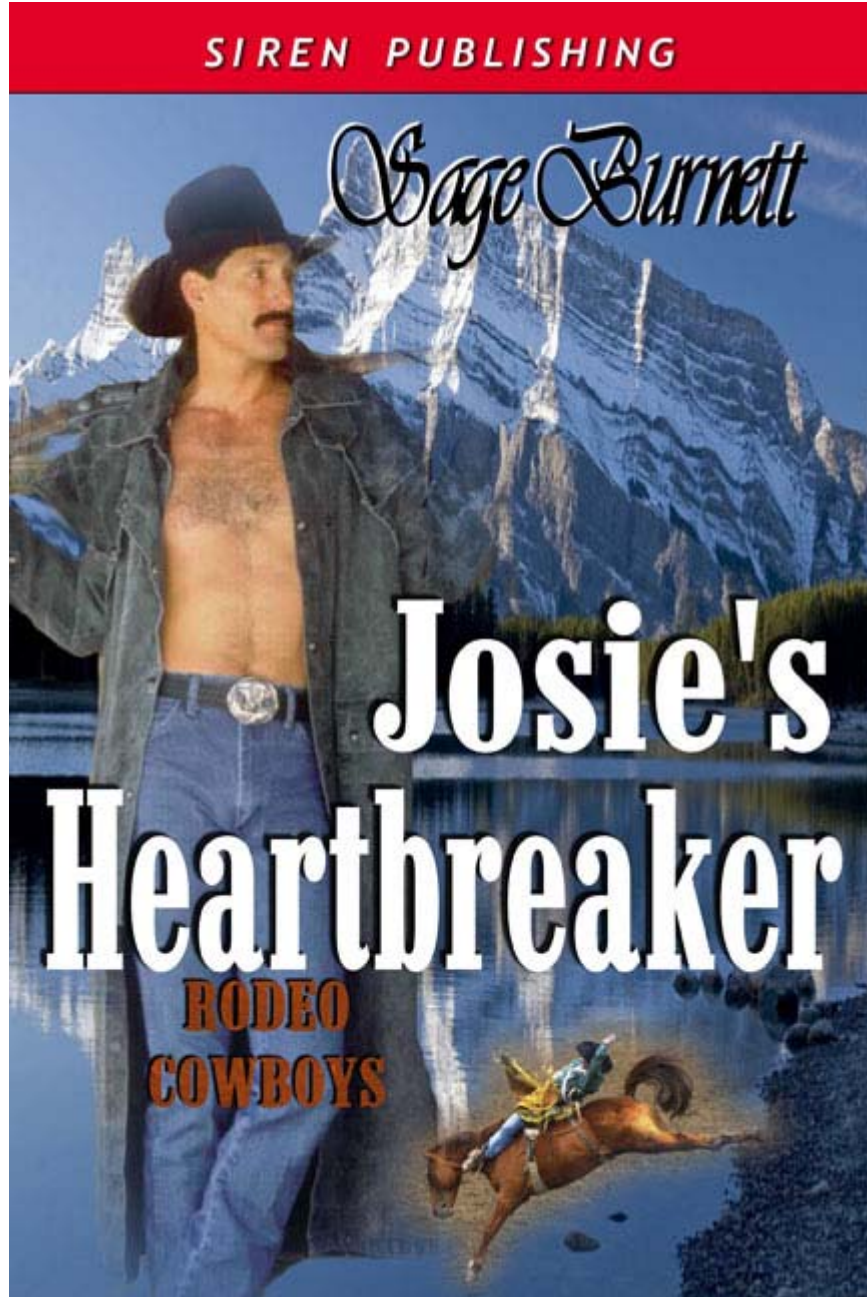


SIREN PUBLISHING

Sage Burnett

# Josie's Heartbreaker

RODEO  
COWBOYS



**JOSIE'S HEARTBREAKER**  
*Rodeo Cowboys: The Series, Book 3*

**SAGE BURNETT**

## **SEX RATING: SIZZLING**

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**STEAMY:** Heavy sexual tension; graphic details; may contain coarse language

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**SCORCHING:** Erotica; contains many sexual encounters; may contain unconventional sex; will offend delicate readers

**SEXTREME:** Excessiveness; many instances of unconventional sex; may be hardcore; not for the faint-hearted

# **Sage Burnett**

## **Rodeo Cowboys: The Series, Book 3**

### **Josie's Heartbreaker**

Josie Landford is determined to find the perfect rodeo cowboy to fulfill her fantasy. After watching sexy Rex West wrestle a big, old steer to the rodeo floor, she approaches him and makes an offer he certainly cannot refuse!

Josie has her own guidelines for her fantasy affair, and soon, it becomes a fantasy affair for them both.

However, the all-too-willing but wary Rex is not about to get involved emotionally again after his failed marriage. And Josie is not about to allow herself to fall in love with her fantasy cowboy and get her heart broken in two.

It's a good thing that the heart does not always listen to the voice of reason...

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**Sage Burnett**



**Siren Publishing, Inc.**

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# **Josie's Heartbreaker**

## ***Rodeo Cowboys: The Series, Book 3***

**By Sage Burnett**

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### **Chapter One**

Chewing on her bottom lip, Josie Landford studied the rodeo program. "Number twenty-seven looks good in the steer wrestling."

"Josie, get a grip, for God's sakes." Carol thumbed her sunglasses down her nose, rolling her eyes.

Josie ignored her friend and marked a red X by number twenty-seven. "Rex West. He's from here. Now, that's convenient."

Carol pushed her glasses back up. "You just can't pick a cowboy from a roster for your so-called plan."

Still studying the program in hopes of finding another likely candidate, Josie said, "I want to know why not. I'm finally free of a twenty-year oppressive marriage. Plus, my son's in college halfway across the country, which basically leaves me footloose and fancy free."

"Dean and your ex have nothing to do with this. You can't saunter up to a man and tell him," Carol lowered her voice, "you want to do the nasty with him."

The crowd in the rodeo stands cheered as the young cowboy riding the bull stayed on the entire eight seconds.

“Why not? Times are changing. I’m hoping he’ll be flattered. You know what part of the anatomy a man thinks with.”

“Are you going to run out in the arena and wrestle the steer away from him?”

“Ha, ha. I’ll have to catch up with him after he’s done competing. I’ll play it cool and coy.”

“What if he’s married?”

“Good point. I need a couple of back-up cowboys.” Looking at the program again, Josie searched the events and lists of names. With her pencil, she marked off two more possibilities, both steer wrestlers. “We have to sit through the saddle bronc riding before the steer wrestling starts.”

“Everybody has fantasies,” Carol twisted off the cap of her water bottle and took a drink, “but it doesn’t mean we should act on them.”

Josie glanced at her friend, who had short blonde hair, pale blue eyes, and long, slim legs, which had turned the color of a lobster from the burning August sun. “Did you use sun block?” When Carol nodded, Josie continued, “It must not be a high enough SPF because your legs are turning red. That’s why I wore jeans.”

“When you work in an office all day, getting a little burn feels good.”

“Now, back to my fantasies.” Josie turned on the bench and scrunched her knees against Carol’s thigh. “It has always been a dream of mine to have hot, raunchy sex with a cowboy.”

“Shhh,” Carol scolded. “There are kids around us.”

Leaning forward, Josie whispered, “I’m finding me a cowboy today. And in the very near future, I’m having scorching—I mean, *scorching*—sex with him.”

“You’re hopeless.”

“Not hopeless. Persistent.”

“I think this obsession of yours comes from living in a big city all your life. I mean, a cowboy is just a cowboy.”



Josie fanned the program in front of her face. The day was hot, promising to get even hotter as the afternoon wore on. “Not in my fantasies. You try being married to an anal-retentive stockbroker for twenty years. I need a man as wild as a cougar.”

“We call them mountain lions in Montana.”

“Okay, okay, I’m learning.”

Impatience threaded through her as Josie squirmed on the hard bleacher seat, waiting for the saddle bronc competition to end. Rex West was the second cowboy up in steer wrestling. She liked the sound of his name since she’d never known a man with that name before.

The first steer wrestler was a young guy who wrestled the white-face yearling down in six seconds flat. Impressed by the young man’s skills, she was positive her cowboy would beat the young stud.

*What if number twenty-seven is a young stud, too?* She wasn’t into robbing the cradle. She wanted a hunky cowboy her own age—a few years either way, she could handle. When Rex West raced out of the chute on a rich, brown Quarter horse, her breath caught. His shoulders were as wide as the Rocky Mountains, and he was tall. Oh, she definitely liked tall.

Leaping off his gorgeous steed, he wrestled the bawling animal down to the ground in six seconds. Her potential fantasy cowboy got to his feet and turned in her direction, causing her breath to catch again. His face was rugged from the harsh Montana elements, and his scowl was somehow quite sexy. On the plus side, he was the target age.

Fanning herself again with her program, Josie elbowed Carol in the ribs. “He’s the one.”

“Right age, good body, and he wears his jeans well. But at his age, he’s probably married.”

Josie smacked Carol on her arm with the program. “Will you just stop? Come on, let’s go.”

“I want to watch the rest of the rodeo.”

“Don’t mess with ground control. I’m ready to launch.” Grabbing Carol’s hand, Josie tugged her to her feet. “You said you were bored with rodeos. Joe drags you to them all the time.”

“For the record, I don’t like being a part of your little scheme.” Carol followed Josie down the steps of the bleachers. “I mean, this is so high school, and it’s been years since I graduated.”

“That’s why it’s fun. Come on. Get the lead out.”

Ignoring Carol’s grumbling behind her, Josie bullied her way through the crowd. When she exited the grandstands, luck was on her side. Rex West was leading his horse somewhere. She wasn’t sure where. He was tall, rangy, and oozing manly sex appeal.

She hurried to catch up with him. “Pardon me.”

He stopped and glanced over his shoulder at her. Josie flashed him her brightest smile. His horse whinnied and backed up a few steps.

“Hi.” She smiled at him again. Up close and personal, the man was delicious. With lines etched around his caramel-colored eyes, he was even more rugged in person. His thick, black eyebrows were now raised as he stared at her intensely.

“I just wanted to tell you how much I loved your wrestling that big old steer down to the ground.”

“Excuse me?” His voice had the bite of ass-kicking whiskey.

“This is my first rodeo, and it’s so exciting.”

He scratched the back of his neck, looking slightly confused even as he continued to stare at her. “Your first rodeo?”

She nodded. “I moved here recently from Portland, Oregon.”

“They have rodeos in Oregon.”

“Oh, I’m sure they do. I just never had the opportunity to attend one.” Her anal ex wasn’t into rodeos. “By the way, I’m Josie Landford.” She held out her hand.

He studied it for a moment before he shook her hand.

Pings of electricity shot through her at the feel of his large, rough hand. Oh, she was having visions of what those big hands could do to her. *No wedding ring*. If she had spotted a ring, she would have turned and sashayed off.

“Rex West.”

He held her hand a tad too long, which she took as a good sign. “How long have you been steer wrestling?” Visions of wrestling with him scrolled through her mind.

One corner of his lip twitched up. “Since I was old enough to catch one.”

She laughed.

From under the brim of his cocoa-brown cowboy hat, he held her eyes for a few sizzling seconds. "Pleasure to meet you, ma'am."

A man of few words. "It was so nice to meet you, Rex. I hope you don't mind if I call you Rex. I mean, we just met and all." She paused, scrambling to keep their meeting extended. "And you can call me Josie. Actually, it's short for Josephine."

Both corners of his lips curled up this time. "Josie." He nodded.

"Your horse is absolutely gorgeous." She narrowed her eyes and looked under the rump of the muscular horse. "What's his name?"

"Max."

"Now, that's a nice, masculine name." She pushed the ribbon-thin strap of her black top over her shoulder and caught him watching her. Definite interest. It was in his eyes. Josie dug around in her purse and pulled out her business card, then held it out to him.

He studied her card, frowning. "Sorry. I'm not interested in selling my ranch."

"Heavens, no. I don't want your ranch." *I want your body.* She moved up close to him. Her breast 'accidentally' brushed against his arm. Their eyes caught for one scorching moment. "You see," she pointed at her business card, "this has all my numbers on it. Work, home, cell. You can ignore the part that I sell real estate."

His frown deepened. "If you don't mind my asking, ma'am, why do I need your card?"

Under all that cowboy masculinity, the man couldn't be dense. "Just in case you'd like to call me."

He stared down at the card for a second, eyebrows scrunching together, before he looked back at her, a touch of confusion and interest in his eyes. "Well, thanks." He stuffed her business card into the back pocket of his jeans.

When he turned to lead his horse away, Josie kicked her common sense out the back door. Her coy seduction technique had clearly hit a bump in the road. "I'm just going to be honest here." She hurried and caught up with him.

Man and horse stopped walking. "Honest about what?"

“Will you have an affair with me?” It was out. Her secret was out. She was sure her cheeks matched the color of her hair.

He paused, slanting her a look. “Are you for real?”

She held up her hands. “Do I look real?”

He turned to face her, his eyes cruising down to her toes and slowly back up to her face. “Yeah. You look real, that’s for damn sure.”

His rich, brown eyes gleamed with interest, which sent a thrill sailing through her. “See, you’re not having some cockeyed dream.”

One corner of his lip curled up. “I’ll take your word for it.”

“You must be used to women coming on to you all the time.”

“Uh...huh.”

“Well, okay, then. You have my card. Of course, you need some time to think about it. Most men wouldn’t, but I do respect you not jumping in head-first.”

“Do you do this all the time?”

She waved her hand in front of her. “Never. This is the first time I’ve been so bold.” He kept staring at her. She wondered if he thought she was crazy. “Call me. We can talk.” Josie started backing up. “I’m a great cook. I bet you’re a meat-and-potatoes man. See you later.” She spun around and slammed into Carol. “Ohmigod, get me out of here.”

Carol grabbed her arm. “What the hell happened to coy? I thought you were going to act coy. You came onto him like a steam roller.”

Josie covered her face with her hands. “Oh, God. I can’t believe I was so brazen. He probably thought I’m as easy as frozen dinners. Just pop one in the microwave, and it’s ready in a flash.”

Carol glanced over her shoulder. “Good sign. I caught him watching you. Your butt. He was definitely staring at your butt.”

“Really? Do you think he likes it?”

“He turned away when I caught him ogling you.”

“I need some water. I’m sooo overheated.”

Carol handed her a water bottle, which Josie guzzled down in ten seconds. Pouring a few drops on her hand, she rubbed the cool water on the back of her neck.

