeeze, both Colin and I managed to fit in the front passenger seat in the boat. Not that I complained. I reveled in his closeness, in his arm around my waist, the warmth of his lips against my ear as he pointed out different landmarks.

The most awe inspiring point of the day was when Colin whispered in my ear, “Look up there.” My eyes followed the line of his pointing finger, and my breath caught in my chest as I saw a pair of eagles soaring directly overhead. Like everyone else, I’ve seen them on TV and in a zoo, but never before had I witnessed anything so beautiful as those majestic birds flying wild and free, swooping, diving, and soaring upward upon the air currents.

Further upriver, Josh guided the boat to a gas pump at a marina. Colin jumped out, secured the boat, and then reached down to help me up onto the wooden pier. Josh cut the engine and joined us. After talking to the attendant and leaving instruction to fill the tank, we walked a few blocks for lunch.

The bar they chose was clearly a favorite when they were in the area. It was a typical, dimly lit, local hang-out with scuffed metal tables and vinyl padded chairs, but had a surprisingly extensive menu for the lunch and dinner crowd. It also had a pool table at the rear of the room. Following their suggestion I ordered the breaded tenderloin and spiced waffle fries. Good Lord! The sandwich was so huge it filled the entire plate. The fries, on a separate plate, would have fed three people. While I think I did justice to the mountain of food in front of me, Colin and Josh had no problem finishing off theirs and what was left of mine.

“You play pool?” Josh asked.

“I’ve played at it a few times, but I could never get the hang of it,” I admitted.

“That’s because you didn’t have pool sharks like us to teach you,” Colin chimed in. “You game?”

Was I game? After everything else I’d done so far, what was making a fool of myself over a game of pool? “Don’t say I don’t warn you how bad I am.”

Josh went to the bar for three more beers while Colin and I made our way to the pool table at the back of the room.

“You play Josh, and I’ll be your coach,” Colin said as he took some coins from his pocket and dropped them in the slot on the side of the table. I heard balls drop and roll. Colin pulled a pool stick from a rack on the wall and handed it to me. He then placed only the white ball on the table. “Now, pretend you’re making a shot. I want to see how you hold the cue.”

Okay fine. Feeling more than a bit uncomfortable, I leaned forward, attempted to grip the tip with my left hand while holding the stick with my right, as I’d been instructed numerous times in the past. As Colin instructed, I took aim and hit the ball ... sending it

airborne across the table and over the edge to roll across the floor.

“See, I warned you,” I groaned.

Josh returned and placed a tray with three bottles of beer on the table closest to the pool table. He walked over to retrieve the white cue ball and returned it to the table. “The goal is to keep it on the table,” he pointed out.

“Yeah, so I’ve been told,” I responded.

“Let’s try it again,” Colin said, moving behind me. “First off, you have to lean further over the table and relax. Hold the cue stick gently and let it slide easily through your fingers.” Moving behind me, Colin leaned over me and gripped my hands around the cue stick while I was bent over the pool table. “Like this,” he said, helping me slide the stick through my fingers, “Like you’re making love to it.”

His front pressed tightly against my backside. I could feel him beginning to stir and harden within his jeans, and he’s telling me to relax? *I don’t think so.* I turned my head, and my eyes met his. “Is that some pool shark’s trick designed to distract an opponent?”

Colin chuckled and gave me a quick kiss. “Not intentional, sweetheart, I assure you. The damn thing seems to have a mind of its own where you’re concerned.”

Josh cleared his throat. “We gonna play pool, or do you guys want to get a room?”

Another chuckle from Colin, and we returned to the task at hand. “Okay, remember what I told you and try again.”

At that point, the game was NOT what I had on my mind. “*Like you’re making love to it,*” he’d said. I aimed the tip of the cue toward the ball and let it slide through my fingers. The ball shot across the table, hit the bumper on the end, and... stayed on the table.

“Okay, Josh, rack’em,” Colin said.

