

**Brit
Blaise**

**CAVE
CREEK
COWBOY**



CAVE CREEK COWBOY

Ridge cleared his throat. “You mean a no-strings-attached kind of thing? Let me see if I have this straight. You can handle a no-strings fuck, but you don’t think *I* can?”

Did she dare? “Yes, that’s exactly what I mean.”

“I’m ready if you are.”

Her heart started pounding in her chest so hard she was certain he could feel it. “One time only? To scratch a ten-year-old itch?”

“I can handle it if you can, darlin’.”

Had she heard right? “I think it’ll be good for us—like therapy.”

“Therapy, huh?” he growled. “My place is closer. And I don’t have a nosey ranch manager.”

When he didn’t say anything else the entire time they rode to his place, Holly almost changed her mind. She’d returned to Arizona, praying for a way to make things right with him. She didn’t know if this qualified, but being with Ridge, even if it was only one time, was too good to pass up...

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CAVE CREEK COWBOY

BY

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CAVE CREEK COWBOY
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*For my younger sister,
and the true-life cowboy she left behind.*

CHAPTER 1

If Ridge stabbed himself in the foot with a pitchfork, it couldn't hurt any worse than coming face-to-face with Holly Turner. Since she'd left Arizona ten years earlier, not a day went by he didn't think about her. Sometimes the memories were painful, always bittersweet, and on occasion, they were steamy enough to curl his toes. Ridge steered into the sprawling barnyard of Bar Creek Ranch and cut the motor. With any luck he could avoid seeing her altogether. But when did *he* ever get lucky?

By the time Ridge unfolded his long legs to swing out of the driver's seat, Sam, Bar Creek's ranch manager, came out of the barn. If not running, Sam was at least moving as fast as any eighty-year-old could go. His thick gray brows were drawn tight with worry.

"Guess this means you haven't heard from her," Ridge grouched. *Damn. Why did Holly have to come back to Arizona?* Why did he have to care so damned much after all this time?

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Sam nervously rubbed his hand over his almost bald head. "She should've been back hours ago. You know as well as me what that could mean. It spells trouble. Maybe big trouble."

"My friends Tam and Mike were at the ranch when you called and will be here shortly to lend a hand in the search. I'll see if I can pick up her tracks. Tell them I decided not to wait."

"Take this," Sam said, handing Ridge a walkie-talkie. "If you don't find her by dark, I think I'd better call for help from the sheriff's office."

"We'll find her before dark, Sam. She probably got thrown from her horse and is out there walking home in her fancy city shoes."

"Ridge, I may be three times your age, but I'll be damned if I let you disrespect little Holly. She's the closest thing I'll ever have to a daughter. Now, I appreciate your help, but put a lid on it or I'll do it for you."

Ridge felt a twinge of grudge-holding guilt. "Holly and I have history and bad blood between us. You knew that when you called me for help."

"I called you because you know this ranch better than anyone living 'cept me. I can't get up on a horse with this bad back of mine and I didn't have anyone else I trust like you."

Ridge walked back to his horse trailer to get Big Red. "I appreciate that you trust me to help Holly, but I can't help how I feel."

Ridge wasn't surprised about Holly getting into trouble. He was, however, blown away by rumors Holly intended to keep Bar Creek instead of parceling it out. She must have made a boatload of money as a New York model to be able to hang onto the place. Taxes on thirty-five acres of prime desert land on the edge of Cave Creek had to be high. Many of the home sites in the area were selling for well over a hundred-thousand-an-acre.

Ridge saddled his horse. "Did you see which way she headed?"

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Sam gave a nod. “Down the wash and out toward the old house.”

Ridge’s heart crashed in his chest. Surely she hadn’t gone *there*. Not to the place they’d first made love. *Damn!* “I think I know where to find her. She’s probably just daydreaming and forgot the time.”

* * *

Holly ran her hand along the blanket, fighting the need to sleep. The familiarity of being home, back in the place she’d first made love to Ridge, was comforting, and at the same time, overwhelming. Memories were around every corner. She yawned and curled into a ball. Memories—dreams of her cowboy, so crystalline clear, it was like it happened yesterday...

* * *

“Are you sure about this, cowboy?” Holly asked as she watched Ridge fold and adjust the flannel blanket between him and his horse.

Ridge smile was golden, making her glow inside. “You’re the one who wanted to try it,” he teased. “Climb on up here and I’ll take you for a ride you’ll never forget.”

Holly looked admiringly at the big cock sticking high in the air near her nose. She’d never get used to how weak in the knees it made her feel to look at it—him. Since the first time they made love a year earlier in the abandoned homestead built by her great-grandfather, Holly had been consumed with thoughts of when and where she could get her hands on him next. She couldn’t get enough of handsome Ridge White.

“Hold still, Red,” she told his horse, running a hand along his thick neck while her fingers threaded through his coarse mane. She climbed onto the rock and swung her bare leg over the horse’s withers with her backside toward the animal’s head. Sitting high, she faced the man she loved with all her heart. He leaned down to kiss the side of her neck. She sank her fingers into his soft golden hair and pulled him to meet her mouth.

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Ridge was pure gold. His hair, his skin, his kisses, everything about him was twenty-four karat. And every inch of him belonged to her, Holly Turner. All six-feet of golden, sinewy muscles were her private property. Especially so, the magic rod now poking anxiously against her belly.