“He’s got your card. The ball’s in his court.”

“Please, don’t refer to balls. Remember, I’m overheated.”

## **Chapter Two**

A bottle of Miller's beer clutched in his hand, Rex sat on his porch, still slightly confused about meeting the woman at the rodeo earlier in the day. The last thing he'd expected was a sexy woman coming onto him. Hell, he'd been married for almost twenty years until his wife left him. As he lifted the bottle, Rex spotted Paul, his employee, sauntering toward the house.

"Hey, buddy." Paul came up the steps and parked himself in the lawn chair across from him. "How did it go at the rodeo today?"

Frowning, Rex drank more beer. "I didn't even place. Ended up sixth."

Paul stretched his long legs out in front of him and laced his hands behind his head. "A couple of weeks ago, you placed second."

"Yeah, that wasn't bad. Want a beer?"

Paul shook his head. "No, thanks. At least you got away from the ranch for the day."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"It means you don't have a life. At least doing a few rodeos gets you out among people."

His defenses prickling, Rex took another swig of beer. "I have friends."

"You don't have any lady friends."

The image of Josephine Landford immediately popped into his head. All shapely with bouncy, auburn hair and beautiful, bright blue eyes. However, any woman who would come onto a stranger was either nuts or desperate.

“One of these days, you need to get laid,” Paul said.

“I pay you to run the ranch, not give me advice on my love life.”

“You mean, lack of love life.”

Finishing off his beer, he glared at Paul, both his employee and friend.

“See any nice women today at the rodeo?”

Rex scowled. He had an urge to pitch the beer bottle at his friend, and damned if he knew why. Maybe his friend was right. He did need to get laid. Ever since meeting up with the auburn-haired woman, his hormones had roared to life. “As a matter of fact, I did.”

Paul’s bushy brown eyebrows shot up, disappearing under the brim of his red baseball cap. “No kidding? Did you get her number?”

“She came onto me like gangbusters. Gave me her business card.”

“I hoped to holy hell you didn’t toss it.”

After he’d arrived home, Rex had slipped her card into his desk drawer. Why, he wasn’t sure.

He didn’t answer, staring off at the cluster of barns and outbuildings on his ranch.

“Did you keep the lady’s card? What’s her name?”

“Doesn’t matter. I’m sure as hell not calling her. Men are supposed to make the first move.”

“In case you haven’t noticed, we’re driving automobiles instead of horses and buggies. Women are bolder these days. Personally, I like it. It takes some of the heat off us fellows.”

“She’s probably desperate to get married.”

“What does she do?”

“She sells real estate.”

Paul nodded. “Good money in real estate these days. Does real estate lady have a name?”

“You’re worse than a damned dog with a bone. Josephine Landford. She wants to be called Josie.”

“Nice name. Old-fashioned sounding.”

Her name might be old-fashioned, but the woman sure as hell wasn’t. “Like I said before, it doesn’t matter. I’m not calling her.”

Paul stood up. “I’m going into town. Need anything?”

Rex shook his head. What he needed was to get Josephine Landford out of his mind. Her image kept wiggling into his thoughts. Watching her walk away, her shapely butt in snug jeans, had given him a damn hard-on. Thinking about her now had the same affect on him.

“Damn,” he muttered.

\* \* \* \*

Josie smiled at the young couple as they got into their car. A good feeling filled her as she walked inside to her office. They’d loved the little starter house she’d just shown them in Kalispell and had assured her once they got their finances in order, they would be in touch. Inside, she waved at Allison, the receptionist, who was talking on the phone, and headed for her office to gather up her things.

As Josie reached for her briefcase, her cell phone rang. Grabbing her purse off her desk, she rummaged around in it for her phone. “Hello.”

She frowned, listening to the silence at the other end.

“Ah...Josephine.”

Oh, she recognized that manly voice—she’d had fantasies of that voice whispering sexy words into her ear. Why was he referring to her as Josephine? “Who may I ask is calling?” She didn’t want to sound too eager even though her pulse had picked up speed.

“Rex West.”

Her heart skipped at least three healthy beats. “Ah...Rex. How are you?” She’d given up hope he would ever call. It had been almost two weeks since she’d collared him at the rodeo, and it was clear he was still a man of few words.



"No complaints. And you?"

She rolled her eyes and smiled even though he couldn't see her. "That's good to hear. I'm great. I've never been better." *Liar*. Disappointment and embarrassment had hounded her the last couple of weeks. She'd been positive she'd never hear from him again.

"I thought maybe I could take you out to dinner."

Angling around her desk, she plopped down on her chair. "Dinner?" She couldn't remember if dinner was part of her scheme. Hot and wild sex topped her agenda. Maybe a few candles and a trail of red rose petals leading to her bedroom. A little romance wouldn't hurt. But dinner? That moved it into the dating category. Since her divorce, Josie had sworn off marriage, and at this point in her life, she didn't want or need a commitment. The only thing she wanted was a hot, steamy affair.

"Dinner would be lovely, but how about this? You drop by my place, and we can have a few glasses of wine and some hors d'oeuvres."

"I don't drink wine or eat hors d'oeuvres."

*Oh, dear*. "How about a few cold beers and some cheese puffs, then?"

"I asked you to dinner, Josephine."

He wanted to do dinner. They would need fuel in their bodies. "Okay. Why don't I cook?"

"I'm buying dinner. If you don't want to go, just say so."

She hoped she hadn't bruised his male ego. This was her one shot at fulfilling her fantasy. "Dinner it is. When and where?"

"Tomorrow night. And I *will* pick you up."

*Masterful*. Masterful could be good. "Here's my address." Josie recited it to him. "How should I dress?"

"I don't know. How do you usually dress for going out to dinner?"

So he wasn't an urban cowboy but the real thing. "I'll wing it, then."

"You do that. I'll pick you up at six."

"Til then..."

\* \* \* \*

Cursing himself seven ways to Sunday, Rex slammed the phone down in his office.

Wine and hors d'oeuvres. What was wrong with his taking her out to dinner? He'd sealed his fate. One dinner with her, and that would be the end. On the other hand, a romp in her bed would be damned nice.

Imagining her naked brought his cock to life. Struggling to ignore his hard-on, he figured it would at least get Paul off his back about getting involved with a woman. And his kids, too. They kept badgering him to get married again. What did it matter to them? His two daughters had their own lives now.

Leaning back in his chair, Rex ruminated on his life. He and Cindy had been high school sweethearts. A year after graduating, they'd gotten married. Kelly was born a year later, and the following year, they'd had Amanda. For years, the two of them had seemed happy. He supposed he could only speak for himself. Cindy wanted to see the world and be her own person. They had drifted apart, and after the divorce, she moved to Denver and took accounting classes. Rex had not seen her since then.

"Shit." Shoving his chair back, he stood up and stomped out of his office. He had work to do.

\* \* \* \*

Josie paced across her living room. Her fantasy, ready to come true, had her nerves tied up in knots. Maybe Rex wasn't her type. She had no complaints about his physical attributes, though. Did he need to be her type for a scorching affair? He came across as a little on the uptight side. Her fantasy cowboy would take her in the barn on a giant pile of straw, not even bothering to pull off his dusty, scuffed boots. Two people joining in wanton lust. A sexual attraction only. No strings attached. Just raw, animal sex.

The doorbell rang, jolting her out of her fantasy. She skimmed her hands over her form-fitting, sleeveless black dress that hit two inches above her knees. Drawing in a calming breath, she walked to the door and opened it.

One look at him, and her hormones charged over the mountain and out of sight. He was dressed in black jeans and a blue-and-black western shirt. No hat. His short, black hair was neat and shining.

“Hi,” she said.

His eyes raked over her in one quick sweep, making her senses tingle. “Hello, Josephine.”

Hand on the doorknob, she tilted her head. “Why are you calling me Josephine and not Josie?”

A hint of amusement gleamed in his eyes. “Because it’s your name, and I like the sound of it.”

“Oh.” The look in those brown eyes had her forgiving him for that little idiosyncrasy of his.

Staring at her tight, little black dress, Rex cleared his throat. “Are you ready to go?”

She’d always been a sucker for brown eyes. Maybe she should have picked a blue or green eyed guy because this man had killer eyes. “I just have to get my purse.”

After she fetched her purse and keys, she sashayed back over to him. His eyes seemed to drink her up. Heat ballooned inside her body. One dinner, and that was it. Why was she having second thoughts? Sex was the focal point of her fantasy, and she intended on staying focused.

After she locked the door, Rex held his arm out so she could tuck her hand inside of his. Escorting her to his big, black, four-wheel-drive Dodge truck, Josie felt slightly shell-shocked. This guy was a real gentleman. God, she’d believed gentlemen had vanished sometime back in the sixties, never to be seen again. Certainly not in her lifetime.

After he opened the passenger door for her, she realized there was a slight problem with her tight dress. “Hmmm...”

“Aren’t you going to get in?”

“Your truck is pretty high.”

His brows puckered together. “It’s a standard-size truck.”

It was clear he didn't grasp the concept of tight little dresses and big trucks. "Oh, hell." Josie hiked up her dress and saw how his eyes gleamed as he stared at her legs. He touched her back lightly to steady her, and a tingle shot through her body. She climbed into the truck none too gracefully. Tilting her head, she smiled at him. "Mission accomplished."

Her dress was still pushed way up her thighs.

Eyes fixated on her bare thighs, he said, "Maybe you should change your dress."

Heat roiled low in her tummy. "I'm in now."

His eyes flooded with heat. "But you have to get out and back in again."

"If I did it once, I can do it again with your help."

Watching him angle around the front of his truck, she noted the hard set of his jaw and wondered if another part of him was hard.

He climbed inside his truck, and his gaze rested on her thighs again. She quickly tugged down her dress.

He started his truck and eased away from the curb, staring straight ahead.

"By the way, where are we going for dinner?"

"The Lone Steer," he said without looking at her.

She was familiar with The Lone Steer. It was one of the fanciest restaurants in Kalispell. She gave him points for his choice.

"Reservations are at six-thirty." Slanting her a look, he said, "You're not one of those women who picks at her food to keep her figure, are you?"

"I promise to lick my plate clean."

Before he looked away, she saw the hint of grin on his face. Maybe he wasn't as uptight as she first believed. They arrived at The Lone Steer a few minutes later.

After she pulled off her heels, she opened the door and smacked him in the chest—which, of course, probably didn't hurt him one bit, since his chest was so broad and muscular.

"I'm supposed to do that."

"What? Smack yourself in the chest with the door?"

His eyes twinkled with amusement as she handed him her heels. Lucky for her, she'd decided against panty hose. Concrete had a nasty way of snagging nylons.

Rex handed her heels back to her. She took them, wondering what kind of game they were playing.

“Put your shoes back on,” he said.

“I need to jump out. Have you ever jumped in heels? It’s not good on the ankles.”

“Just put your damn shoes back on. I’ll get you out of my truck.”

A split second after she had her heels on, he reached inside his truck and lifted her out. One hand grazed her breast while the other hand rode dangerously high on the back of her bare thighs. She stared at his rugged profile, heat gathering between her legs.

His eyes locked on hers. Her body pressed against his, he slowly lowered her to the concrete. After her feet touched ground, she found herself hanging onto his shirt for support. Her legs reminded her of a wobbly, newborn colt. His hands lingered on her lower back, above her butt. The look in his eyes alone raised the heat level inside of her, while the feel of his big hands holding her tight sent a flush rushing through her.

Before he stepped back, he skimmed his fingers over her hair and then dropped his hand on the top of the door, still staring at her. Josie scooted out of the way, avoiding his gaze and wishing she had a fan to cool herself down. They were quiet as they walked toward the restaurant entrance. Emotions swished and swayed inside of her when she thought about the gentle caress of his hand across her hair. She’d dangled the bait, and he’d grabbed onto the hook. Struggling to ignore her emotions, she reminded herself this was about sex and only sex.

Inside the restaurant, she pushed aside those unwelcome emotions as the hostess led them to their table next to a window.

The view of the northern Rockies was spectacular. Only a few of the highest peaks were covered with snow.

She pretended a keen interest in the menu, but curiosity got the best of her. Peeking over the top of it, she caught him watching her.

The waitress appeared with water glasses. “Would you folks like a drink before dinner?”

“I’ll have a rum and Coke, please.” She needed a strong drink to calm her nerves.

Rex ordered a bottle of beer.

“They have delicious food here,” she said.

He nodded.

“You’re not much of a talker, are you?”

“That depends.”

Dropping her elbows on the table edge, she leaned forward. When she was nervous, she talked with the best of them. “So, tell me. Why did you decide to call me?”

“You were pretty damned forward about your intentions at the rodeo.”

“Me? Forward?”

The waitress returned with their drinks before taking their orders.

While she sipped her rum and Coke, Josie watched him take a swig of beer. “You didn’t answer my question. Do you think I’m forward?”

“You said you wanted to have an affair.”

The embarrassment of her behavior still lingered. “I think I had a mild heat stroke.”

That statement actually produced a grin from him, which caused a mild flutter in her tummy. “It’s true,” she continued. “I don’t know what came over me.”

“I think you’re the type of woman who knows what she wants and goes after it.”

She sipped her drink before answering. “Is that a bad thing?”

Rex raised a shoulder and swigged more of his beer. “Depends on what side of the fence you’re sitting on.”

The glass almost to her lips, she paused. “Meaning?”

“Meaning, it depends.”

“Is that some kind of cryptic answer?”

The waitress returned again with a basket of rolls and their dinner salads. It was clear he wasn’t about to elaborate any further. They kept stealing glances at each other as they ate their salads. Finally, their dinner arrived. Usually, Josie had a healthy appetite. However, sitting across from Rex tonight, aware of his every move, the delicious food didn’t hold much appeal. Remembering her promise to lick her plate clean, she concentrated on eating.

A young man pushed a dessert cart next to their table. “We have some delicious, decadent desserts tonight.” The waiter turned to her first.

“I’ll just take a fork so I can share his.”

The young man grinned at her while Rex's eyebrows raised a fraction.

"I'll have the apple pie," he said.

The waiter lifted a plate with a large slab of pie on it and placed it in front of him.

"Would you like whipped cream?"

"Oh, definitely," she answered for him.

The waiter spooned an extra helping of the fluffy topping onto the pie and held a clean fork out to her. "Can I get you anything else?"

"No, thank you."

"This is fine," Rex said.

"That pie looks yummy." Sweets, she could always eat.