We spent the next couple of hours playing pool. From time to time, Colin seemed to take perverse delight in rattling me by helping me with my shots. Although I was by no means good and didn’t have a prayer of beating either Josh or Colin, I was getting better with each game I played.

I suspect that Colin’s comment about them being pool sharks wasn’t too much of an exaggeration. They were both damn good. For the first time since meeting them, I saw the competitive side to their friendship.

I can’t deny that it did wonders for my ego to have two gorgeous men giving me their undivided attention in a public place, seeming totally oblivious to a couple of younger women who were jumping through hoops in an attempt to attract their attention. If the visual daggers the women were tossing in my direction were lethal, I’d have been a goner. I loved it.

We were getting ready to wrap it up and head home. Colin and I were playing one last game. I’d been having so much fun, enjoying our easy camaraderie, that I decided to turn the tables on Colin. At least I planned to try.

It was so warm in the bar that I’d long since removed my sweatshirt, leaving me wearing my jeans and a long sleeved denim shirt. While Colin wasn’t looking, I unbuttoned the shirt to expose the low cut tank top I wore underneath. When I bent over

the table to make my shots, I made sure Colin would get an eyeful. There was no mistaking the tightening of the fabric at the front of his jeans. He also missed a couple of shots that had Josh razzing him.

We each had one ball remaining on the table plus the eight ball, and it was Colin's shot.

I slid my hand up and down my cue as if I was stroking an erection. "I think I'm getting the hang of making love to this thing?"

Colin made his shot. The cue ball hit his red, sending it into the eight ball. I held my breath as the black eight ball rolled toward the pocket, slowed, hovered, and dropped. Game over. I won.

## Chapter Six

The boat ride back to the cabins was leisurely but fun. I felt as if we'd been friends forever, making it seem impossible that we'd just met the day before. It also didn't hurt that they went out of their way to include me in their conversation and friendly joking, never once during the day making me feel like an interloper. And except for the slightly frisky game playing at the pool table, no sexual advances or comments had been made all day.

By the time Colin and Josh secured the boat to the pier down the hill from their cabin, it was already after five o'clock.

"I'll fire up the grill and make the steaks. The rest of dinner is up to you guys," Josh said, joining us on the narrow wooden pier that could do with a bit of strengthening.

"I've got the baked potatoes covered," Colin chimed in, holding up the bag he'd collected before we left the bar. I have no idea when he ordered them and was surprised when he picked up the order on our way out. "Foil wrapped and ready to pop on the grill to heat. Butter and sour cream on the side."

"Hey, no fair. You guys cheated." I complained, frantically searching my mind for what I had in my cabin to contribute. "How long do I have before we eat?"

"Half an hour?" Josh asked.

"Okay, you're on." It wasn't a lot of time, but then I'm a pro at cooking and eating on the run.

When all was said and done, I was rather proud of my contribution. I had a bag of taco chips and salsa that I brought from home, combined with bagged, ready to eat salad mix, I had a taco salad. I'd planned to make spaghetti tonight so I purchased a bag of soft bread sticks while I was in town. I brushed melted butter on the bread sticks and rolled them in cheddar cheese with a touch of garlic powder. My only regret was that I didn't have anything to make for dessert. The guys had been so great, I wished I had something to WOW them.

In truth, I love baking, when I have the time. Not only do I find the act of creating something from scratch soothing, there's just something about the smell of something baking in the oven that gives the house a warm, homey feeling. No doubt comfort by association, the smells bringing back warm memories of times past, of carefree times spent in my grandmother's and my mother's kitchen as a child.

Unfortunately, not only did I not have the necessary supplies, I didn't have the time. As I placed the cookie sheet with the breadsticks into the oven to brown, my mind flashed to the bag of marshmallows I'd tossed into the grocery bag as an afterthought, one of my quick fixes when craving something sweet. I simply stick a marshmallow on a fork and hold it over the range burner to toast. I had the marshmallows, a small package of graham crackers, and three candy bars. S'mores. Lord, I hadn't made them since I was in Scouts. Why not? Would the guys indulge me by building a fire in the fire pit, or

would they think it was hokey?