Ridge put his arms under hers and lifted. Pinned against him, she felt him about to enter her core and moaned. Each time with him got better, more magical. If she guessed right, this time would be the best yet.

"I love you," Ridge whispered and lowered her slowly onto his thick, throbbing cock. "I love making love to you. Promise me we'll still be doing this fifty years from now."

"I plan to live to be a hundred. That means we'll be doing it a lot longer than fifty years. This feels incredible. All the way, Ridge. I can take you. All of you." She didn't need foreplay. Just telling Ridge what she wanted him to do made her wet with need. The wonderment on his face as he calculated the physical possibility made her sex clench with anticipation.

Ridge lowered her completely and draped her legs around him. She was so full of him she willed herself to stretch. Hot tears ran down the sides of her cheeks. The feel of him was exquisite—so perfect it was almost painful. He filled her so fully she wanted to scream her intense pleasure. She wrapped her legs around him more tightly while Ridge raised the reins behind her naked backside, signaling the horse to move.

At first they walked, the easy gait sending him deeper inside her. She knew they were headed to the sand bottom wash, which would slow Red's gait, making his hooves dig deeper and harder than on ordinary ground.

Again she felt Ridge signal Red, this time with his legs. The horse immediately stretched into a lope. The effect was devastating. The

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strong motion carried her up and down on Ridge's long, hard cock. They'd only gone thirty seconds before she started to come.

"Not yet," she moaned into his shoulder. "I want more. I want longer. I...never felt anything so wonderful!"

Ridge pulled Red to a sliding stop, the action pushing Ridge deeper than he'd ever been inside her.

"Oh, baby," he moaned while his hot cum filled her.

Holly's orgasm began again as she felt him throbbing inside her. "I love you," she whispered. "Forever."

* * *

"Wake up, Sleeping Beauty," Ridge growled. Why the hell had she whispered, "Forever"? She'd said that same word to him every time they'd made love as teenagers, which was often. And, she did look *beautiful*, despite being much too thin for her five-foot-ten frame. Her mahogany curls fanned out from her delicate face in a riot of color and disarray over the green flannel blanket he recognized immediately.

Dark circles in the pale porcelain skin under her eyes were clearly visible. When words didn't rouse her, he bent down and gently nudged her shoulder. The smile on her slumbering face was pure rapture. Whatever she was dreaming about had taken her to a happy place.

He envied that.

This same woman had turned all his dreams into hellish nightmares.

Somehow, she managed to grab onto his hand, rubbing it against her silken cheek like a damned cat. The act cut through him like a knife. His cock, already stiffening at the sight of her, began to throb mercilessly. After almost ten years, he still wanted her. *Hell!*

When she whispered, "Forever," a second time, he jerked his hand away. No way! She wasn't dreaming about *him*.

Ridge stood and stomped over to the old stone fireplace with his back to her, trying to find something—anything—to distract him. Vandals had done a lot of damage to the old homestead over the years.

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The No Trespassing signs posted all over Bar Creek land didn't seem to deter them much.

Why the hell had she come home? How did she have the ability to both anger and sexually frustrate him after all these years?

"What are you doing here?" he heard over his shoulder. Her silken voice poured over him like bottled sex, low and husky. His cock painfully pulsed even more in response to the sound of her.

Ridge hadn't even been certain she'd know him after all these years. He'd changed a lot since they were nineteen. He'd grown four more inches and added forty pounds of muscle to his lean frame.

He turned to face her blinking blue eyes. Just a whisper of blue, almost silver really, they were arresting as ever against the darkness of her long, thick lashes. "Sam was worried about you. I'll ride on back and tell him you were taking a nap while he thought something bad had happened to you. Some things never change."

She winced like he'd slapped her before she raised a dark brow and pulled herself into a sitting position, hugging her long legs in front of her. "Did you bring back my horse?"

Now it was his turn to be confused. "What happened to your horse?"

"I tripped over a rock and sprained my ankle. When I tried a one-legged mount, she got away from me. I hoped maybe she'd head back to the barn."

Damn! Ridge should have known she'd get the upper hand five seconds after they met again. *That's stupid*, he told himself. *She didn't do this on purpose. She didn't make me run my foolish mouth.*

Ridge pulled the walkie-talkie from his belt and put it to his lips. "Are you there, Sam?"

"You find her?"

"Yep, I got her. We still have a horse out there running free in the desert."

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"The horse showed up here a few minutes ago. Are you sure she's all right?"

Ridge met her pale silver-blue eyes and she gave a single nod before turning away to stare at the old stone fireplace.

"Yeah, she's fine," Ridge assured Sam. "I'll bring her home. Did Tam and Mike get there yet?"

Holly's face jerked back in his direction at the mention of her ex-lover, Tam.

So, she still has a thing for Tam?

"A couple of minutes ago," Sam's voice announced. "They're standing here arguing about which way to go."

"Tell them to go win the roping competition tonight. Without Brett and me there, they might even stand half a chance. Oh, yeah, tell Tam Holly says hello."

"Thanks a lot," she mumbled, turning away again in a huff.

Ridge clipped the radio back onto his pocket. "What'd you expect? Hearts and flowers?"