"I know this will sound like a stupid question to you, but why didn't you order your own dessert?"

Her fork hovered near the slice of pie. "It's the in-thing these days. Couples share desserts. Not that we're a couple or anything. Besides, I only want a few bites. I couldn't eat a whole dessert by myself. I was hoping you would have ordered the cheesecake, but apple pie will do." She cut off a small wedge of pie and ate the bite.

"Why in the hell didn't you say you wanted the cheesecake?"

"Because you wanted the apple pie." She pointed her fork at him. "I had a feeling you would go with apple pie. Fits your profile."

Rex shoved a large bite of pie into his mouth and finished chewing before he asked, "What exactly is my profile?"

"Mom, apple pie, Sunday baseball games, potlucks at the neighbors." She sliced off another bite of pie.

"So what's wrong with potlucks at the neighbors, baseball games, and whatever else you said?"

"Those activities are very wholesome."

"Maybe I like wholesome." Skewering her with a look, he shoved another bite of pie into his mouth.

Most friends of Jack, her ex-husband, had been on the snooty side. Lots of money, country clubs, fancy houses. "Maybe I like wholesome, too."

His expression said he didn't believe her.

“I’m serious.”

“Josephine, you don’t come across as wholesome.”

Well...she certainly hadn’t been born yesterday, and her brazen come-on to him at the rodeo had been slightly out of character for her. “You mean because I’m forward.”

He pushed the plate across the table, offering her the last bite. For some screwball reason, that did things to her heart.

She shook her head. “I’m stuffed. I couldn’t eat another bite.”

“You’re sure? So we don’t end up having a duel with our forks?”

She laughed, leaned toward him, and smiled. “You do have a sense of humor.”

“There’s lots of things you don’t know about me.”

Oh, and she was dying to find out.



### **Chapter Three**

“You don’t have to do this.”

“You’re not jumping out of my truck with bare feet.”

This time, Josie circled her arms around his neck when he lifted her out of his truck. She landed on the ground with a slight thump, his hands resting on her hips.

“Ah...thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

Anticipation rolled through her as he lowered his head, and when his lips touched hers, tasting of apple pie and beer, luscious waves of heat washed through her. Her fingers clutched his shirtfront as he slanted his head, coaxing open her lips. Sighing in pleasure, she let him explore her, feeling every nerve ending in her body blossoming to life. When he ended the kiss, a sense of disappointment trickled through her. His brown eyes smoldered as he looked at her.

Slightly flustered and overheated at the same time, she dug in her purse for her keys. “Would you like some coffee?”

“Sure. Why not?”

Overheated, she understood, but feeling flustered baffled her as they walked into the house. Kicking off her heels on her way to the kitchen, she struggled to pull herself together. Her fantasy was minutes away from coming true, and she was so nervous she

could barely walk. She tossed her purse and keys on the counter. "Sit down and make yourself comfortable."

Rex pulled out a chair from under her round, walnut antique table while she started the coffee.

"Let's see, now...you like cream in your coffee."

He drummed his fingers on the table. "Yeah, I do."

She walked to the fridge and snagged a carton of cream off the shelf. Padding back to the counter, she caught him watching her. His presence in her kitchen, not to mention their kiss, was hard to ignore as she made the coffee. She glanced over her shoulder and saw he was still watching her. Their eyes locked for a moment before she turned away from him.

She carried the mugs over to the table and sat down across from him. "Oops. Forgot the cream." She jumped up and hurried over to the counter to grab it, feeling more skittish than ever.

Rex was still drumming his fingers on the table as she set the cream and a spoon in front of him. She sat down again.

"Do we really need coffee?" His mug sat untouched in front of him.

"You said you'd like some."

"Why are you acting coy all of a sudden?"

Had she really come across as the easiest woman in the county that day at the rodeo? "I think we need to get to know each other."

"We could do that in bed."

Grabbing the spoon and carton of cream out from under Rex, she dosed her coffee, which made no sense whatsoever, because she drank hers black.

"You asked me if I wanted to have an affair," he reminded her.

*Guilty as charged.* "True, I did, but I don't see why we can't get to know each other a little better."

"Having second thoughts, Josephine?"

Second thoughts was putting it mildly. Confusion snaked through her. Part of her wanted to jump his manly bones, and the other part of her was so nervous that she was

not sure if she could go through this. Hell of a time to climb up on the fence and wonder which direction to take.

Not knowing how to answer him, she changed the subject. "I'm divorced, and I have one son, Dean. He's in Chicago studying to be a doctor." She watched surprise flicker across his face. "Believe it or not, I spawned a very intelligent, responsible son."

He stared past her shoulder for a couple of seconds before he looked back at her. "You must be proud of him."

"Oodles."

"Oodles?"

"You know. Slang."

"I know what it means. You have an unusual way of expressing yourself."

"Is that a compliment?"

"I think so. If you're looking for compliments, you're a damned attractive woman."

"Oh. Um...thanks." His words sent a flush to warm her face.

Rex held her gaze. Surprised at herself, she glanced away first and took two sips of coffee to fortify herself before locking eyes with him. She was losing her footing with him, and fast. "Why don't we cut through all the B.S. and get down to the nitty gritty?" When he started to speak, she held up a hand to stop him. "Please don't tell me I'm being forward again."

His eyes narrowed slightly, but the heat of his gaze seared clear down to her black bikini panties.

He drummed his fingers on the table again and then said, "Do you still want to have an affair with me?"

"Well...um...I..."

One dark eyebrow lifted. "You mean I actually made you speechless?"

"It doesn't happen often."

"Why doesn't that surprise me?"

For an electrifying moment, she gazed into his eyes and found herself floundering. "Do *you* still want to have an affair with me?"

"Yeah."

“You seemed uncertain at first. So, what changed your mind?”

“That sexy little impractical dress you’re wearing.”

*The moment of truth.* Heart racing, she considered her options. She’d come onto this cowboy to fulfill a persistent fantasy. Now, this cowboy was coming onto her.

“First, we need some ground rules.” A hint of desperation trickled through her. She needed time to think, which she had never actually thought this through before. In all of her fantasies, she’d never gotten past the sex part. There had to be more to this than doing the tango with her dream cowboy.

“Ground rules?”

“Yeah, ground rules. We can’t just go at it all haywire.”

“Sex is pretty straightforward in my book.”

Josie held up a finger. “Number one. I simply abhor one-night stands.” Since she didn’t know the exact timetable for an affair, she figured that was a reasonable statement.

Rex crossed his arms over chest, leaning back against his chair. “Go on.”

“Number two. No strings attached.”

He nodded.

“Number three.” What in the hell was number three? Winging ground rules for an affair was harder than she’d first thought. She waved her hand in front of her. “You need to participate. You pick number three.”

“Me?” He thumped a finger against his chest. “These are your rules. Why bother? We could be in bed right now. Naked.”

The words “bed” and “naked” sent a delicious thrill through her. Why was she stalling? She wanted this badly, but she was so nervous. “Like I said, you need to participate.”

“Christ, Josephine. Can’t we just go to bed?”

“We can...eventually, once we’ve ironed out all the details.”

“Here’s a rule. One night a week.”

“Are you going to spend the night?”

“Enough.” He stood up so fast, the chair toppled over behind him. “Are we starting our affair tonight, or do you want to back out?”

Wide-eyed, she stared up at him. Anger blazed in his eyes.

"There's no reason to get all agitated."

"You agitated me right from the get-go with that skimpy black dress of yours."

"It is not skimpy," she chattered on. "All my vital parts are covered."

He rounded the table and stood over her. "Correction. All your vital parts are emphasized."

"Oh."

He snagged her hand off the table and hauled her to her feet. "Where's your bedroom?"

"I was kind of hoping you would take me on the table."

"I'll find it on my own." Dragging her behind him, he marched through the house.

Josie struggled to keep up with his long strides, moist heat dampening her panties. A wild feeling of trepidation as well as excitement swept through her that she had just created a monster.

He shouldered open the first door in the hallway. "Guest bedroom," she murmured behind him.

Stomping down the hallway, he stopped at the next door. "My office." She heard him groan. At least, it sounded like a groan to her. "Bathroom," she said when he paused at the next door.

At the end of the hallway, he swung open the door to her bedroom and paused. She hoped he liked girly-girl bedrooms because hers would win first place in a home decorating contest. Anything and everything was done in various shades of pink.

He marched her over to the bed, then turned to face her. "Are you sure this is what you want? Tell me now, because once I start, I'm not stopping."

His brown eyes blazed with anger and lust, while his expression seemed carved out of stone.

"Did my ground rules tick you off?"

"No. Your dress is driving me crazy. I want to see and touch what's under it."

Sultry sensations hummed inside of her body. The man of few words certainly had a way with them. "I think you need to kiss me," she whispered.

"You really are something else." He gathered her into his arms and pressed her so tight against him, his hard-on poked against her tummy. Finally, he crushed his lips

against hers. She grabbed his shirt collar and tugged him closer. He groaned as he opened her lips, sliding his tongue into her mouth. Eyes closed, she savored the hot embers igniting into a full-blown fire. Inhaling his male scent, mixed with his piney aftershave, it whetted her appetite to taste more of him. All of him.

He broke the kiss, his breathing heavy, and nibbled the corner of her lip. "It has been a while. Since you're intent on getting into my pants, I wouldn't want to disappoint you."

Duration didn't matter to her at this point. The desire to be naked with him was more overwhelming than she had counted on. Her body burned with heat as he nibbled on her lips. Manly men usually had a hard time admitting something so personal. "In case you're wondering, I haven't been with another man since my divorce."

He framed her face with his hands and looked at her. "Ah...dammit. Tell me you're sure about this."

He was enough of a gentleman to offer her an out at the last minute, which made her heart melt. Not answering, she spun around. When his hands spread across her butt, her breathing grew shallow. One of his hands slid around to her front and covered her crotch as he fondled her with his palm.

"You do know you're driving me nuts." He trailed soft kisses along the side of her neck.

She closed her eyes and leaned her head against his shoulder, turning slightly so he could have full access to her neck. "Hmm," she whispered. He pressed more kisses against her skin as his big fingers moved the zipper down. Reaching up, she pulled the dress down over her shoulders, and then she slithered out of it, giving it a kick with her foot.

After he unclasped her black bra, he pushed the straps over her shoulders and dropped it at her feet. He cupped her breasts. Her breathing sped up as she looked down and watched him fondle her. When his fingers gently pinched her protruding nipples, she gasped again. The soft cotton of his shirt against her bare back excited her even more. Warm lips trailed down her neck to her shoulder.

Her fantasy was only beginning. His hands on her hips, he turned her to face him. A hint of wildness glowed in his eyes. She realized he was having a hard time controlling himself, so she unbuckled his belt and unzipped his jeans. "Hurry, take your shirt off."

With hot, hooded eyes, he stared at her. For a second or two, she lost herself in those big brown eyes. While he unbuttoned his shirt, she pushed his jeans and briefs around his ankles. He still had on his cowboy boots. *Oh, what the hell.* She straightened up, peeled off her black panties, and tossed them.

"I gotta get my goddamn boots off."

Before he could bend down, Josie pushed him on the bed and climbed on top of him, straddling his thighs. She ran her fingers through the sooty hair on his chest, looked at his broad, muscled shoulders, and simply savored the sight of him.

"Damn it, Josephine."

Her cowboy had a magnificent hard-on. Oh, how she wanted to wrap her lips around his penis and suck. *Next time. And by God, there will be a next time.* She scooted down just enough until the head nudged her pussy, lust exploding inside every single one of her nerve endings.

"Foreplay," he mumbled in a strained voice. "Ladies like fore—"

Mounting him, she put an end to his mumbling and took him into her body, reveling in the feel of him deep inside her. Josie reached for his hands as she moved up and down his cock. She gasped as he thrust hard into her. She pressed his hands against her breasts. His rough groans upped her need to please him, and she wriggled her hips up and down as he plunged himself deep and high into her. Mesmerized by his rugged face, she watched him grit his teeth, his eyes closed. His rugged face overcame with lust and sent tantalizing shivers through her.

He opened his eyes and looked into hers. "You're so damn hot. I'm ready to explode."

The burning look in his eyes was nearly her undoing. Bending over him, she placed her hands on each side of his head and kissed him, forcing his lips open. His tongue drove inside her. As their tongues danced together, Josie bordered the edge of her orgasm. Not only was her body inflamed, so were her senses. The feel of him plunging deeper into her had her wanting to scream out his name. She put his hands on her hips,

working back and forth over him. When he groaned and pulled out then thrust his cock back into her, hard and swift, the powerful intensity of her climax stunned her. Through a foggy, blissful haze, she felt him come inside her.

She melted against his strong body. An eerie feeling of contentment made itself at home in her as his arms circled around her, holding her tight. Their breathing lowered until all was quiet in her bedroom.



## **Chapter Four**

Her soft, pliant body melded to his. He'd gone a long time without a woman, but waiting for Josephine to come along had been worth it.

*No, it's just an affair.* He needed release like any other red-blooded man. That was why he was here at her house, in her bed, with her soft, shapely body draping over his.

When she lifted her head to look at him, a rosy glow painted her cheeks. The bouncy curls of her auburn hair were all askew, and her beautiful blue eyes were soft and dreamy. Rex struggled to shove aside the warm feeling that crept over him.

"Mmmm..." she murmured, skimming a gentle kiss across his lips.

His heart cinched tight with that sweet little kiss. When she smiled at him, he couldn't help himself. He grinned back at her.

She circled his lips with her fingertips. "You should grin more often, cowboy."

His grin faded when he considered their hasty affair. His gut warned him to get up and get the hell out of Josephine's bed and life. His traitorous body was already stirring with desire to have his cock inside her again.

Reaching up, she trailed her fingers across his forehead. "Now, you're frowning. You went from a cocky grin to a frown in less than five seconds. What gives?"

"Why do you ask so many damn questions?"

Her fingers stilled. "Why do you refuse to answer so many questions?"

Score one for her. "Let's set another ground rule."

This time, it was her turn to frown. "Okay. Throw it at me."

"No personal questions."

She laid her arms on his chest, quiet for a moment. "I agree with that, up to a point. I think we need to know a few things about each other. For safety reasons."

"We weren't thinking of safety a few minutes ago." He paused. "Are you going to get pregnant?"

"Heavens, no. My tubes were tied years ago. Okay, I'm assuming you're divorced, and I have a feeling you don't want to talk about it. I can live with that. You must have kids?"