\* \* \* \*

“You know, they actually have a restaurant in the city with small brazier type things on the table where you can make these,” Josh said as he licked marshmallow cream from his fingertips. “I’ve never tried it because it didn’t sound all that good to me. I’ve changed my mind.”

“I don’t know about that,” Colin said, popping his last bite into his mouth. “It’s the setting that makes them taste so good. When you compare being outside beside an open fire to a table inside a crowded restaurant, something is definitely lacking in the transition.”

We were sitting on the ground beside the fire the men had built after dinner. The firewood supplied with the cabin was in a storage shed and dry so building the fire had taken no time at all. The heavy rain had made sitting on the ground problematic. A problem solved by spreading out the boat tarp and topping it with chair cushions from the deck.

It had been a perfect day and wonderful evening, but, after the sun set and stars began to dot the darkening sky, I began to feel hesitant, unsure about what the rest of the night would bring ... about what I wanted to happen ... or not happen.

The melody of Moon River began playing from Josh’s direction. With a groan of frustration he reached for the cell phone in his pocket. “Curse of the job,” he said as he flipped the phone open.

“Tell me about it. That’s why I left mine home,” I responded.

“Not a particularly wise decision for a woman traveling alone,” Colin scolded gently.

“Yeah well, I learned that one the hard way. If you’re in the mood for a hair raising tale, I’ll tell you about my blow-out on the Interstate.”

“You had a blow-out on the Interstate?” Colin repeated. “I hope someone stopped to help.”

The “*you’ve got to be kidding*” look I shot Colin was all the answer he needed. “I was actually pretty proud of myself for changing the tire myself, for the first time ever. It occurred to me that maybe someone was trying to tell me something, and I considered turning around and going back home.”

“I’m glad you didn’t,” Colin said.

“Me too.” If I had, I’d have missed out on.... Okay it probably wasn’t a good time to think about the night before.

“I’m going to take this inside,” Josh said as he rose to his feet.

Colin’s eyes met Josh’s. “Heather,” was Colin’s one word response, his tone slightly accusing.

Josh’s response was no response at all as he turned and walked up the steps toward the cabin.

“Heather?” I couldn’t resist asking.

“His ex-fiancé. He told me she’d called last week.”

“You don’t sound as if you like her.”

“That’s a hard question to answer honestly,” Colin replied. “Actually, I do like



her. Heather is a wonderful person. It's just that Josh hadn't seen or heard from her in over six months, and he was finally beginning to move on with his life. I don't want to see him get hurt by her again."

I couldn't help thinking about how often I had dwelled on how badly I'd been treated and hurt by my ex. What you hear most often is about women being hurt. As women, I guess we don't normally consider that it's a two way street and men get hurt as well. "After I leave tomorrow, you'll have the rest of the week to talk to him. But ultimately, only Josh can decide how he feels about her, and what he needs to make him happy."

"Yeah, I know," Colin agreed.

"Mmmmm, this is nice," I said, pulling my knees up to my chest and wrapping my arms around them. Gazing into the dancing flames I admitted, "I didn't think I would dread going home so much."

"Regardless of where you go, it's never easy to return to someplace where you aren't happy.

"What makes you think I'm not happy?" I asked.

"Are you?"

"Of course I'm h...." I couldn't bring myself to say the words. Once again Colin sounded more like the psychologist than Josh. I wasn't unhappy, exactly, but I wasn't happy either. The truth was, I was merely existing, marking time, one day at a time.

"I'm sorry," Colin's words pulled me from my unsettling self analysis. "It's really none of my business."

"No need to apologize for being a little too close for comfort. I repeat what I said earlier. You must be damn good at your job."