"I expected you to be happily married and not carrying a decade-old grudge. Silly me."

"I tried marriage."

"So I heard," she relied and then looked like she wished she hadn't.

"Been checking up on me, huh?"

"You're a neighbor. Of course, Sam would mention you'd gotten hitched."

"Gotten *hitched*? You must have wowed them in New York City with your quaint country charm."

"Go to hell, Ridge. Call Sam on that radio and tell him to come and get me himself."

"You know he can't ride. You want an eighty-year-old man to walk all this way?"

"And you know there are dirt roads leading all the way to this old

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house. You traveled them often enough to get a piece of ass off of me.”

“Is this how it’s going to be between us?” he snapped. Did she know he was divorced? It had only been final a month earlier. “Always at each other’s throats?”

Holly glared at him. “You started it.”

Ridge raised his brows to show he questioned the truthfulness of her charge. No, she’d started it when she cheated on him and left town, shattering his young heart in the process. “I’ll make sure you get back to the ranch in one piece. Then we can stay the hell away from each other.”

“Fine,” she said.

“Fine,” he repeated, but she didn’t move. She was staring at the front of his jeans.

“Thinking of your wife?” she asked with sarcasm tingeing her voice.

“I don’t have a wife. Bobbi Jo moved out a couple of years after we married. We didn’t advertise it. She made it final a month ago.”

A look of surprise crossed her face. No. She hadn’t known about Bobbi Jo. And now she knew he had a serious hard-on for *her*. Always had. Always would.

“I’m sorry,” she said when she met his gaze.

Sorry for what? Sorry for being the third person in his marriage bed? Sorry for being the only woman he ever really loved? Sorry for being a lying cheat?

“Divorce happens everyday. Marriage is hard,” he said. “I’m surprised you haven’t tried it yourself.” For all he knew, she could have been married several times. She’d chosen a glamorous occupation as a model, but she wasn’t famous. There were no supermarket tabloids reporting on beautiful Holly Turner’s exploits. “How’s your cousin?”

“Connie died right after Grandpa did. That’s why I didn’t come back to the funeral. She was too sick to leave alone.”

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“I’m sorry to hear that. I thought after all these years she’d beat the cancer. Wasn’t she diagnosed when you left here almost ten years ago?”

Holly turned away again, but not before he saw tears streaking down her face. “Take me home. I can’t do this right now.”

“Can’t do what, Holly? Can’t be civil with a neighbor?”

“You were a lot more to me than just a neighbor and you know it. I can’t fight with you. It’s not right. I’m sorry for everything you think I did. I’m sorry I was so stupid when I was nineteen. If I could do it all over, I would.”

“Everything *I think* you did? You slept with one of my best friends and then bragged about it. You broke every promise you ever made to me.”

“Not every promise, Ridge. Just a couple really. I’m surprised Tam didn’t tell you the truth long ago. I guess he must not have thought it would matter to you.”

“Tell me the truth? What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“Not now. I think I might’ve taken a chill lying on this cold floor.” She ran her hand over the old frayed blanket beneath her.

“Your horse bolted, but you managed to grab *that* particular blanket?”

“I brought it up here the day I got home and left it. We had some good times on this old flannel. Take me home?” she pleaded again.

Ridge wanted to yell at her. There were so many unanswered questions, but she didn’t look good. In fact, she really *could* be sick. He walked back to give her a hand up. She stared at it for a moment.

Yeah, it’ll hurt like hell to touch. You showed me how bad a minute ago. But I’d be a big pussy not to help because I’m afraid of your touch. Afraid of all the pent-up emotions aching to be freed. Damn!

Holly slowly reached toward his hand.

She’s as scared as I am! When she stopped short of touching him,

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he knew he was right.

“Don’t worry,” he said softly. “I won’t bite you. I can’t guarantee what ol’ Red will do. *He’s* missed you.”

CHAPTER 2

“I can’t ride on Red with you. He’s too old. The two of us will be too much weight,” Holly told Ridge. The reason she didn’t want to ride back to the ranch with Ridge had nothing to do with Big Red’s age. She didn’t want to be reminded of the erotic dream she’d just experienced. The same dream she had almost nightly since she’d left Arizona.

She and Ridge had made love while riding Red several times. The time they’d cantered in the desert wash became more like a dream than reality. Riding on Red with Ridge would only make her memories more painful. Losing Ridge continued to be so agonizing she could barely breathe.

Ridge huffed. “You’re insulting Red. Besides, you are about fifty pounds underweight.”

He didn’t have to tell her she looked bad. She knew.

When she started to reach for the saddle horn, he caught her under both arms and swung her onto the saddle with ease. “You want to sit in

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the front or the rear?" he asked her, and the look on his face told her that he could care less.

"Whatever is easier for you."

A frown played across his ruggedly handsome face. She'd made a promise to herself. She never wanted to be the cause of pain for him again.

"I shouldn't have come home."

"And I should be mad as hell at you, but when you look like an underfed waif ready to cry if I say boo, how can I? What happened to the Holly Turner who used to pick fights with people twice her size just for the hell of it?"

Holly shifted in the saddle. "She died. A long time ago."