"Two daughters, Kelly and Amanda. One lives in Denver. The other in Great Falls." He paused again and sighed. "That's all the children I want."

"I don't think I could be with a man who didn't like kids."

"I love my kids. And I thought this thing between us was all about the sex." No sooner had he said that than he saw her blue eyes flicker with a touch of pain. *Damn*. He didn't want to hurt her. Hell, he wasn't sure what he wanted from her, besides more hot sex. Things were already getting sticky between the two of them. The less they knew about each other, the better, since he wasn't looking to get married again.

She squirmed around on top of him, making his body ache more for her.

"It was my ex, Jack, who didn't want more children. Once he had his son, that was it. You know, I could have gotten pregnant again, but he obviously didn't trust me because he bought a five-year supply of condoms." She sighed, staring off into space for a few moments. "So, I had my tubes tied. Looking back on it, he should have gone under the knife, the bastard." She rolled off him. "Are you thirsty? I'm dying of thirst."

Before he could answer, she slid off the bed. His cock throbbed as he watched her walk to the closet. Her shapely ass, narrow waist, and nice, plump breasts made him hard again. She slipped on a short, silky-looking black robe.

Her lips curved into a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes. "Be right back."

Rex stacked his hands behind his head and stared up at the ceiling. The situation was convoluted, but he couldn't bring himself to leave her.

A few minutes later, she sauntered back into the bedroom, carrying two large glasses of ice water.

“There you go.”

Turning on his side, he took the glass from Josephine as she perched on the edge of the bed. “Thanks.”

The only sounds in the room were ice cubes clinking as they drank down their water.

“What do you do to your hair to make it bounce?” he asked.

Laughing, she tilted her head and looked at him.

“What’s so damn funny?”

“Surely, your wife did all kinds of mysterious, girly things to her hair.”

His mood souring, he swallowed the last of his water. He wasn’t interested in pursuing this line of conversation. He had accepted that Cindy was no longer a part of his life.

“I see I just committed a major faux pas. Sorry to bring up your wife.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Her blue eyes twinkled with devilment. “I could type up a list of rules and tape the paper above the bed.”

He had to smile at that. “Real funny.”

She scooted back on the bed, leaned against his thighs, and bobbed her bare feet up and down, her toenails colored with ruby-red polish. “Would politics be a safe subject?”

Talking was the last thing on his mind—he wanted to strip her of that sexy little robe.

“Probably not,” she said. “I bet you’re a die-hard Republican. The entire state is conservative.”

“You’re a Democrat?”

“Nope.” She sipped more water. “Independent.”

“Figures.”

“You have a problem with independent women?”

“I don’t have a problem with independent women.” He set his glass on the nightstand and rolled onto his back.

She eyed him over the rim of her glass. “*Au contraire*. I think you do.”

“You’re getting personal again.” But that didn’t bother him as much as he thought. He wanted to get personal all right, with her underneath him. A knot formed inside his gut, knowing once wouldn’t be enough with Josephine.

After she slid her water glass next to his, she stood and undid the sash of her robe, studying him from under lowered lashes. “We’ll get personal in another way.”

After the robe dropped to the floor, he grabbed her waist, tumbling her on top of him.

“Finally, we agree on something.” His hand slid between her silky legs while his lips captured hers.

\* \* \* \*

Arms crossed over her chest, Josie leaned against the window frame in her living room and watched Rex drive down the street. Why was uneasiness squirreling around inside of her tummy? And why did she feel off-balance? Her fantasy had been fulfilled with a cowboy. Twice last night, and once this morning. Spectacular didn’t begin to describe his skills in bed. The second time around, he’d definitely found his footing. A flush spread through her body when she remembered last night. She rubbed her clammy palms down her robe.

He might be slightly temperamental, but that was easy to overlook in lieu of the satisfaction she felt in his arms. Why did she always pick men tending toward anal-retentive? To be fair, he had loosened up, and that grin of his made her heart flutter and her blood warm each time he flashed it.

Her ex Jack had been a perfectionist. Their house always had to be spotless. When entertaining, the dinners were gourmet. Nothing else would do. Her cowboy didn’t strike her as a perfectionist. Perhaps he was just uptight by nature. Since he didn’t like talking about his divorce, she wondered if he was still pining away for his ex-wife.

With her luck, she was probably the rebound gal. Sighing, Josie wandered down to the bathroom.

Once fresh out of the shower, she dressed in black shorts and white tank top before heading for the kitchen. She nosed around in her fridge, deciding what to eat. Rex left without taking a shower, eating breakfast, or even taking a minute for a quick cup of coffee. Nothing like a fast getaway. It would have been nice to have cooked him breakfast. Uh, oh—where was she going with this?

Her doorbell chimed as Josie reached for a container of strawberry yogurt. She plucked a spoon out of the drawer, then hurried to answer the door.

“Anybody home?” Carol opened the door and walked inside.

“Just your resident lunatic.” Angling over to her navy blue sofa, Josie plopped down on it. “If you’re looking for coffee, I haven’t made any yet.”

Josie propped her bare feet on the coffee table, noticing she’d forgotten to shave her legs. She stared at her legs, frowning. That was not like her at all. She’d always figured she’d been a cat in a previous life because she was so meticulous about grooming herself.

Carol sat down in the recliner across from her. “If I need some, I’ll make it myself. You look a little droopy this morning. I do believe this is the first time in the six months I’ve known you that I’ve seen you without makeup.”

Josie lifted a shoulder. “It’s Sunday morning.”

Carol leaned back in the recliner and kicked off her sandals. “What’s up? I haven’t heard from you in days.”

“Let’s see now.” Pretending to concentrate on what she’d been doing the past few days, Josie ate a spoonful of yogurt. “I remember now. I went on a date with fantasy cowboy last night.”

Carol’s eyes widened in shock. “No kidding? I thought you wrote him off. When did you hear from him?”

“He called me Friday afternoon and invited me to dinner last night.” She dug her spoon into the yogurt carton again.

“Come on, girl. I have to know every last detail. Oh, oh, did he spend the night?”

Josie nodded.

Carol crossed her arms over her chest. "You fulfilled your fantasy."

There was no arguing that point. Physically, she felt quite satisfied, but emotionally was a different matter. Something nagged at the back of her mind.

Carol waggled her eyebrows. "Was he good?"

"I never kiss and tell."

"I'm your best friend. You have to tell me."

"Yes, he was good, but..."

"But what?"

Josie finished off her yogurt then dropped the empty carton and spoon on the end table next to the couch. She stretched her arms over her head. "There's something I can't quite put my finger on."

"A man is either good or he's not."

Rex was more than good. He knew how to please a woman. They appeared to be much more compatible in bed than out. "It doesn't have to do with the sex."

"That's what you wanted. Sex with a cowboy." Carol paused. "Am I missing something here?"

"He's kind of uptight. He doesn't want to talk about his divorce, and he has two grown daughters. One lives in Great Falls, and the other in Denver. That's all I could pry out of him."

"You think his divorce was recent?"

"Your guess is as good as mine."

"Was he uptight in bed?"

"Oh, no. Thank goodness, not at all."

"You're blushing. He's good in bed. That's what you wanted. A wild, hot fling with a cowboy. Are you going to see him again?"

"The plan is once a week."

"You two made a plan?"

"Kind of. I told him we needed some ground rules." Looking back on it, her sanity must have taken residence in someone else's brain at the time.

"I need some coffee." Carol got up. "You look like you could use some, too. It's obvious you didn't get enough sleep last night, but that can be a good thing."

Josie followed Carol into the kitchen. "What if I fall for him? I don't have the best sense where men are concerned."

Carol turned from the counter, a measuring scoop in her hand. "Don't tell me you fell in love with him after one night."

Josie sank down on a chair at the table. "No. I'm not that much of an airhead. At least, I hope not. What if I did fall in love with him?" That must be what kept nagging at the edge of her mind. There was a slim possibility she could fall in love. Which, of course, she hadn't considered when she'd concocted her far-fetched plan to have an affair with a cowboy.

Carol spun around to face her. "That's always a problem whenever you get involved with a man."

Propping her chin on her hands, Josie frowned. "I think it's the afterglow of lust making me think that. Like I said before, we get along better in bed than out of it."

A few minutes later, Carol brought two mugs over to the table.

"Thanks." Josie slid hers across the table and wrapped her fingers around the handle. "Maybe I'll call the whole thing off."

"Maybe fantasies should be left as fantasies."

"Don't you dare say I-told-you-so."

\* \* \* \*

As Rex toweled himself dry after the long hot shower, he fought to ignore his hard-on. His cock had swelled at the sight of Josephine in her little black dress last night, and he was still hard for her. He'd foolishly believed once he scrubbed her womanly scent off him, he'd be back to normal.

Dropping the damp towel, he stared down at his throbbing erection, cursing her and himself for his agony. All because she'd propositioned him at the rodeo. He felt like a first-class sucker.

Rex grabbed his razor off the counter to shave. No one held a gun to his head and forced him to call her. The first time he looked into her blue eyes, something had revved

to life inside of him. She'd surprised the hell out of him that day at the rodeo, but after considering her proposition, he figured what the hell.

"Goddammit!" The nick from the razor burned his jaw. He scowled at himself in the mirror, knowing he'd let his hormones run the show. He'd suppressed his manly urges for so damn long; he forgot what it was like to be with a woman. *Until last night.* Until Josephine had pushed him back on the bed and straddled him.

"Damn." Taking extra care not to cut himself again, he finished shaving. His stomach wailed in protest. She had offered to cook him breakfast, but he hightailed it out of there as fast as he could. He didn't want to think too deeply about why he did that.

After Rex dressed in clean jeans and a red tee shirt, he walked to his kitchen, planning on eating a solitary breakfast. No chatter from a nutty, sexy woman. No one eating off his plate. Yeah, that was the way he liked it. Rex fixed coffee and gathered up eggs and bacon from the refrigerator. Just as he sat down to eat, Paul shouldered open the back door.

"Where the hell have you been?" Paul didn't wait for answer. Instead, he went to the counter, poured himself some coffee, and carried it over to the table. "I was about ready to call the sheriff."

Rex didn't answer because he'd forgotten how sex could work up an appetite as he dug into his breakfast.

"I see you're fine." Paul tilted his head as he studied Rex.

Rex snatched a strip of bacon off his plate. "What?"

"You got some last night, didn't you?"

"You're full of it," Rex said as he bit off half the strip.

Paul grinned. "What was her name?" He snapped his fingers. "Josie, the hot real estate lady."

"So what if I did? You gonna make a federal case out of it?"

Paul shot him an innocent look. "Hell, no. Not me. All of have to say is, it's about damn time."

Rex snagged the last piece of bacon off his plate. "Shove it."

That comment had Paul roaring with laughter.



After Paul calmed down, he glanced over at Rex. "You're going to see her again, aren't you?"

With two fingers, Rex pushed his empty plate out of his way. "If I had any brains, I shouldn't."

"Is there something wrong with her?"

"She talks too much. She wears skimpy, impractical dresses. She couldn't even get into my truck without hitching her dress way up high." He paused and drank some coffee, remembering his first glimpse at her bare thighs and his reaction to those shapely curves. "This is the clincher. She set ground rules for our affair. And," he pointed a finger at Paul, "she's a damn Independent."

"Anything else you don't like about this woman?"

"Yeah, she does something with her hair. Her auburn curls are all bouncy. I don't know what the hell kind of perfume she wears." Whatever it was, it had driven him mad with desire.

"Uh...huh. Go on."

"Her whole damn bedroom is pink. She's even got tiny pink soaps in her bathroom, shaped like some flower or other." Even as he complained, Rex found he was not as bothered as he thought. Josephine's bedroom was all soft and feminine.

"Women usually like pink."

"And she kept asking me questions about my personal life." She had seemed genuinely interested. Not that it mattered, Rex reminded himself. They had agreed to an affair, not a lifetime commitment.

Paul picked up his mug. "People generally do that when they're getting to know each other."

"You want to know what's really odd?"

"What's that?"

"She wants me to call her Josie instead of Josephine." For some reason, he liked her given name. It was old-fashioned. God knew, she wasn't.

Paul rubbed his chin, lost in thought for a several seconds. "You're got it bad for her, buddy."

Rex wrestled back the urge to bust his best friend in the chops because Paul had just hit the nail on the head. He damn well might have the hots for her, but that didn't mean he was falling for her. Big difference between lust and love. A couple of weeks, maybe a month with her, and he planned to be out the door. No strings attached.

## **Chapter Five**

Josie combed her fingers through her hair and said, "If you take me out to dinner again..."

Why did he insist on dinner? Not that she minded dinner, but it did move their relationship into the dating category. This was her first *affair*, and the rules were still muddy for her.

"What is wrong with going out to dinner again?"

"It's too much like dating." Jumping up from the couch, Josie jogged into the kitchen, circled back around, and jogged back to the living room, struggling to work the nervous energy out of her body.

"Point taken," Rex said.

"Why don't you just come over Saturday night and," she paused for emphasis, "I promise not to serve wine and hors d'oeuvres."

"We have to eat."

Josie blew out a frustrated breath and tried power walking into the kitchen but could only swing one arm because of the phone pressing to her ear. Okay, so he had a point. She almost offered to cook, but that was too... romantic. They needed to stick to basics. Raw, animal sex. No emotions. No chance of getting hurt. "Why don't you pick up a pizza on the way over? Canadian bacon and pineapple is my favorite. If that's not yours, get whatever you want on your half."

She could have sworn he growled at his end of the line.

“You still there?”

“I’ll be there at seven with a damn pizza.”

The line went dead.

“Good.” They had ironed out the details for Saturday night. Josie sighed. Pizza was so unromantic.

\* \* \* \*

Saturday night, Josie dressed in her oldest pair of jeans and studied her butt in the bathroom mirror. The faded denim molded to her behind, while her pink tee shirt outlined her breasts nicely. Casual. It was all about casual. She must strive for casual. Josie spritzed her favorite perfume behind her ears before she fluffed her curls.

When the doorbell chimed, she glanced at the digital clock on her nightstand. Right on the money again. On bare feet, she padded down the hallway, wondering how he managed to arrive exactly on time.

As Josie reached for the doorknob, her heart did a swift little somersault. Not good. Her heart was supposed to steer clear of their little affair. It’s all about the sex. It’s all about sex.

She swung the door open just as the bell rang again.