"I trust my instincts about people. It helps me get at the truth." No ego involved, just a simple statement of fact.

"I honestly don't know how I got to this point."

"The question is, what are you going to do about it? Too many people settle because it's easier than change."

I couldn't deny that there was something major missing in my life. After my divorce, I threw myself into my job. I didn't have much choice. It took me a year to clear up all the debts my ex's gambling got us into. Then when the local economy went into the sewer, I just fell into the rut of letting one day run into the next. We'd moved to my current location because of Bill's job. I had no family in the area, casual friends but no one to whom I was really close. What I did have was a job that gave me satisfaction, or at least it did at one time, and an empty house to go home to each night.

Lost in my thoughts, I didn't realize that I'd been rubbing my shoulder until Colin asked, "Still sore?"

"That's an understatement."

"The best way I know to sooth sore muscles is to take a long soak in a hot-tub. Interested?" Colin suggested.

Hell yes I was interested, but interested in being with Colin – just Colin. Although I found Josh an incredibly handsome man, and I genuinely liked him, it was Colin to whom I'd been drawn to from the beginning. Last night just happened, and although I

still didn't regret it, it was a once in a lifetime, never to be repeated experience, at least not by me.

"What about Josh?"

"He already offered to make himself scarce tonight to give us some alone time. The phone call from Heather just made his exit more convenient," Colin confessed. "Of course, this is *if* it's what you want as well."

The scent of the wood smoke, the heat, the sound of the crackling logs, and the sight of the firelight dancing in the depths of Colin's dark eyes affected me in ways I can't begin to describe. It was all consuming. I felt an immediate clenching sensation between my legs in response. "It *is* what I want, Colin. Under the circumstances, I just didn't know how to go about making it happen."

"I was hoping you'd say that." Colin reached out, slid his hand beneath my hair to the nape of my neck, and pulled me toward him.

His lips were firm as they moved against mine, expertly demanding a response, and so warm they sent an aching need spreading through my veins like an insidious drug to which I could easily become addicted. His kiss gentled as the tip of his tongue probed the seam of my lips. They parted in a small gasp of pleasure I was unable to hold back. Taking advantage of the opening I offered, Colin's tongue slipped inside, caressing mine with long, wet, sensual strokes.

We were virtual strangers, yet I couldn't ignore the almost magical rightness of being in Colin's arms. Nor could I ignore the way my body responded to him as if I'd known him forever in the most intimate, elemental way a woman can know a man.

Growing weak and light-headed from the duration and intensity of his kiss, I moaned softly with mounting desire as much as in need for air. Colin pulled back for barely an instant. My lips parted as I sucked in a breath. He swooped down and gently nipped my bottom lip that was already slightly swollen and sensitive from his kiss. I felt myself trembling in his arms. One strong, hot palm caressed my jaw line before his fingers slid into my hair to cup my head. Holding me secure, he captured my lips again in a kiss so deep, so demanding, I felt a corresponding tightening and tugging sensation between my legs that was almost painful in its intensity.

And then he pulled back. "Why don't we get wet?"

"I already am," I confessed.

With a chuckle, Colin rose to his feet and reached his hand down for mine. I didn't hesitate before placing my hand in his. He pulled me to my feet, scooped me up into his arms, and carried me up the steps to the second tier of the deck where the hot-tub occupied the far end.

"Now *that's* what I call friendship," Colin commented as we took in the hurricane lamp enclosed candles burning around the perimeter of the hot-tub. The cover had been removed and the steaming water was bubbling and churning invitingly. Two large towels occupied one of the chairs, and a wine bottle and two glasses sat on the wide ledge surrounding the tub. The lights inside the cabin went out, leaving the night illuminated by the flames from the fire below, the flickering light from the candles and the full moon and stars overhead.

"Perfect," I murmured against Colin's throat.