"Christ, Holly, what happened to you? I'd like nothing better right now than to piss you off, but you're making it damned near impossible."

Ridge swung up onto the saddle behind her, lifting her onto his lap in the process. "If someone told me this morning I'd have you on my lap today, I'd have never believed it."

"You're a good man. It doesn't surprise me at all you came to my rescue."

Ridge made a clicking sound with his tongue to signal Red, who took off at a lumbering walk. "Don't say things you don't mean."

"I learned that lesson not long after I left home at nineteen."

Red stumbled on a rock and Ridge grabbed her tighter. "It's a good thing you came home if you think you need to be this skinny to be a model."

Holly wanted to tell him everything. It would be so nice to have someone to talk to. How could she? She'd left Ridge for his own good. She'd left him because she couldn't see him go through what her own father had suffered, watching Holly's mom waste away.

"Sam is trying to fatten me up."

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“Good for him. You let him. And stay away from the old homestead until I make sure it’s safe. A bunch of wild teenagers have been partying there every weekend. Give me a couple of weeks to scare them off for good.”

“Leave them alone, Ridge. Remember how much we loved going there?” Holly felt him stiffen at her words, growing hard along her backside.

“Now you’ve done it,” he growled.

They rode in silence while his hard cock rubbed into her ass cheeks all the way up to the small of her back, making her pussy ache unbearably. *If only*. If only she could have one more time with him.

The motion of the horse magnified her need a hundred-fold. “I know you don’t want to hear it, but I’d give anything to be able to fuck you without worrying I’d hurt you again. Once for old times’ sake.”

Ridge cleared his throat. “You mean a no-strings-attached kind of thing? Let me see if I have this straight. You can handle a no-strings fuck, but you don’t think *I* can?”

Did she dare? “Yes, that’s exactly what I mean.”

“I’m ready if you are.”

Her heart started pounding in her chest so hard she was certain he could feel it. “One time only? To scratch a ten-year-old itch?”

“I can handle it if you can, darlin’.”

Had she heard right? “I think it’ll be good for us—like therapy.”

“Therapy, huh?” he growled. “My place is closer. And I don’t have a nosey ranch manager.”

When he didn’t say anything else the entire time they rode to his place, Holly almost changed her mind. She’d returned to Arizona, praying for a way to make things right with him. She didn’t know if this qualified, but being with Ridge, even if it was only one time, was too good to pass up.

Ridge’s ranch hadn’t changed since the first time she’d visited,

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when he'd still lived there with his father. She'd heard Ridge's dad had moved to a cooler climate, leaving Ridge the house and five acres.

Reining Red to a stop at the small frame house, Ridge dismounted before holding his arms out to her. It was just a simple gesture to help her dismount, but it felt like more.

"Are there any rules for this I should know about?" he asked almost sarcastically.

"I didn't have a master plan to lure you to have sex with me. Have you changed your mind?"

Ridge grabbed hold of her hand, placing it over his still hard cock. "Does this feel like I'm ready to change my mind? This has nothing to do with my mind. Otherwise, the guys in white coats would be here carting me off to the loony bin."

"Funny, funny."

"No strings attached. Remember?" Ridge sounded unmistakably angry and yet his eyes smoldered with desire. He was fighting a personal war and Holly understood how dangerous it could be for her heart to battle alongside him. However, he was right. This had nothing to do with gray matter. It was all about the ache she had for him between her legs.

Nothing more. Right?

Now if she could figure a way to keep him from touching her breasts.

"Should I call Sam and tell him not to worry?" she asked.

"This won't take long."

If he'd slapped her, it would've hurt less. She looked away, trying not to allow him to see her pain. Tears stung the back of her eyes until she remembered what he'd said earlier about crying if he said boo. She'd be damned if she'd give him the satisfaction. Holly still had a backbone, even if it was dusty from lack of use.

"I feel like I'm in a time warp," she said. "Even Grandpa bought a

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new sofa and curtains. This place is the same as it was ten years ago. Didn't your wife want to change anything?"

"I don't think we should talk about my marriage," he said, stopping to take her into his arms.

The effect of being in his strong arms was devastating. "We don't have to talk at all. Or kiss," she said when his head started down toward her lips, hoping to gain the distance she needed.

This time it was Ridge's turn to look shocked. Her words made him drop his arms. "Fine with me. You know where the bedroom is." He walked ahead of her, shedding his shirt and belt.

Inside the same room where they'd once made love on a regular basis, Holly's breath caught in her throat. "You didn't move into the master bedroom when your dad moved out?"

"For a while, when I got married." He sat on the bed to begin removing his boots.

Holly began to feel embarrassed just standing there, so she crossed one leg over the other and pulled her boot off. Her twisted ankle still hurt badly enough she had to sit to take the other one off. Ridge's bed was the only place in the room to sit. When she joined him on the bed, she saw him stiffen. He wasn't as unaffected by this as he wanted her to believe.

She removed her other boot and then stood to pull her jeans down just inches from his face. A rush of heat and moisture flooded her panties. When she slowly inched the pants down, he moved closer. Holly held her breath.

"Just sex," he whispered.

Holly wondered if he'd meant for her to hear. He hooked his fingers alongside her own, taking his time while he lowered her jeans to the floor, waiting for her to step out of them.