Rex held a large pizza box in one hand and a six-pack of Miller beer in the other. There was something about a man in faded denim and a simple, short-sleeved black tee shirt. Damn him anyway for being so delectable. She reminded herself that was what she had yearned for. A hunky cowboy.

“Hi.”

His eyes cruised down and back up her body and lingered on her breasts for a couple of seconds. “Hello, Josephine.”

Ignoring the heat gathering low in her tummy at his look, she rolled her eyes, stepping back so he could come inside. “I think we need to set another rule.”

He glanced over his shoulder as he strode toward the kitchen, but his yummy butt distracted her. “What now?”

She followed him into the kitchen, where he dumped his cache on the kitchen table. "No pet names."

"Josephine is your name, so it can't be classified a pet name."

She jutted her hip out. "Josephine is calico dresses, corsets, and flour sacks."

A grin curled up his lips. "Which is the exact opposite of you." His eyes lingered on her breasts again.

Her nipples were probably hard as rocks from all the attention they were getting from him. "That's right."

"I like your name. Josephine."

The way he said her name...maybe she could get used to it.

Rex pulled a beer bottle from the carton. "Do you want a beer, or do you have some wine I can't even pronounce chilling in a bucket of ice somewhere?"

"Very funny."

"Let's eat your pizza before it gets cold."

Pulling a chair out from under the table, she made a face at him. "I can drink beer with the best of them." She reached across the table and snagged the bottle out of his hand.

"That wasn't very ladylike."

She snorted as she twisted off the cap and took a drink from the long-necked bottle. "Would you rather I drink the beer out of a glass? Would that be ladylike enough for you?"

He slanted her a look on his way to the fridge. "Now that you mention it, I think it would be."

As he slid the remainder of the beer in the fridge, she made another face at him.

When he wheeled around, she gave him her sweetest smile.

Locking eyes with her, he angled back to the table and lowered his tall body down to the chair across from her. "Why don't I trust that smile of yours?"

Her annoyance was short-lived when she looked into his brown eyes. Josie took another sip of the cold brew. It calmed her heart rate but not the fire crackling in her veins. "Maybe you're paranoid."

After he opened the pizza box, he pulled out a couple of slices and dropped them on the plates she'd set out before he arrived. He handed her a plate.

The gentlemanly part of Rex was definitely getting to her. "Thank you."

"I'm not paranoid." Catching her eye, he held her gaze.

Josie looked down at her slice of pizza. He'd bought her favorite. "Whatever you say."

His two slices of pizza disappeared in a flash. Josie found his hearty appetite seductive, in some insane kind of way.

Suddenly, Rex reached across the table and wiped the corner of her lips with his fingertip. The feel of his calloused finger zapped her with a swift jolt of electricity.

"Uh...you had some cheese on your lips."

Her hand hovered over the box, ready to grab another piece, but his gaze burned straight down to her bare feet.

"Um, thanks." She giggled like a nervous teenage girl. "It's kind of like having a milk mustache."

He chuckled. "Yeah."

Her nerves jangled. She needed to talk. "How was your week, dear?"

The look he shot her was both annoyed and amused. "Busy."

"Hmmm..." Josie trailed her fingers up and down the side of the beer bottle. "I sold a house this week, in case you're interested." Had she just crossed a line in the sand by sharing her accomplishment of the week?

His eyes focused directly on her. "Congratulations."

His expression was so sincere that she couldn't help not softening to him even more. "To a young couple. It's their first house. I did a good job negotiating with the owners so they could get a reasonable price on it. I'm not bragging, mind you. I like making those first-time sales for new buyers. The buyers are always so excited about their first house."

"So you're not just in it for the money?"

She kicked him gently in the shin under the table. "No, Mr. West, I'm not. I enjoy meeting new people. I didn't make a very big commission on this sale because the house was cheap as prices go these days."

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I got the impression you were ambitious."

Now, his expression was contrite. Crossing her arms over her chest, she nudged him playfully in the shin again. Why, she wasn't sure.

"I am sorry," he said.

"Apology accepted."

He stood up and walked over to the fridge. "Would you like another beer?"

"No, thanks." Why was it so important to her that he have a favorable impression of her? After all, their little tryst was all about sex, not about getting closer.

He brought a fresh bottle back to the table. "Kalispell and northwest Montana are booming. A helluva lot of realtors are in it for the money."

"Well..." Despite her resolution to keep her distance, Josie reached across the table and took the bottle out of his hand before he even got a chance to take a drink. He sat back, waiting for her to drink his beer, amusement sparking his eyes as he indulged her. Holding his gaze, she took a slow sip before handing it back to him. So much for her resolution not to get any closer. Looking at him made her damp. Focusing on their conversation, not her nether regions, she said, "As I mentioned before, I have to earn a living. I've been in the real estate business for ten years. That was my job back in Portland before I moved here. But—" she stabbed her thumb in the air, "I'm not high-pressure. I'm very laid back."

"Okay, I understand where you're coming from."

"Did I break one of our ground rules? Have I shared too much personal information about myself?"

Rex took his time answering. "I already knew what you did for a living. Now, I understand why you're doing it"

"Good." They stared at each other for a little while longer. Rex stood up and slowly set the beer bottle down on the table, and just as slowly walked to her side, never taking his eyes off her. Josie gulped, knowing he was a man on a mission.

"No more talking," he said softly.

Heat swept through her as he took her hands and hauled her to her feet. Before she could blink, his lips crushed against hers. She twined her arms around his neck and

melted against him. Under his jeans, he was hard as steel. Drawing his tongue deep into her mouth, she listened to her own crazy moans of pleasure.

\* \* \* \*

Rex thrust his tongue inside her mouth that tasted of beer, pineapple, and Josephine's own unique taste. Moaning against his lips, she grabbed onto his tee shirt.

He backed her against the table, then picked her up and sat her down on it.

She tore her lips from his and stared at him, her eyes blue eyes widening. "What is it?"

He pushed his hands under her shirt, then lowered them and kissed the silky skin above her jeans. Barely raising his head, he looked into her eyes. "Last week, you said you wanted to do it on the table. This week, I aim to accommodate you."

"Oh."

As he unzipped her jeans, his tongue followed the path of the zipper. When lacy pink panties filled his view, he tugged off her jeans in one quick sweep. He lifted her onto the table, laid her back, and bent over her, elbowing the pizza box and a beer bottle out of his way. The bottle hit the floor with a thud.

Josephine's arms clutched his neck, pulling him down for another kiss. Wedging her legs between his, Rex circled her lips with his tongue before entering her mouth. He fondled her breast, then broke the kiss and trailed kisses down her neck to the collar of her shirt. Her little moans and sighs of pleasure made him even hotter for her. After she ripped his shirt over his head, she reached for his belt buckle.

He covered her hands. "No."

Her eyes widened in surprise again.

Hooking his boot around the chair leg, he dragged the chair close to him and sat on it. Eyes focused on her flushed face, he peeled off her panties. "Lie back and let me pleasure you."

She gave him a hot, sultry look, then slowly lay back on the table. After he lifted her legs onto the table, he spread them wide. He ran his fingertips over her dark auburn



curls until his fingers found her clit. The moistness of her pussy made the blood pound inside his head.

He flicked the tip of his tongue over her clit, his cock responding with intense heat. He took his time licking her with slow, deliberate strokes, loving the feel of her pussy pressed against his face. Losing himself in her musky scent, his strokes broadened and deepened as her hips gyrated under him. When he slipped his middle finger inside of her, he heard her gasp. Pumping his finger in and out of her, his tongue swirled around her clit.

Her fingers clutched the sides of his head. His need to pleasure her shoved any gentleness aside. His finger roughly drove in and out of her while his tongue pushed harder and faster against her clit. Their labored breathing echoed in his head with each stroke and shove.

He pressed Josephine's pussy against his face so tight, he could barely breathe. Her body exploded in a convulsing orgasm as her squeals of release and pleasure filled his ears. The sounds she made pleased him, and he lapped at her hungrily.

Finally, he stood up and quickly unhooked his belt and kicked off his boots. His cock was greedy to be inside her wet pussy. He no sooner had his jeans off when Josephine slid off the table. She stripped her shirt and bra off, muddling his already cloudy brain. Her nipples were puckered tight, so he bent his head and drew one into his mouth. When he reached for her hips, she shoved at his chest and pushed him down on the chair.

He expected her to straddle him, so surprise shot through him when she knelt down in front of him. With a sexy, little smile lifting the corners of her mouth, she bent her head to his cock. He clenched his teeth when her tongue circled the head. Rex groaned and grabbed her shoulders. She trailed her tongue from the tip of his cock to the base before going back up and encircling the head with her lips. One soft hand gently fondled his balls as she pulled him deep into her throat.

With a groan, he let his head fall back, feeling the high-powered sensations flood his body. Her mouth tightened around him, pushing his control beyond reason. He framed her face with his hands and lifted her head. Before she could protest, he dragged her to her feet.

“Rex,” she murmured.

“I want to come inside your sweet pussy,” he growled out through clenched teeth. He laid her back on the table and rammed his cock inside of her so fast that his vision blurred momentarily. Still standing, he wrapped her legs around his hips. When she started to sit up, he gently pushed her back. “You’re beautiful. Let me look at you.”

Driving himself into the deepest part of her, his eyes savored the way her breasts jiggled and swayed as he pounded himself harder into her. He took her with a rough passion that shocked him. He listened to her gasps and moans as he pumped his cock swift and hard until she cried out. He gave an animalistic groan when he reached release and came inside her sweet body.

## **Chapter Six**

Rex rolled onto his side, needing to feel Josephine's shapely ass. His cock, which was stiff, rigid, and aching, needed her again. When his hand landed on the bed and didn't touch her body, he opened his eyes and he saw he was alone. He looked toward the bathroom off her bedroom. The door was open, and he didn't hear signs of her showering. "Shit."

One hand scrubbing down his face, he sat up. Her house was quiet. Where was she? Rex tossed the blankets aside, stood up, and glanced around the room in search of his clothes. They sat on a chair near her dresser. He vaguely remembered the mess they'd left her kitchen after their wild romp on the table.

Working to ignore his hard-on as he tugged on his jeans, Rex also fought to ignore the warm feeling in his heart where Josephine was concerned. *It's all about the sex.* After he zipped up his jeans, he went in search of her.

The aroma of fresh, hot coffee mingled with bacon frying drifted under his nose as he neared the kitchen. Josephine stood at the counter, her back to him, dressed in another pair of sinful, faded jeans that emphasized her shapely butt. And she had on some skimpy little sleeveless white top that showed bare skin above the waistband of her jeans. She was delectable.

"Why are you up?" he asked.

She spun around, holding a pancake flipper. "Good morning to you, too."

Still struggling to ignore his hard-on, he trudged over to her. When he was close enough, she handed him a mug of steamy coffee. He took it from her slowly. His eyes zeroed in on her perky nipples, standing at attention because she didn't have on a bra. She turned back to the counter, and he saw that the side view of her breast was equally enticing. He wanted to fondle and caress those plump breasts again. He'd pretty much forgotten what morning lovemaking was like until last Sunday. His dream about her last night added to his conflicting mood. Hell, he'd dreamed about her for the past week. Not liking that fact, an uneasy feeling settled inside his gut. He could not let himself become attached. He must not.

"Pancakes and bacon for breakfast. A manly breakfast," she said without turning around.

"Hmmmph."

Watching her prepare breakfast made that warm little feeling glow brighter in him. She looked sexy as hell flipping the pancakes. Her auburn hair was all bouncy as usual. He slunk over to the table, sat his butt down, and glared down at the steam rising from the mug.

A few minutes later, she slid a plate stacked with pancakes and bacon strips in front of him. "Thanks."

"You're welcome." She returned to the table with a plate for herself. "You're not hungry?"

Hungry for her, hot and naked underneath him, not for golden brown pancakes and crisp bacon just the way he liked it. He must not become more attached. "I'm hungry," he grumbled.

She sat down and passed the syrup bottle to him. He caught her hand and forced himself to simply hold it and not caress those slender fingers. "Why didn't you stay in bed?"

Something wasn't right when she refused to look him in the eye.

"I was wide awake. It was time to rise and shine."

He took the bottle from her, wondering what was on her mind. Knowing the unpredictable Josephine, it could be any number of things.

Rex wolfed down his breakfast, but not because he was starving. Concentrating on eating took his mind off his hard cock. She picked at her food, which wasn't like her, either. A bad feeling snaked through him. She was either having second thoughts about their affair, or she wanted more from him. Either possibility didn't sit well with him. He didn't want to become too involved. He could not give his heart again.

"You're a good cook."

"Um, thanks."

There sure as hell something was wrong. When a woman turned moody, things got sticky. The breakfast turned into a heavy load inside his gut. "Are you feeling okay?"

Her eyes widened. "I feel fine."

She was lying through her teeth.

"What's on your mind?"

"There's not a thing on my mind."

He could press, or he could retreat, and in the end, he took the easy way out. "I'll help you clean up. Then I have to get going." The hurt expression on her face had him wanting to hold her tight against him and comfort her, to assure her that things would work themselves out somehow. Gritting his teeth, he pushed back his chair.

"Don't worry about the mess," Josephine said quietly. "If you have things to do, you'd best be on your way."

\* \* \* \*

Josie moped for the better part of the day because her excursion down fantasy lane seemed to have backfired on her. Two nights with Rex and she was...she refused to finish that thought. No, she wouldn't go there. Out of bed, into the shower, and cooking breakfast while he slept. She couldn't have handled it any other way.

The sight of him in her kitchen this morning had her fidgeting on the couch. His short black hair sticking out in funny little spikes all over his head. His naked, muscled chest, and the huge bulge in his jeans. Not to mention his cautious, edgy attitude.

It appeared if he didn't get his morning love, it made him edgy, which in a way made him quite sexy to her.

She might as well be a trout dangling from some fisherman's line, the hook securely lodged in her mouth. Jumping up from the couch, Josie walked towards the kitchen then circled back around, having no idea where she was going or why.

*Shopping.* Shopping always took her mind off her problems. She gathered up her purse, cell phone, and keys and was inside her truck in less than two minutes. As she turned the ignition on, her phone rang. Figuring it was Carol, she answered, knowing her best friend would let her cry on her shoulder.

"Hello."

"Are you feeling better, Josephine?"

Just the sound of his voice sped up her heartbeat to an abnormal rate. "I am not feeling bad."

"This morning, you did."

"I feel great," she lied. "I was just heading out to go shopping."

"For groceries?"

Her plan was to shop for frivolous girly things that she didn't need or want. *Men!* "Not groceries. I need to pick up a few things."