“Not quite yet, but we’re working on it,” Colin responded as he withdrew the arm supporting my legs, allowing the lower part of my body to slide down his until my feet touched the wood plank flooring. It was on the downward slide that I discovered, much to my satisfaction, he was sporting an erection. With my arms still around his neck, his arms circling my waist, I leaned my body against his and allowed my head to rest against his chest. I found such satisfaction in the sound of his erratically pounding heart, in the knowledge that his response to me was as intense as my desire for him.

Using the tip of his finger, he tipped my lips up to meet his in a brief, tender kiss before he grasped the hem of my sweatshirt and pulled it up and over my head, forcing me to remove my arms from around his neck. I grasped his sweatshirt and returned the favor. My bra quickly followed, leaving us both nude to the waist.

Using his lips and his tongue, Colin blazed a hot, moist trail along my neck, across my shoulders, and downward to the swells of my breasts. I couldn’t stop the helpless little moans as I watched his tanned finger gently squeeze and mold my much whiter breasts, whimpering when he rolled my hardened nipples between his thumbs and forefingers. My knees nearly buckled when his lips at last closed over one engorged nipple and sucked my flesh into the hot wet depths of his mouth. When he moved to the other breast, the night air chilled the wet nipple he released, tightening the sensitive bud to almost painful proportions. Recognizing what was happening, Colin alternated between breasts, heating them with his mouth and tongue, leaving them wet to be caressed by the night air, the contrast driving me to a frenzy of need.

There was no slow, sensual removal of our remaining clothing. We couldn’t get out of them fast enough. The perfection of Colin’s body literally took my breath away. He was every woman’s fantasy, broad shoulders, narrow waistline, well defined muscles and washboard abs. His erection stood out rigid and ready, its size reminding how difficult I’d found it to get my lips around him last night, how he’d stretched my insides to accommodate him. Any unease I might have felt was quickly overshadowed by my overwhelming desire for him. When my hand closed around him, Colin groaned and gritted his teeth. I slid my hand from the tip of his erection to the base and back up, testing his length, forcing another groan from him as I squeezed gently in an attempt to close my fingers around him. When I went to my knees before him, Colin made a half-hearted attempt to stop me, the word dying in his throat when my lips closed around him.

I couldn’t believe that I was being so bold, couldn’t believe I actually wanted to do something I found distasteful with my ex-husband, especially when he seemed to take perverse delight in forcing the act upon me. Yet with Colin, wanting to bring him pleasure felt as natural as breathing. Drawing him in deeper, I slid my tongue along the sensitive underside, the scent of him, the taste of him affecting me like a potent aphrodisiac making me want more.

I felt his fingers tangle in my hair in an attempt to pull me back and heard his warning, “Jesus, honey, if you don’t stop now I’m going to come.” It was a warning I ignored.

I increased the suction pressure and drew him in deeper with each downward slide. The muscles in his thighs bunched and began to quiver. His hips began to thrust forward, meeting each downward stroke of my lips. With the sound of his moans of

pleasure adding fuel to the fire burning inside me, I cupped him in my hand and massaged him gently until a deep, guttural groan ripped through him with the intensity his release.

When I pulled away from him, I was amazed to see that he remained as hard as he'd been when I started. Colin clasped my shoulders, pulled me to my feet, and once again swept me up into his arms. Clearly Colin's release hadn't weakened him in the least. With me in his arms, he stepped into the hot-tub and sat me on the cushioned edge.

"Turn about fair play, Sweetheart," he said, going to his knees in front of me.

Grasping my calves, he placed my legs over his shoulders. As he kissed his way up the insides of my thighs, his broad shoulders spread my legs further apart, giving him free access to the moisture dripping between my legs. When he leaned in to taste that moisture with the tip of his tongue, my hips jerked off the cushion.

"Oh, God, Colin." My groan originated somewhere deep inside me and radiated outward until it slipped past my parted lips. I felt as if he'd touched me with the pointed tip of one on the sticks on which we'd roasted the marshmallows ... after it had been in the fire.