"It's cold in here," Holly said, before she jumped into the full-sized bed, pulling the covers up under her chin.

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Ridge drew his brows together in a frown, but he didn't argue when she left her sweater on. Instead, he crawled under the blanket with her. He made no move to touch her. If not for his large hard-on tenting the blanket, she might have wondered if he'd changed his mind.

Holly was about to take matters into her own hands when he reached over to the dresser next to the bed and opened the small drawer at the top. Relief flooded through her. Condoms. He had every intention of going all the way.

When he started to tear the foil wrapper with his teeth, she took the condom from his hand and opened it with her fingernail. She'd sheathed him so often in the past. She needed to wrap her fingers around him and feel his strength.

When Holly peeled back the covers, she tried not to let him see her trembling. He had the most magnificent cock in existence. It was perfect, except maybe bigger than she remembered. *That stands to reason*, she told herself. *Everything about him is bigger...more.*

Holly wanted to kiss him there, hold him, but she'd made the rules. No kissing, no talking—so different than they'd been together in the past. She rolled the condom over him, wondering if it would even fit. A flood of warmth between her legs told her she was ready for him. She'd been ready for years. Looking up from her task, she found him watching her.

Holly threw her leg over him, not hesitating to guide him to her core. She lowered herself onto the length of him until she was firmly impaled. She could both see and feel him trembling while she took a brief moment to adjust and stretch.

Leaning over, she grabbed the rail of the headboard, taking a deep breath as she did. Then she began to move, at first slowly, before increasing the tempo when the pressure built so rapidly she didn't have a choice.

Ridge brought both hands to her hips to encourage her. She threw

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her head back and closed her eyes. Nothing ever felt this good. Perfect. She wanted it to last forever.

Forever.

CHAPTER 3

Holly stared at her naked breasts in the bathroom mirror. There was no way Ridge wouldn't guess the truth once he got a closer look. The doctor did a good job, but they didn't look like her old breasts. They especially didn't feel like them.

"Holly, are you hiding in there?" Ridge asked from the other side of the closed door.

"I'm coming," she said.

"My sentiments exactly," he said and then laughed.

I have to tell him first. Ridge wanted to make love again. This time he insisted on everything. Talking, touching, kisses and everything they'd missed the first time.

Holly wrapped herself in a towel and walked out into the hallway.

"Holly!" a voice called out.

She did a half turn to see Tam appear out of nowhere.

"You told him," Tam said.

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Ridge walked up behind her. "Told him what?"

This wasn't how it was supposed to happen. Holly began to panic.

"Do you and Tam have something to tell me?" Ridge's voice was strained. "You two have a secret you want to share?"

Holly turned away from Tam to face Ridge. "Not a secret. Just something we haven't told you."

"Sometimes people are better off if they leave well enough alone," Ridge snapped. "I don't want to hear any ten-year-old confessions. Tam, take her home."

"But—" Tam started to say.

"Now! When I think of what almost just happened. What a fool..." Ridge stomped back to his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

Before she even gave thought to her clothes being still in his bedroom, the door opened again and he threw them out. The second slam was even louder than the first.

"I guess he still has a short fuse," Holly said.

"I'm sorry," Tam murmured. "When I saw you here like this...I thought you'd told him."

Holly retrieved her clothes from the floor with as much dignity as she could muster. She should have told Ridge. She had no one to blame for this mess but herself. If she'd told Ridge she'd had breast cancer at nineteen and *that* was the reason she'd left him, maybe they would still be planning to make love—not just have sex. Not because of a make-believe affair with Tam to fool Ridge into thinking she no longer loved him.

* * *

Almost twenty-four hours later, Holly still hadn't heard from Ridge. Tam insisted on setting Ridge straight, but she'd heard nothing from either of them. She decided she'd screwed up again and needed to give up any lingering hopes. When she took her daily horseback ride, she had no intention of going back to the deserted homestead. Yet, when

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she found herself there, she tied her horse where Ridge wouldn't be quick to discover her, if he happened by.

Not long after she arrived, she heard a truck pull into the yard. Jumping up, she looked out the hole in the wall at the end of the fireplace.

It wasn't Ridge.

Three men piled out of the pickup, laughing and pushing at one another. The last thing Holly wanted was to get caught alone in the desert with three strange men.

She searched for a way out of the house without being seen. The house had gaping holes in the outside walls. One entire room had the outside wall missing completely. If she went toward either the right or left, they would see her. Holly slowly backed up into what had once been a bedroom, and just her luck, it was the one room without a hole in the wall to escape.

From a vantage point behind a halfway-attached door, she hunkered down and prepared to throw herself out the only intact window in the entire house while she tried to keep watch on the intruders.

With her back tight against the wall, she figured to smash the door into their faces, if need be, before she dived out the window.

They congregated in front of the fireplace, sticking something in it. When one of them removed a ball cap and long, feminine blonde curls fell out, Holly started to breathe easier.

"Light the log," the woman said as she ran her fingers through her hair.

"Look," one man said. "Someone left us a blanket to keep warm."

"Won't need it." The other man laughed, then threw a rope into the air.

Holly couldn't see why, but she knew there were open beams where the roof had long since blown away on that corner of the house.