There was a long pause before he asked, "Are we still on for next Saturday?"

Pausing for a moment, she tried to decipher the underlying tone of his voice. A touch of insecurity, maybe? No way. Not from her manly cowboy. "Why not?" Josie realized she possessed the backbone of a slug and slouched down in her seat.

\* \* \* \*

Rex stared at the phone like it was an alien, high tech object he didn't comprehend, then dropped it down in its cradle. *Women!* Instead of confronting the problem at her house this morning, he'd it out of there after breakfast. Something was bothering her. On the flip side, something was bothering him.

Why the hell had he called her? If he had any good, old-fashioned horse sense, he'd pick up the phone again and end their affair now. Soured on marriage, he wasn't about to get snared in that trap again.

When Rex walked out onto his porch, the high temperature of the late afternoon bogged him down as he headed toward the barns. The cloudless blue sky overhead did nothing to elevate his mood. He was a practical man by nature. So why had he gotten involved with an impractical woman like Josephine?

The barn smelled of horses, straw, and dry dust. Grabbing a pitchfork, Rex angled toward the horse stalls. As he mucked out the stalls, he wrestled with his emotions over their little affair.

Problem was, it wasn't little.

He'd called her on a whim, needing some satisfaction, and she satisfied him just fine. More than just fine. It was what came along with the sexual satisfaction. Restless nights while his waking thoughts consumed with Josephine. This insatiable need to be around her all the time. The coming week yawned in front of him. He cursed himself for wishing he was with her right now, wishing like hell he didn't have to wait a week to see her.

He swore to himself that he'd end it next week.

\* \* \* \*

Ice cubes clinked as Josie lifted the tall glass of lemonade. "I think I blew it, Carol."

Carol ate the last bite of her grilled chicken salad. "Is that why you wanted to meet me for lunch today?" Even without Josie mentioning his name, Carol seemed to know she was referring to Rex.

Josie glanced around the café, packed with the working lunch crowd. Two more days until she saw him again, and her nerves felt like they'd been fed through her office paper shredder. She nodded.

Carol dabbed her lips with her napkin. "You're either involved in an affair you want out of, or you want more from the affair." She studied Josie for a several moments. "Something tells me you want more."

Josie eyed her friend over the rim of her glass. "I blew it big time. I thought I could have a generic, lusty affair. Once I was satisfied, I would walk away and never look back. I would always have the delicious, sexy memories, though."

"Are you in love with him?"

Josie frowned and set her glass down. "I don't know."

"Come on. Women know when they're in love."

"Do you think it's just simple infatuation?"

Carol took a sip of water. "Not by the dreamy look in your eye whenever you say his name. Not to mention picking at your lunch. Ever since I've known you, you've always had a healthy appetite."

"I could be coming down with something."

"Yeah. You got bit by the love bug."

Josie closed her eyes for a moment and battled to get some control over her emotions. "He's definitely the strong, silent type, and he doesn't want to share much about his life. Sunday morning, he was really in a weird mood." She'd chalked his mood off to horniness, but maybe something else had been on his mind.

"Does he still have his lips zipped about his ex?"

Josie nodded.

"Some men just won't open up. It took years with Joe to get him to express his deepest emotions. For that matter, he's still a work in progress." Carol paused and tapped her fingernail against her water glass. "So, he was in a weird mood Sunday morning...that could mean he's fighting his feelings for you. He figured he'd have an affair, and that would be it. Slam, bam, thank you, ma'am."

"For all I know, that's what he wants. I mean, I'm the one that came onto him."

"True, but he definitely took the bait."

"I'm going to call it off this week."

"Say it like you mean it, Josie."

Sitting up straighter, Josie squared her shoulders. "I'm going to end it today. I have the afternoon off."

Carol's eyes widened. "Today? You don't even know where he lives."



"I know about where he lives. I looked up his address. I have some property listed in that area. Trust me, I'll find it."

Carol leaned forward. "Are you sure you want to do this? You've had this fantasy for years. Only two nights. I mean, not be crude or anything, but you might as well milk it for what's it worth."

She doubted Rex would call off the affair. Men's brains were stationed in a different part of their anatomies than a woman's. If she continued the affair, she'd probably get her heart broken. Out-of-this-world sex was one thing. Her heart busted in half was another. "My mind is made up. I'm driving to his place now and ending it."

Carol gave her a skeptical look. "Whatever you say. It's your life."

\* \* \* \*

Forty-five minutes later, Josie turned her shiny red Chevy Blazer down Rex's long, narrow, and dusty driveway. A few lodge pole pine trees were scattered here and there. Fat and sleek white-faced cattle grazed in the pastures that flanked either side of the driveway. Four Quarter horses wandered amongst the cattle.

Josie cruised to a stop in front of his house, a sprawling, cedar-sided ranch with a covered porch and a dusky, red metal roof. Rex's truck was parked out front.

"All the better," she murmured.

He was here. She could get it over with and be on her way.

Before Josie could even get out of her truck, she spotted Rex and another man about his age walking out of one of the barns. Heat rocketed through her body at the sight of Rex. He wore a black ball cap, faded jeans, and a bright white tee shirt. He looked just as sexy and manly as the first time she'd seen him at the rodeo in his cowboy hat and western shirt.

Climbing out of her truck, Josie drew in a calming breath. Both men spotted her at the same time. Rex stopped, but the other man kept walking toward her.

As the man approached, she smiled, although her face felt like it had turned to plaster in the last thirty seconds.

“Hi. I’m Josie Landford.” The man was tall, like Rex, but leaner, with thick brown eyebrows under a red ball cap.

He picked up his pace and held out his hand. “It’s a real pleasure to meet you, ma’am.” His face split into a wide grin. “I’m Paul Reed.”

Josie returned the handshake, wondering what he knew about her. His green eyes twinkled as he stared at her. “It’s nice to meet you, Paul.”

Rex muscled Paul out of the way, pulling their hands apart. “Josephine,” Rex said simply.

“Hi.” Planting her hand on her hips, she eyed him. The blazing sun beat down on her, causing sweat to trickle between her breasts. At least, she wanted to blame it on the hot sun.

She heard Paul clear his throat. “Nice to meet you, Josie. Or is it Josephine?”

She stared at Rex for a second before she peeked around his shoulder. “It’s Josie.” She smiled. “It was nice to meet you, too, Paul.”

“I have to run an errand.”

Rex grunted his approval.

“What’s up? How did you know where I lived?”

She shifted back on the balls of her feet. “The phone book.”

“Hmmm...”

“I need to talk to you.” A mighty war battled inside her. She wanted to throw her arms around his neck and kiss him until she couldn’t breathe, but she wasn’t here for that. “Do you think we could go inside? It’s hot out here.” She wiped the back of her hand across her forehead.

“Yeah, let’s go.”

They walked to his house in silence. She risked a quick peek at him and saw that his profile was rigid, his jaw resembling steel as if he knew what was coming. He opened the screen door for her, waiting while she walked inside. A large ceiling fan swirled in the center of the living room, keeping the house cool. Dark brown, masculine furniture filled the room. Paintings of snow-capped mountains and big game animals adorned the walls. When Josie reeled around to face him, she rammed into his chest.

Rex caught her upper arms. “I didn’t expect to see you until Saturday.”

The feel of his solid body, plus the scent of him—a combination of horses and a touch of masculine sweat—sent her senses into a tailspin. His fingers caressed her bare arms.

“Oh, right.” She fought to bring herself back to reality and placed her hands on his chest—which, of course, wasn’t a smart thing to do. Would one more time hurt?

Before she could consider that option, he wrapped his arms around her, leaning down for a kiss.

“Rex,” she whispered.

“We’ll talk later.” Then his lips touched hers.

No willpower. Not even a smidgen as her lips parted for him, losing herself in his demanding touch.

\* \* \* \*

Rex’s hands cupped her butt, pressing her tight against his hard-on. When he’d spotted her climbing out of her truck, his emotions had immediately heated up, along with his cock.

Josephine hurled his hat off into space before driving her fingers into his hair. Overwhelmed with an insatiable need to be inside her body, he backed her against the wall and tugged her cotton blouse over her head.

Watching her, Rex saw a glimpse of vulnerability in her lovely blue eyes. He unhooked the front clasp of her lacy blue bra, then bent his head to feed off her nipples. She arched her back against him and reached down to rub his cock with her palm.

In an aroused, frenzied state, he stripped off her clothes, followed by his tee shirt. Her breath came in tiny little gasps as he unzipped his jeans and pushed them down around his ankles. Craving her body, he placed his hands on her hips and lifted her off her feet. “Wrap your legs around me, honey.”

He searched out her lips as she twined her legs around him. Pushing her back up against the wall, he rammed his cock hard and high into her. Her gasp of pleasure had him groaning. He nipped her bottom lip. She sucked his tongue into her mouth as his fingers dug into the soft flesh of her ass. Lost in her womanly scent, her heady perfume,

and the feel of her breasts rubbing against his chest, he punched his cock harder and faster into her pussy. He hoped like hell he wasn't hurting her, but he was unable to control his need for her. She didn't seem hurt because she tightened her arms around his neck and pulled him down for a long and deep kiss, her tongue soft and seeking. He devoured the sweetness of her mouth. Finally, breaking away from their kiss, he struggled to control himself. He needed her to come, too. His wild state had him pounding himself hard into her, but her pleasure was important to him.

Josephine opened her eyes, looked straight at him, and in that moment, Rex got lost in those glorious eyes. He knew he'd fallen for her. Seconds later, she came with a loud gasp, her pussy tightening around him. Control and sanity rushed from him as he impaled her one last time before his world went blank.

Still holding her, he leaned his forehead against hers, fighting to get his breathing under control and his brain to function again. He waited for her breathing to settle down as he nuzzled her sweat-glistened neck, his mouth slightly open so he could taste her skin.

After a time, he lowered her to the floor and kissed her forehead. "Maybe we should meet two or three times a week." What he really wanted to say was, *How about every day of the week?*

She shoved at his chest. "Oh, just go to hell!"

He nearly lost his balance with his jeans down around his ankles. "What in the blazes is going on, Josephine?"

Gathering up her clothes, she turned her back to him as she dressed.

As she fussed with her hair, he laid his hands on her shoulders, his muscles tight. "Tell me what's going on with you."

She wrenched away from his hands, spinning around to face him. "You thought I came out here just for sex?"

Snagging his shirt off the floor, guilt washed through him. "Sorry." He gave her a sheepish look before he shrugged his tee shirt over his head. "That's right. You needed to talk to me."

Her lower lip trembling, she crossed her arms over her chest. "I came here to tell you—" She stopped and stared at him, tears gathering in her eyes. Suddenly, she circled around and headed for the door.

In two long strides, he caught up with her. He took her arm and spun her around to face him. "What the hell is it?" Desperation settled inside his gut. He didn't understand her behavior. "Did I hurt you?" If he hurt her with his rough lovemaking, he'd never forgive himself. He would be gentle if that was what she wanted.

She shook her head, her lower lip still quivering. "It's over. All bets are off. Our affair is done, kaput."

Rex felt as if she had punched him in the stomach. "What are you talking about?"

"I said, it's over between us. Please let go of me."

Ignoring her plea to take his hands off her, he tightened his hold. "I don't get it. You're the one who came onto me. Now, you want to end it, just like that."

She held up her hand and snapped her fingers under his nose. "Just like that."

Jesus, if he lived to be a hundred, he would never understand women. "You mind telling me why?"

"Because it's all about sex."

Shit, he had a bad feeling about their affair from the beginning. The number one rule was to keep their relationship focused on the sex. He had it bad for her, but that didn't mean he wanted a commitment. Her emotions were all in her eyes, which stabbed his heart. "That's what you wanted. Sex. You made that damn clear in the beginning."

"And you're just peachy keen with that. Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong."

Her eyes swam with anger and pain—so much so that he looked away from her. She was hurt. He didn't want to hurt her, but he didn't want to fall in deeper.

Jaw tightening, he dropped his hand. "Yeah." He looked back at her. "I am."

"Then find another woman." She threw open the screen door and hurried down the steps to her truck.

When she opened her truck door, he hollered at her, "You wanted this, Josephine!"

She glared at him over the roof of her Blazer before she climbed inside and slammed the door after her.

“Damn. Damn!” Anger charging through him like a temperamental white-faced bull, Rex watched the rooster tail of dust she kicked up speeding down his driveway. A powerful urge to jump in his truck and take after her swept through him. Clenching and unclenching his fists, he tried to figure out who he was angrier at, himself or Josephine?

He stared at his driveway as the dust floated back down to the ground. With Josephine, things got complicated, and fast. She wanted an affair, and now she never wanted to see him again.

As soon as she’d walked inside his house, he’d acted like man possessed. Yeah, he’d fallen hard for her, but she’d ended it. She actually had started the whole damn mess in the first place. Wheeling around, Rex shouldered open the screen door, banging it closed behind him.

## **Chapter Seven**

“Come on. You have to get out of bed. It’s after two.” Carol stood at the foot of Josie’s bed, her hands planted on her hips.

“I have been out of bed. I got up this morning, took a shower, and drank coffee. Now, I’m reading a book.” Not that Josie had the foggiest idea what the book was about. She’d grabbed it off the shelf at the supermarket last night.

“You didn’t answer the door when I got here.”

Josie waved her hand in front of her. “What does it matter? You knocked and walked inside, anyway. So there.”

“*Josie*, you have to get over him. It has been over a week, and you haven’t heard from him.”

“Tell me something I don’t know.” She tossed the paperback book on the floor. “I don’t want to hear from that man. I never want to see him again. If he comes around, I’m calling the cops.”

Carol rolled her eyes. “You can’t call the cops. He’s never harassed you.”

“If he was to stop by right this very minute, I would consider it harassment.” No. She would consider it her luckiest day since her divorce.

Carol poked Josie in the foot with her finger. “Come out to dinner with Joe and me tonight.”

Josie shook her head. “Thanks, but no.” This would be her second Saturday night alone. Well, she’d only had two Saturday nights with Rex. Next week would be different. She’d be over the hump.

The doorbell chimed. “Would you answer that for me?” Josie asked. “Pretty, please? I’m not in the mood for company.”

Carol skewered her with a look before she flounced out of the bedroom.

Drumming her fingers on her jean clad thigh, Josie wished like hell she’d never conjured up her insane cowboy fantasy. Her entire life, she’d always had a thing for blue jeans, cowboys, and lassos, even though she was city girl.