Parting my sensitive lips with his fingers, Colin focused his attention on my rigid clitoris, flicking it with his tongue until my breathing became ragged and my body went taut as a bowstring. Sliding two fingers deep inside me, he pulled the rigid bud between his lips and began to suck, moving his fingers in and out with the same easy rhythm.

"Oh, yes. Oh, God, Colin, please don't stop," I gasped, barely able to breathe. He didn't. He carried me to an exquisite pinnacle of release. When my orgasm hit, he increased his tempo as he pushed me over and stayed with me, drawing out my pleasure to the very end. And when I fell back to earth, he was there to catch me, sending me right back up before I had time to catch my breath. He didn't let up until my final orgasm was little more than a weak moan and a subtle tightening of my insides against his probing fingers.

If Colin hadn't wrapped his hands around my waist and eased me down into the hot churning water, I wouldn't have had the strength to do it myself. My reaction to the sudden warmth was instantaneous. I could feel all the aches and stress seeping from my body to be replaced by incredible lassitude as the powerful jets of the hot tub massaged my over-sensitized flesh. It was heavenly. Unable to resist, I gave myself up to the sensation. With a sigh of bliss I closed my eyes and allowed my head to drop back against the padded leather side of the hot-tub. In the afterglow of the mind numbing orgasms Colin had given me, I savored the feel of the cool night breeze caressing my face as I listened to the gurgling sounds of the hot-tub, the serenade of the night birds with the background accompaniment of crickets and tree frogs. It was so easy to lose myself there. So easy to block from my mind the fact that I'd leave here tomorrow and return to a life that hadn't changed, even though I believed that something inside of me had.

Colin's lips met mine, gently coaxing them open to the wine he passed from his mouth to mine. "You asleep?" he asked.

I recognized the taste and scent of my favorite wine, medium bodied with a light spicy taste as it trickled down my throat. I opened my eyes, my gaze meeting his. "I don't want to sleep. I don't want to waste the time I have left."

“Any chance you could extend your time off?”

“I wish I could.” Truer words were never spoken. “I don’t want to ruin tonight by thinking about tomorrow, Colin.”

Accepting my desire to change the subject, Colin handed me a glass of wine and reached over to retrieve another from the tray. Resting his head beside mine, he looked upward. “Of everything I love about this place, I can never get over how incredible the night sky is here. You never see stars like this in the city.”

It was an awe inspiring sight, millions of pinpoints of light of various sizes and brightness shining through a blanket of black. The stars looked so close I felt as if I could reach up and touch them. We sat there together, watching the stars and sipping our wine, so comfortable with each other there was no need to make idle conversation.

Whether it was the setting, the wine, the powerful pulsating hot-tub jets, or simply being so close to Colin’s incredible naked body, the cool night air caressed my breasts making them ache to be touched. My nipples were so puckered and hard they were becoming painful.

I looked over at Colin, reluctant to disturb the absolute peacefulness he seemed to have found. I watched the rise and fall of his chest. Surrounded by dark, water dampened chest hair, his masculine nipples were as hard and puckered as my own. My gaze traced the outline of his features, no longer appearing as rugged and distant as when I first met him.

I couldn’t resist. I leaned over and gently covered his lips with mine, losing myself in the warmth he so readily offered.

“I was afraid I’d given you all you could take for one night,” he whispered against my lips.

“Apparently not.”

“Thank God.”

Taking the glass from my hand, Colin returned it to the tray along with his own. Without saying another word he pulled me onto his lap so my knees straddled his hips and I rested snugly against his erection. He flexed against me, and I moaned to communicate my desire for more.

“Kiss me, Beth.”

I slid my hands up his hair roughened chest, around his broad shoulders, and pressed my lips to his. My tongue snaked out and traced the seam between his lips. Colin’s lips opened in invitation for my tongue to enter and mate with his.