The woman began to undress while the men watched in silence. She

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started with her boots before removing her jeans. Her legs were long and shapely. She slipped her shirt over her head and held her hands above her head expectantly. "I can't believe I let you two talk me into this. You better hurry before I change my mind," she said, while the taller man tied her wrists with the rope hanging from the rafter, leaving the woman's left side facing Holly.

"A bet is a bet, Alicia," the shorter man chided.

Holly's breath caught in her throat. The trio was into bondage. What else would they do? In spite of herself, the thought began to excite her. It had been so long since she'd experienced any kind of sex life, she couldn't help being curious. Watching the three of them would allow her to live vicariously.

Another thought occurred to her. One she didn't want to think about. She took a closer look at the woman. Could she be Alicia Moore? Little Alicia, the sweet girl who used to find any reason to visit the ranch and hang out with the cowboys, especially Brett. Poor little Alicia, who had no father and whose mother was a drunk and worse?

"You should've removed your bra," the other man admonished with exaggerated concern. "Now I'll have to cut it off." He fished in his pocket, pulled out a small knife and circled her while he opened it.

The other man began to pull her thong underwear down over her hips. At first, he moved slowly, but the sight of her naked mound seemed to motivate him to hurry. The second guy cut the band of her bra, tossed it aside, then folded his knife with a sharp snap.

Alicia didn't say anything. Only the side of her face was visible, so there was no way for Holly to tell how she felt about what they were doing to her.

The man who cut her bra off began to suckle her breasts while the other one began to undress. Alicia began to moan and pull against her restraints. Holly experienced a sharp twinge of jealousy for not being able to enjoy a man's mouth on her breasts as she had in the past.

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“Hurry,” Alicia said. “This is finally starting to get me excited.”

The naked man moved to the front of the woman and tapped the other guy’s shoulder, almost like he was cutting in on a dance. The man’s condom-covered cock was stiff as he moved into the space occupied by his friend a second earlier.

“Don’t start without me,” the other guy said like he meant it and then started to shed his clothes.

Alicia grabbed hold of the rope, lifting her body from the ground and wrapping her incredibly long legs around the man in front of her.

“You’re being a bad girl, Alicia. I said don’t start without me,” the other one said.

“Get over here,” the man in front moaned. “Hurry up.”

When the second man moved behind the woman, Holly almost moaned out loud. He smacked Alicia on the ass, first one cheek and then the other and then rolled a condom over his cock. The sound was magnified by the stillness of the desert.

“Are you ready, Alicia?” he demanded and smacked her again.

“Now,” Alicia said.

Holly could see both men’s cocks thrusting, attempting to enter her at the same time. Alicia emitted a long, piercing moan and began to pant loudly.

Holly unzipped her jeans and fished her hand down to her throbbing clit.

At first one man moved in and out and then the other did likewise, but the tempo increased until they were both moving in unison. Alicia was moaning, louder and louder.

Then suddenly, the man in front of Alicia stopped, turned his head and stared toward the room Holly was in. She wondered if she made a noise that he’d heard or if he had finished too fast.

“Not yet,” Alicia demanded. “My clit, Carl. Jim is daydreaming.”

Carl was evidently the one with his cock in her ass. He moved a

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hand around in front of the woman. Only seconds later she was moaning in ecstasy and both men seemed to be coming with her.

"I think we have company," the one in front eventually said when they all stood motionless.

Holly didn't have time to react before a frowning, naked man with his limp dick swinging back and forth, headed straight toward her. She didn't know what to do. If she pushed the door shut on him, it could anger him more.

She stood and stepped aggressively around the door blocking his pathway and stopping him short. Then she wished she'd zipped her damned jeans.

"What do we have here?" he asked. "Were you getting off watching us?"

Holly *had* almost gotten off watching, but now she was worried how they'd react to finding her. "I saw you pull up and had no idea you'd planned something like this."

"Why would a woman be out here in this deserted hovel all alone?" he asked and moved closer. Too close for comfort.

"I own this place. What would you be doing here with No Trespassing signs posted?"

"I didn't see any signs. How about you, Carl? Did you see a sign?"

"Let's get out of here," Carl said. "Sorry, lady."

Alicia was scurrying to retrieve her clothes. However, the man in front of Holly didn't appear ready to leave. "Not so fast. I think Miss Snoop wants to join the party."

He reached out to touch Holly's breast. Holly reacted by slapping his hand away without thinking twice.

"You didn't answer my question, lady. Did you get off watching us?"

"Get your clothes on and get the hell out of here!" Holly said before she took a step back.

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Bile rose in her throat when the man gave her a vile grin and closed the space between them. This time, he rubbed himself against her.

"You heard her! Get out of here while you can still walk."

Ridge!

Holly breathed a sigh of relief and, for good measure, kneed the man in his naked balls for his uninvited touch.

"You bitch," he moaned and doubled over with his hands resting on his knees.

"Ask your playmate, Alicia," Ridge cautioned the man holding his balls. "She'll tell you I mean business."

"I'm sorry, Ridge. I didn't think anyone would mind if we used this old place," Alicia said while scurrying to cover her nakedness. "I had no idea Holly had come home."

"Here I thought teenagers were coming here. Alicia, take your friends and get out of here." Ridge grabbed a handful of men's clothes from the floor and threw them out one of the holes in the wall.