“Josephine! Where the hell are you?”

“Ohmigod.” Waves of shock rolled through her as Josie sat up.

Carol appeared at the door. “Do you want me to call the cops?”

“Why in the hell would you call the cops?” Rex stood behind Carol, scowling over her shoulder.

Carol circled around to face him. “That’s what Josie said she would do if you showed up. And voila, you’re here. Really strange coincidence.”

His eyes locked on Josie like a vise, making her heart pound with excitement. She must have some control over herself.

“What do you think you’re doing here anyway?” she asked.

“I came to talk.”

“It’d better be good talk,” Carol said. “You’re responsible for breaking my best friend’s heart.”

“Carol!” Josie screeched. Why did her friend have to tell him about her aching heart? Heat crept up her cheeks as she scrambled off the bed. She saw the fire banked deep in his gaze.

Rex looked at Carol. “Do you think you could give Josephine and me a few minutes alone?”

Carol glanced over her shoulder at Josie, one eyebrow raised.

Struggling to breathe like a normal, unaffected person, Josie nodded.



Carol turned back to him. "Okay, I'm out of here." She poked him in the chest with her finger. "Like I said, this had better be good talk." She brushed past him and disappeared.

After the front door closed behind Carol, Josie squared her shoulders. "So, talk."

He leaned one shoulder against the doorframe and scrutinized her with a serious expression.

"Why did you break it off last week?"

Josie shifted in discomfort. "I fulfilled my fantasy of having an affair with a cowboy."

Stuffing his hands in the front pockets of his jeans, he studied his boots for several seconds. "My ex-wife, Cindy, and I got married a year after high school." He brought his gaze back to her. "Hell, I thought we were happy, until one day, she told me needed to find herself. She said she needed to be her own person and that she wanted a divorce."

She realized how hard it was for him to talk about his ex-wife, because Rex was a man of few words. The pain in his eyes tore at her heart.

"For the past three years, I've avoided getting involved, until you came along and flaunted yourself in front of me."

"Hey, wait a minute," she protested. "I didn't flaunt myself."

"Yes, you did."

She conceded. "Okay, maybe a little."

"What about that ridiculous little black dress you wore on our first date?" He shook his head. "If that's not flaunting, I don't know what the hell it is."

"And your point is?"

"Dammit, Josephine." Heat flared in his eyes. "It's not just about the sex anymore."

A small ray of hope lit in her. "What's it about, then?"

He narrowed his eyes. "I'm not good at this. I'm not good at expressing myself, and you damn well know it."

She did know that about him. "Let's see if I can decipher man-talk." He scowled at her. "You're implying in very few words that you're madly in love with me. Please correct me if I'm wrong." *Please don't correct me if I'm wrong.*

His jaw tightened as he glanced away for a moment before looking back at her. “I wouldn’t put it exactly that way myself.” He hesitated. “But yeah.” It was in his eyes.

“Really?”

“Dammit, Josephine.” He pushed away from the wall and stomped over to her. “You have to accept me the way I am if this is going to work between us.”

Her heart pounding against her rib cage, she said, “It’s a two-way street. I happen to like little black dresses.”

He gathered her into his arms. “Of course, you can keep wearing those impractical little dresses.”

“Oh, I can, can I? I like my job.”

“I never had a problem with your job.”

“And...”

“What else?”

She smiled. “I’m not switching political parties.”

“Fine. That will give something to argue about when we’re not in bed.”

“There’s one more th—”

Rex silenced her with a kiss so demanding and potent, she felt completely intoxicated. Leaning into him for support, she splayed her hands across his chest. Emotions swelled inside of her, knowing her fantasy had morphed into something more.

He ended their kiss. “What were you going to say?”

The warmth in his brown eyes spoke volumes. He cared for her. Josie blinked. “I...forgot.”

He smiled as he cupped her face, his fingers brushing gently across her cheek before weaving into her hair. “I like making you speechless.”

“Oh, you do, do you?”

Before Josie could say anything more, Rex kissed her again.

**JOSIE’S HEARTBREAKER**  
*Rodeo Cowboys: The Series, Book 3*

**THE END**

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Sage Burnett has been composing stories since childhood. Short stories, school plays, and poetry. She now writes contemporary romance set in Montana. Romantic suspense and comedy. And she loves a happy ending.

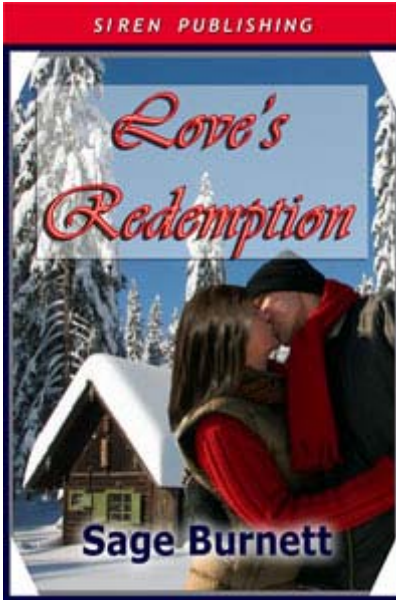
Sage once had a face-to-face encounter with a grizzly sow and her two cubs. It's clear she lived to tell about it. She survived a one-hundred-year storm on the eastern side of the state, another nail-biting incident she lived to tell about. She loves hiking in the Montana wilderness, wondering what wild animal might be around the next bend.

Sage eats a bowl of Cream of Wheat every morning and is a chocolate addict. She also drinks tons of green tea.

Her roomies are a rowdy girl black lab, Madison, and two spoiled, lazy, temperamental girl kitties, Runt and Cody.

Some of her favorite authors are Dana Stabenow, John Sanford, Tami Hoag and Dr. Seuss.

**Check out Sage's latest books at  
[www.sirenpublishing.com/sageburnett](http://www.sirenpublishing.com/sageburnett)**



## Love's Redemption by Sage Burnett

When a fatal mistake ends Jake Ramsey's career as a big city cop, he travels the country struggling to come to terms with his past. Jake ends up in Mountaintop, Montana where, one day, while drowning his sorrows at the local bar, he discovers a young couple has gone missing but left their dog behind, so Jake adopts the stray.

When he meets Lily Baker, it's instant attraction for him. As he gets to know her, Jake realizes Lily could crack the brittle pieces inside his heart.

Lily, a widow, is just as attracted to Jake, but she's afraid he might not stick around long, and she doesn't want her heart broken again.

Jake gets snagged in the web of deceit surrounding the young couple's disappearance as his heart begins opening up to a woman who holds the power to free him from his past.

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# Love's Redemption by Sage Burnett

## Story Excerpt

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“Oh, Jake...”

He dumped the glass on the small table next to the couch so he didn't crush it in his hands. “A few days after Lawson died, Wellington's wife, Lisa, came forward. Said she had lied about her husband being with her that night. She knew about the affair. He cheated on her half a dozen times in their marriage, but she always forgave him because she didn't want to lose him.” Jake dragged in a shallow breath. “You hear it on the news all the time. A cop thinks a suspect is reaching for a weapon, so he shoots.”

Lily remained quiet for a time before she asked. “Were you fired?”

“No. After a thorough investigation, I was reinstated to the force.”

“So you quit?”

He nodded.

“You've exiled yourself.”

Jake stood and walked over to the window. He jammed his hands into the front pockets of his jeans and stared outside at the black night, not seeing anything.

“You've also inflicted your very own punishment,” she said behind him.

Jake didn't answer her. He expected her to leave. Why would she want anything to do with him now? He killed an innocent man, took his life away.

Suddenly, Lily stood next to him. She laid her hand on his arm. He forced himself to look at her. Her eyes were clear and unwavering.

“Hold me.”

That was the last thing he had expected to hear from her. Was she asking for his embrace so she could comfort him? “I don't need your pity. I have no one to blame but myself.”

Hurt shadowed her eyes. He cursed himself.

“You're wrong. It's not pity.” Her voice trembled. “I think we both need comfort.”

Jake didn't respond, his hands still stuffed in his pockets. He ached to hold her, but he held back. He'd wanted her since first meeting her.

"I haven't been held by a man since John died," she whispered. A moment later, she dropped her hand and turned away from him.

He caught her before she got far. He wrapped his arms around her. When her arms twined around his back, something cracked loose inside his heart. He buried his head in her soft, sweet-smelling hair. Jake heard her sigh and gathered her closer.

"Lily..." He found her lips and kissed her. A slow, gentle, exploring kiss. The taste of her bewitched him. He lifted his head and gazed into her eyes.

She blinked, then whispered. "Kiss me again."

"Are you sure?"

Lily nodded.

The invitation in her eyes was unmistakable. Desire and need shimmered in her gaze. A carnal need swelled inside him as he smashed his lips against hers and parted her lips. His tongue pushed inside her, tasting her sultry flavor. Their tongues mated, danced, and seduced each other.

He broke the kiss abruptly. "Lily." His voice sounded rusty to his own ears. "Kiss me like that again, and I'll be carting you off to bed."

"I can walk." She untangled herself from him and grabbed his hand.

"You have to be sure."

She laid his hand on her cheek. "There are no guarantees. I'm as sure as I can be."

Lily's word struck a chord deep inside of him. There might not be a tomorrow.

# Love's Redemption by Sage Burnett

## Adult Excerpt

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He saw the doubt in her eyes, so she surprised him the hell out of him when she pressed herself against him and twined her arms around his neck. She coaxed his mouth open and slipped her tongue inside.

He ground his hips against hers so she could feel his hard cock. So she could know what she did to him. Jake backed her toward the couch. The bedroom was too damn far.

He laid her down on the couch and peeled off every inch of her clothing and boots. She gazed up at him with unabashed desire, her nipples hard and her legs slightly spread, showing her pussy to him. Jake kept his gaze locked on hers as he stripped. Her beautiful eyes flooded with desire.-

He lowered himself on top of her. When his body wrapped around hers, need and passion burned in his veins. He kissed her long and thoroughly before his lips trailed down to her breasts, where he suckled each of her nipples. Then, he tugged on them gently with his teeth. He didn't stop until she moaned and gyrated beneath his body. Jake continued his descent down her flushed body until his lips closed around her clit. He moved off the couch and knelt in front of her. He shifted her hips to bring her closer to him.

"Jake," she moaned. Her hands tangled in his hair.

He licked her clit, slow and easy at first. As the fire built inside of him, he licked her harder and faster. The movement of Lily's shapely hips against his face and her wanton moans drove his desire for this woman to a new level. Her musky, womanly scent floated around him like a sultry cloud. When her body shuddered with her orgasm, he continued licking her until she stilled.

He scrambled up and climbed on top of her, then plunged his throbbing cock deep inside her dewy moistness.

Lily dragged his head down for a kiss. Now, he tasted all of her. Moans fell from

her lips as her body thrashed against his. Her ragged breaths filled his ears.

Jake didn't know how much longer he could control himself. "Lily, come again for me. Please," he ground out through clenched teeth.



## **Rodeo Cowboys: The Series**

### **Complete Collection**

*by Sage Burnett*

**Melanie's Protector**  
**Karly's Drifter**  
**Josie's Heartbreaker**

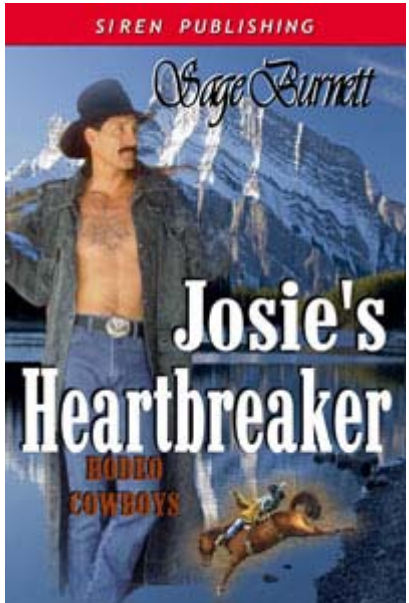
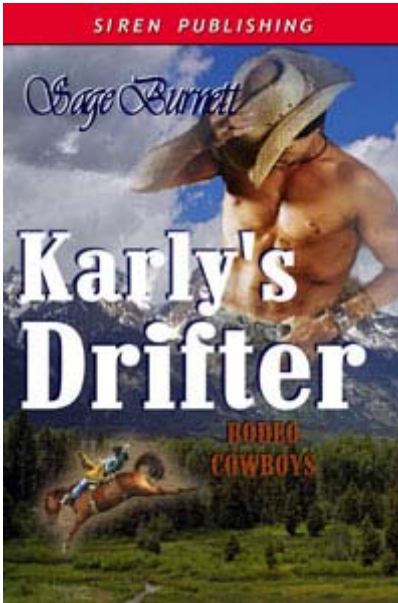
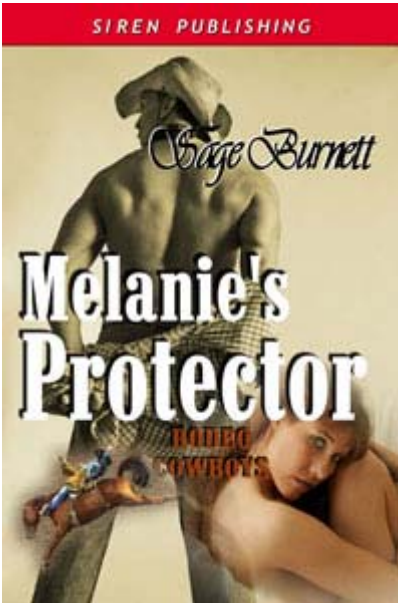
Melanie Blake needs protection so she picks Steve McCall to help her escape the people in hot pursuit of her. Steve has no idea the woman stowed away in his camper is smoldering with passion.

Karly Jackson follows the Montana rodeo circuit shooting photos of the cowboys for her book. Hawk Rivers is opposed to being featured in her book. Karly wants to know what he is hiding. On the other hand, Hawk is eager to share her bed and midnight pleasures after the rodeo ends.