His hand slid up my back to my neck, holding me in place as his teeth gently clasped my tongue. His lips closed around me, and he began to suck rhythmically. At the same time he began to flex his erection. Without realizing I was doing so, I instinctively began to move against him to increase the sensation. A passionate moan sounded at the back of my throat. He responded in kind.

When his hands covered my breasts, I closed my eyes, giving in to the sensations assaulting me from all directions.

“Don’t close your eyes, Beth. I want you to watch everything I do to you. I want to see the passion burning in your eyes,” Colin instructed.

Not wanting to do anything to disappoint him, I forced my eyes open and watched

as his hands caressed and manipulated my aching breasts. I watched as his thumbs rubbed my distended nipples to a painful hardness. He moved one arm around my waist, pulling me forward and lifting me slightly, so I was no longer in direct contact with his throbbing erection. I groaned in protest. I needed to feel more of him, all of him, not less.

There was a knowing smile on his lips as they closed over my breast and sucked it almost forcefully into the hot depths of his mouth. His teeth closed over my sensitized nipple and bit down gently. I gasped, my breathing became even more erratic as my insides began to clench in response.

Colin pulled back and soothed my nipple with the tip of his tongue. “You liked that. Didn’t you?” His words were more of a statement of fact rather than a question he expected me to answer. He alternated between my breasts, sucking forcefully then biting gently until he had me gasping for breath and straining to reestablish contact with his erection, but he held me securely, just out of reach.

“Please,” I pleaded. I felt as if I would go crazy unless I found some relief to the tension building to a fever pitch inside me. In response, he gripped me by the waist, pulled me into the churning water, and impaled me to the hilt upon his rigid erection.

Multiple orgasms washed over me in waves, leaving me gasping for breath.

“Oh yes. That’s it honey, let it go. Just let it take you,” Colin coaxed as he began to thrust deep and hard into me to draw my climax out to the fullest.

When I at last went limp in his arms, feeling as if my heart was about to explode, he held me quietly until my heart rate slowed, my breathing became less erratic. And then he flexed his erection that will still hard and ready inside me.

Our eyes met, mine showing my obvious surprise, his all too knowing.

Teasing me with slow, deep thrusts, Colin said, “You’re the one who said you didn’t want to sleep. The one who didn’t want to waste the time she has left. And if I remember correctly, we’ve barely made a dent in making up for your second year of celibacy.”

“I can’t decide if that’s a threat or a promise.”

“I never make threats, sweetheart, and I always honor my promises.”

## Epilogue

So much has happened since my run away from home weekend that I can hardly believe it was six months ago. I put my house on the market a month after I returned home. I received an offer that I accepted last week.

There are still times when I think back on that weekend and can't believe that I actually had sex with two men at the same time, like it was a dream that happened to someone else. Do I now regret it? No. Would I recommend it to someone else. Hell no! I'm well aware that I was extremely lucky. I shudder to think what could have happened if the two men in the neighboring cabin hadn't been men like Colin and Josh. I'd like to think that if the men had been different types that I wouldn't have allowed it to happen at all. The truth is, I'll never know.

And yes, I am still seeing Colin. At least as often as a long distance relationship will permit. On my way to Florida to spend Christmas with my parents, I made a pit-stop and spent a couple of days in Atlanta. We spent another weekend at the cabin, just the two of us, and he's flying in next week to help me pack up my house for my move – to Atlanta, where the real estate market is booming. The way I see it, Atlanta is closer to my family, making it a faster commute so I can visit them more often.

Am I in love with Colin? I'm well on my way. Even though Colin insists that he still has a long way to go to honor his promise to make up for my second year of celibacy, we're also taking it slow. I made a mistake by rushing into my first marriage and don't intend to make another. What ever happens, I'm no longer merely existing. I'm no longer settling because it's easier than change. My days are filled with something to look forward to, and, yes, I can now say the words... I have a life.

THE END