"I might have come here before, but this is the first time I did something like this." Alicia sounded desperate for Ridge to believe her.

"Just leave," Ridge said. "You need to pay attention to the company you're keeping."

The man Holly had kneed took a step closer to Ridge.

Jim, let it go," Alicia warned. "If you're thinking of getting it on with this cowboy, you'll regret it. Besides, you do anything to hurt *him*, then I'd have to hurt you."

"And you'll end up in jail for trespassing," Holly added.

"I'm sorry, Holly," Alicia said, sounding as if she's lost all her bravado. "I'm so embarrassed."

"I'll forget this, if you will," Holly said and watched Ridge's eyes narrow as he stared at Alicia.

"Are you going to tell Brett you found me like this?" she asked him.

"I'll give you a chance to tell him first. Don't take too long about

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it,” Ridge told her.

Alicia shrugged her shoulders. Holly swore there were tears in her eyes. “It won’t matter any to him.”

Holly remained silent while they filed into their truck in various stages of dress and sped away, kicking up a cloud of dust in the twilight.

Ridge took a couple of steps toward her. “I thought I told you to stay away from here until I found out who’d been hanging out. What if I hadn’t come along?”

Then Holly remembered her unzipped jeans—again. Ridge noticed at the same time. A zing of desire traveled through her. Just a glimpse of Ridge made her hotter than the show she’d just witnessed. “I can’t seem to stay away from this place. Perverse, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know. I seem to have the same perversion. We made a lot of good memories here. Nothing in my life has come close to what I shared with you in front of that fireplace.”

Holly wanted to throw herself in his arms and beg for his forgiveness for how she’d handled her illness. However, the knowledge she could be sick again kept her from acting on her impulse. “Maybe I should think about trying to restore this old place and sell the house my dad built. Do you think it’s too far gone to be brought back?”

Ridge’s gaze penetrated her. “If there’s a good foundation, anything can be restored.”

Holly experienced a flood of joy.

“You never answered the question your trespasser asked you. Were you getting off watching them? I saw you through the window.”

Holly felt herself smiling. It had always been easy for her to share her innermost sexual thoughts and desires with Ridge. No embarrassment or hesitancy. “I haven’t exactly had an active sex life. Not like when you and I were together. So...yes. I found watching them, ah...stimulating.”

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"I can tell. Is there anything you'd like me to do that could help?"

Holly felt like she was nineteen again. Living in the moment, years of pain washed away. "What *can* you do to help, cowboy?"

"This." He crossed the floor and took her into his arms. He brought his mouth down on hers like a drowning man, thirsting for water. Demanding lips made her open to meet him. The taste of him made her cry out with elation.

Ridge fervently kissed her until she was breathless. Holly threaded her fingers into his thick golden hair and urged him on. The touch, taste and smell of him filled a deep void in her soul. Heat flooded her already damp panties as she strained against the hard mound in his tight jeans. She burned inside for him. Needed him filling her.

"I need you," she whispered into his mouth. "Now." The ache of wanting him was so painful, she felt immobilized.

"I've needed you all my life, Holly." He delivered another kiss that rocked her world. When he broke away and looked down into her eyes, her legs almost buckled. "You told me yesterday you're afraid of hurting me again. I'm a man now. I can take care of myself, so you don't have to worry. You've done *all* the worrying for both of us it would seem."

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you about the cancer. If I could do it over, I'd do things so differently."

"All the wasted years. All the years of believing I wasn't man enough to keep you."

The pain in Ridge's eyes nearly suffocated her. She understood what he was experiencing because she'd suffered without *him* too. "I can't ask you to understand what I don't begin to understand myself. I left like I did because thought I was sparing you...that's my only defense. How can I make this right?"

"You can start with another kiss, but let me warn you, it'll take a couple of million kisses to erase the time we've lost."

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"I can do better than a kiss." Holly ran her hand along the length of him. "Let me show you."

Ridge laughed. "This floor won't be as comfortable as it was when we were kids. Come home with me. I want to be in a soft bed where I can take my time and do everything I've wanted to do to you for the last ten years."

"You want to strangle me?"

"That's the second thing on my list."

"What's first?"

"I want to taste every inch of you. I want to reacquaint myself with every mole, freckle and scar my tomboy Holly has. I want to hear the little squeak you make when I lick your sweet place from clit to core."

"Okay," Holly croaked, not expecting him to be so easy. "I like your *first* idea."

"Unless you think we could call this an appetizer. We could consider it just a little taste to whet our appetites for later."

"I can't wait until we get to your bed. Something could happen to change your mind," she said, feeling a sense of elation. It felt wonderful to hear him speak without pain in his voice. *If only*. If only they really could have a second chance.

"You never could wait." He paused, giving her sexy grin. "And I could never stay mad at you." He pulled open the snap buttons of his shirt and shrugged out of it. Then he lowered the zipper on his jeans and pushed them down to allow his magnificent erection to spring free.

Holly gasped. He was hung like a horse.

He chuckled, making Holly wonder what he could see in her face. "Climb on up here and I'll give you a ride."

She took a step back and began to undress. "I hate undressing in front of you...all the way naked," she whispered and touched her fingertips to the front of her sweater.