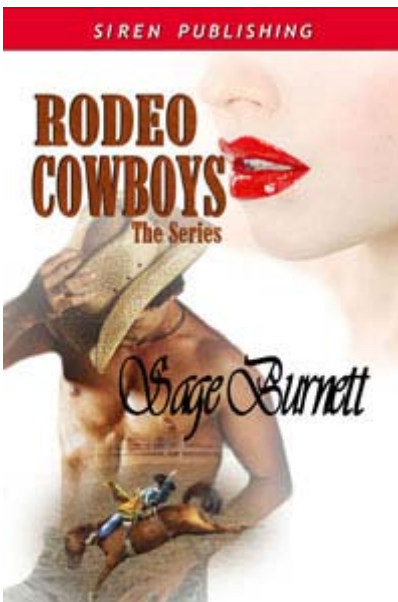
Josie Landford sets out to fulfill a life long fantasy--a hot, sizzling, no-strings-attached affair with a rugged and rough cowboy. Rex West isn't quite sure what to think of the breezy, sexy Josie Landford. He gives her a call and finds himself on a seductive wild ride.

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# Melanie's Protector by Sage Burnett

## Story Excerpt

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Steve dragged his tired butt into his camper, took one step, and tripped over something in the sooty darkness. Losing his balance, he smacked his forehead on the handle of the refrigerator door. “Shit! What the hell is that?” He fumbled for the light over the sink.

As the light flickered to life, he saw a black leather tote bag on the floor.

“Don’t move.”

His gaze shot to the bed over the cab of his truck. The redhead from the rodeo stands held a pistol pointed directly at his chest. He’d been too cranky after losing the competition to fantasize about what color eyes she had. Turned out they were a vivid shade of green. She knelt on his bed with her arms stretched in front of her, gripping the .22 in both hands.

“What the hell?” Steve rubbed his forehead, knowing he’d probably sprout a goose egg. “How did you get back here? And why are you in my camper? I don’t recall inviting you.”

“You left it unlocked. And...I want you to take me to Bozeman. Now.”

His crankiness twisted into anger. “Oh, you do, do you?”

“Yes. I have to be there by six this morning.”

“If you want to rob me, I’ll give you the few bucks in my wallet. Then you can get the hell out of my camper.”

She shook her head, causing her long, silky hair to sway back and forth. “I have no intention of robbing you. I need to get to Bozeman.”

“Ever hear of driving, bus, airplane, lady?”

She shook her head again. “I want you to drive me.”

“Now, wait a minute.” Steve held up his hands. “I’m not a damn taxi service. If you want to shoot me, do it. I’m already dead on my feet.”

“I don’t want to shoot you. I want you to drive me to Bozeman.”

“Sorry, no can do. I’m almost out of gas. The next town is thirty miles up the road, and the gas station doesn’t open ‘til six.”

The redhead’s brows knitted together into a frown. “This is a big truck. It has to have dual tanks.”

Tank number two was filled but he wasn’t about to tell her that. “Forgot to fill it.”

Still frowning, she watched him with a skeptical glint in her eyes. Steve rubbed his forehead again, avoiding her eyes. He hated being dishonest, even to a wacky redhead with a gun pointed at him.

She let out a long, frustrated breath, then stared down at the gun for several moments.

“Why don’t you put the gun away?” Steve suggested. “We’ll forget this ever happened.”

Her gaze collided with his. “No. I have to get to Bozeman.”

“It’s a long walk. And a lady can’t be hitchhiking at night on this lonely road. So, it looks like you have to spend the night on the side of the road with me.” He wasn’t sure if he relished that idea. Sure, she was attractive, with that flaming head of hair, but the fact that she had a gun pointed at him tended to put a damper on things.

She shook her head. “No, no, no.”

“What’s so important about getting to Bozeman by six?”

“I need...” She pressed her lips together in a tight line for a moment. “I need to catch a plane.” Fear swirled in her eyes.

“Listen, why don’t you put the gun away?” He held up his hands again. “I’m an honest guy. You can trust me.”

“That’s why I picked you.”

Steve laid his hand on his chest, eyes widening. “You picked me to drive you to Bozeman?”

She nodded.

So much for honesty. If he looked like a low-down rat, he probably wouldn’t be standing in his camper with a gun pointed at him. “What’s your name?” When she didn’t answer, he said, “I’m Steve McCall. Now, you tell me yours.” She still didn’t volunteer her name. “Okay. I guess it’s Red.”

She frowned at him, clearly not liking the nickname.

“How about I make some coffee?”

What he really wanted was sleep, not caffeine. Since Red was in his bed, he didn't have much choice. If she didn't have a pistol sighted in on him, he'd crawl up there with her.

He kicked her tote bag out of the way and grabbed the small container of coffee off the cupboard shelf. After he measured the coffee, he glanced over at her. “Your legs will go to sleep kneeling like that.” He turned on the propane burner. “Your arms have to be getting tired.”

Red lifted her chin and raised the gun a notch.

Steve shrugged as he pulled a couple of mugs from the cupboard. “If you picked me to be your chauffeur because I look honest, then you don't need to be pointing that gun at me.”

“I said you looked honest. I didn't say you were.”

# Melanie's Protector by Sage Burnett

## Adult Excerpt

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Steve looked into her eyes as his hands cupped her soft, plump breasts. “No one will hurt you. I’ll see to that, Red.” Her eyes, already simmering with heat, flooded with gratitude.

She lowered her head, nipped his upper lip while he gently pinched her nipples.

“You have beautiful breasts,” he whispered before he kissed her again.

Her tongue invaded his mouth and Steve groaned as she rubbed her pubic mound against him. Lifting her forward so her breasts were at eye level, he suckled her nipple like a starving man. Her hips moved seductively up and down over his erection. He needed her bare flesh rubbing against his. Steve reached for the button on her jeans, but she stopped him by pushing his tee shirt up and over his head. Then she bent, her thick hair spreading across his chest as she licked his nipple. She licked her way over to his other nipple and his desire for her ripened with each rake of her tongue. While the exotic scent of her hair drifted around him, Steve palmed her crotch, hearing her breathy moan. Moments later they were both struggling with each other’s jeans. When the clothes were off, Red kissed him again, her hot, naked body draped over his.

Slipping his finger into her wet pussy, he couldn’t stop the groan that rumbled from his lips. She raised her butt slightly, moving her hips up and down. His other hand sought out her breast, where he rubbed his thumb over her hard nipple, the sound of her husky, womanly moans driving his lust higher and hotter.

When she came, Steve gritted his teeth as fiery lust exploded inside of him. He didn’t give her a chance to recover before he plunged his cock deep into her pussy.

Red sat up, moving with him as he thrust hard and fast inside her. Through hooded eyes, he watched her breasts jiggle before he covered them with his hands. Red laid her hands on top of his and worked them against her. The feel of her soft palms had him clenching his back teeth together to hold onto his control.

## Karly's Drifter by Sage Burnett

### Story Excerpt

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He saw Karly throw back her head and laugh at something the young stud whispered in her ear. Burning with unexpected and unwanted jealousy, he watched her flirt. When the husky cowboy wrapped his hand around Karly's neck and started kissing her, Hawk threw down the soda can and stormed through the crowd of partygoers.

As he approached them, he watched Karly shove at the cowboy's chest. Hawk grabbed the back of the young cowboy's collar, twisting him around to face him. "Keep your goddamn hands off the lady."

"Just who in the hell do you think you are?"

"None of your business." Hawk locked his gaze on Karly's.

"Hey, honey, you know this S.O.B.?" The cowboy craned his neck to see Karly.

Eyes wide with surprise, she nodded, never taking her eyes from Hawk's.

The cowboy wrestled himself from Hawk's grip and wheeled around to face her.

"You told me you were footloose and fancy free."

She lifted her chin. "I *am* footloose and fancy free."

Anger charging through him, Hawk muscled the man aside and reached for Karly's wrist. He dragged her away from the cowboy.

"You coming back later, honey?" the guy yelled after her.

Karly glanced over her shoulder. "Maybe, sugar."

Hawk led her outside of the beer gardens, where she yanked free of his hold.

"Just what the hell were you doing in there? You don't have any claims on me."

Karly poked him in the chest. "You disappeared in the middle of the night. Slam bam, and not even a thank you, ma'am."

While the anger steamed and hissed inside of his body, he watched her back up a couple of steps. Hawk fought back the urge to reach for her again.

Karly fisted her hands and planted them on her hips. "I don't like being left high and dry."

“It was for the best.”

“Hah! You made the decision to leave without even a good-bye kiss.”

“How do you know I didn’t kiss you before I left?” Hawk had kissed her cheek, her forehead, and brushed his lips over hers before he’d run out on her.

She opened her mouth to say something but stopped. Karly glanced away for a moment before she brought her gaze back to him. “Whatever.” Squaring her shoulders, she said, “I’m afraid you’ll have to excuse me. There’s a young, randy cowboy in there that has the hots for me.”

She spun around, but Hawk caught her arm. His jealousy roaring to life again, he leaned close to her. “This isn’t your style, Karly.”

Wrenching her arm from his grip, she faced him. “You don’t know what my style is, Mr. Rivers. You didn’t take the time to find out.”

Battling to keep his emotions under control, Hawk hated admitting she was right. His gut told him Karly didn’t sleep around, but then he really didn’t know her. The one sure thing was she had kept him awake every damn night for the last week. She’d dredged up emotions buried for years inside his heart.

“Don’t sleep with the cowboy, Karly. You’ll regret it.”

Hawk burned her with a look before he pushed past her and strode away.



## Karly's Drifter by Sage Burnett

### Adult Excerpt

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She pointed across the table. "Sit down. Maybe we could chitchat for awhile."

Scowling at her, Hawk plowed a hand through his short hair.

"Okay, stand. If you're thirsty, there's a few things in the fridge." After she finished loading the film, she picked up a cleaning tissue and polished a telephoto lens.

Every once in a while, she would glance up at him, locking her eyes with his.

Hawk was itching to get naked with her. "Let's go to bed."

She laid the telephoto lens on the table before looking up at him. Shock intertwined with heat floated in her hazel-toned eyes.

"My, my," Karly clucked her teeth together. "If that's your best line, then I would say you need to do some work on your seduction techniques."

"All that damn stuff before is a waste time. If a man and a woman want each other, why not cut to the chase."

Karly tilted her head, tapping her forefinger on her lips. "Let's see now. I guess us weak-kneed females need some foreplay before hopping into the sack."

"I'll guarantee you I'm good at foreplay."

"You're pretty damn cocky."

Her eyes lowered to his groin. His desire was apparent under his jeans. Karly wore some slinky little black top and her nipples were erect again. "Why don't you see for yourself?"

Karly laughed. "Buy me a drink, dinner. Bring me flowers, then we'll talk."

"Talking's not necessary, Karly." Hawk saw the appreciation in her eyes when he called her by her name.

"So you did read my business card."

"You wanted me to read your business card. That's why you stuck it in my pocket."

She shrugged. "I hand out my cards to everyone. Good advertising."

Hawk moved closer to her, drinking in her womanly essence. “What were you advertising to me?” A touch of pink colored her cheeks, which aroused him even more.

Her eyes widened. “I gave you my business card in case you changed your mind about letting me use photos of you in my book.”

She sounded breathless to him. Hawk watched the rise and fall of her chest, her hard nipples tempting him. “Stand up, Karly. Or would you rather I dragged you to your feet?”

She wiped her palms on her thighs, gazing up at him, the invitation showing in her eyes.

He bent down, took her hands, and slowly pulled her to her feet.

“Hawk.”

“We both want this, Karly.” He moved his hands to her hair, smoothing it back from her face. “If you want to waste more time protesting...” He lowered his head as her hands splayed across his chest.

His intention had been to take her rough and hard, knowing in his gut she would’ve responded in kind. Instead, as his mouth touched her soft, supple lips tasting of Coca Cola and the saltiness of popcorn, he slowly moved his lips over her. Surprise shot through him that he wanted to be gentle with her. Some unnamed emotion inside of him needed to be gentle with her. Karly sighed, opening her lips. He slid his tongue inside of her, enticing her tongue with his own.

Her hands slipped down his chest, her palms pushing against his nipples. Ending the kiss, he leaned back and looked down into her eyes.

“You tell me to get the hell out of here now or else I stay. I’ll let it be your call, Karly.” His cock was throbbing to be inside of her pussy.

She stared at him for what seemed like forever. “Stay,” she whispered.

He backed away from her, reaching for the door to close it. Karly turned, gave him a sultry look over her shoulder, and walked the short distance to the bed over the cab of the truck. Hawk caught up with her, taking her arm, and swinging her around to face him.

Sliding his hands under her skimpy top, he skimmed the black top over her head. A strapless black bra barely covered her small breasts. A groan rumbled from the back of

his throat as he reached behind her and unhooked her bra, freeing her breasts. He stared at her hard, rosy nipples, his lust mounting as he covered her breasts with his hands.

Hawk took his time stripping off her clothes, hearing her sighs of pleasure. He tugged her faded jeans over her slim hips, discovering black bikini panties. Gritting his teeth, he took her out of her jeans and tucked his fingers inside her panties. His fingers brushed the rich brown curls at her crotch as he peeled off her panties until she stood naked in front of him. From his crouched position, his eyes traveled upward until his gaze clashed with hers. Her face was flushed, and her eyes were...Hawk wasn't sure.

He forced himself to stand because what he really wanted was to bury his face between her legs. After he yanked off his t-shirt, he tossed it behind him. Once he unzipped his jeans, Karly took over from there. Hawk kicked off his boots as she pushed his jeans and briefs down to his ankles. With his foot, he shoved his clothes aside. Her hands circled around his cock. As her hands worked up and down over his shaft, she caught his eye. For a few moments, he let her fondle him, knowing it wouldn't take much to get him off. Grabbing her hips, he hoisted her up to the bed. He loved the sound of her little squeal. For him, tonight was about sex, giving pleasure and getting it in return.

As she scooted over, he crawled up beside her. Enough torture, Hawk decided, as he dragged her on top of him. The heat from her soft, silky body fused with his own. Twining her arms around his neck, Karly kissed him, pushing her sweet, salty tongue inside of his mouth. He cupped her tight little ass and grinded her crotch against his aching cock.

Karly slithered up and down and back and forth over his cock, increasing his lust and need. He raised her up over his head until her breasts touched his cheeks and tugged one nipple into his mouth. He heard himself groan like a thirsty man finally discovering the watering hole in the desert. He moved his lips to her other nipple as she rubbed her wet pussy over his stomach. She wanted him as much as he wanted her. Fondling her breasts, he listened to her breathy moans above him.

In one quick sweep, Hawk rolled her over and plunged his cock inside her slick pussy. Karly gasped for breath as she opened herself for him. The sounds of the rodeo crowd faded into the background as he fingered her clit, needing her to come for him.

Hawk drove himself harder and deeper into her tight pussy as her slim legs wrapped around his hips.

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