"In case you hadn't noticed, it's getting dark. Even though you're

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just a little too thin, it's nothing a few good meals can't cure."

"It's not about being too skinny," she said after she stepped out of her jeans and panties. She ran her hand over her sweater, avoiding touching her own breasts.

"Let me help you with that," Ridge said huskily.

Holly stepped forward and raised her arms. He pulled the garment over her head, keeping his eyes locked on hers. He dropped her sweater, tracing his hand along her throat and then down. His touch ignited her, despite her doubt. When he unfastened her bra with a flick of his other hand, she closed her eyes so she wouldn't have to see his expression.

A second later, she felt his lips on her nipple. His kiss breathed life into her. She'd believed she'd lost sensitivity, but his touch sent a frisson of desire zinging downward to her sex.

"Yes," she whispered before she opened her eyes to look down at his golden head. As she watched, his tongue darted out to lave her nipple and she thought she would die. Not only did she feel it all the way to her curling toes, her head was spinning in disbelief. "Oh, cowboy, what you do to me!"

Ridge reached down with both hands and lifted, bringing her high into the air in front of him. "Wrap your legs around me."

She did. With her legs spread wide, the cool air tickled her, making her wetter. She could feel his cock touching her ass. She wanted him inside her. "Please..." she begged.

He lifted her again slightly, slowly lowering her, until she could feel the tip of his cock poised at her aching opening.

"I've haven't been alive since—" she told him before he smothered her with a kiss.

He thrust up into her, while allowing her weight to carry her down on him until he filled her, touching her both physically and emotionally as she hadn't been touched since she'd left years earlier. Her need to be

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filled by this man and only him was so great she could feel her release building. She tried to gain control, but when he started to move, she exploded. Ridge continued to press into her while she climbed an invisible mountain of pleasure. Each thrust released an opus of euphoria so intense it bordered on pain when her emotions got caught up in the thrill of being with the only man she ever loved.

Ridge threw back his head and gave a predatory roar while he poured his seed deep into her womb. "Holly!"

CHAPTER 4

Early the next morning as Holly wheeled Sam's old Chevy dually into the clinic parking lot, she thought about how her evening with Ridge had such an anti-climatic end. Twice now Ridge's close buddies had spoiled their plans. Mike, Tam and Brett *all* came by Ridge's and didn't seem to take the hint she wanted to be alone with Ridge. Holly couldn't fault them. She understood why they were worried about him. Tam was the only one who knew what had happened so long ago. Mike and Brett considered her poison for Ridge and went out of their way to keep them apart.

She'd fallen asleep on Ridge's couch and he didn't wake her. Then when morning came and Ridge finally wanted to get frisky, she had to do some fast thinking to get him to bring her home in time to go to her doctor's appointment, without telling him about it.

Worry over what the doctor might tell her didn't compare to the all-consuming emotions she was feeling for Ridge. Their teenage love had

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been powerful, but nothing could have prepared her for the intense adult feelings growing every second she was with him.

The clinic lobby was empty when she walked in. Holly studied the chart on the wall, indicating the locations of the various doctors.

“Holly Turner. What brings you back to Cave Creek?”

Holly turned toward the voice to see the last person she expected to find at the clinic—Bobbi Jo Gerow, Ridge’s ex-wife, dressed in hospital scrubs. She stood with her arms crossed across her very well-developed chest, waiting for Holly to answer. Wonder Woman didn’t have anything on gorgeous Bobbi Jo. She had a body to make even straight women take a second look.

“I decided to come home,” Holly said and began to search for a way to make a quick escape.

“Have you seen Ridge yet?”

Holly tried not to let anything show in her face as she nodded, but when Bobbi Jo frowned, Holly knew she’d failed.

“Of course you’ve seen him. What a stupid question. You two have already been going at it, haven’t you? Why should that surprise me?”

“Ridge told me you guys were separated for a long time before you divorced him.” Holly didn’t know what else to say. It was evident Bobbi Jo was carrying a grudge against *her*.

“It didn’t take me any time to realize I’d always be living in your shadow.” Bobbi Jo’s expression brightened despite her words. “It’s funny you came back *now* of all times. When I finally get the upper hand, you’re here to see it.” She rubbed her belly, making Holly’s heart sink when she considered where the conversation could be heading.

“Smart lady,” Bobbi Jo said. “Yep, I’m pregnant with Ridge’s baby. You’re the first to know. I haven’t even told him yet, since I just found out. I guess our one last fuck for old times’ sake is going to be something Ridge regrets, now you’ve come home.”

When Bobbi Jo walked away laughing, Holly collapsed into a chair.

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The back of her eyelids stung with unshed tears. She took a deep breath. *Nothing ever happens without a reason*, she reminded herself. *There has to be a reason I've been given this added burden.*

A glance at her watch told her she'd be late for her appointment if she delayed. She waited another minute and then another before she tucked the medical file she'd brought with her under her arm and headed back to the parking lot. *Appointment be damned...* She couldn't handle any more bad news for one day.

When she saw Ridge's truck in her driveway, she wanted to run away. Since they hadn't used protection their last time together, for all Holly knew, she could be pregnant as well.

Ridge came to open her door right after she cut the motor. "I have a surprise for you," he said with a bright, golden smile lighting his handsome face.

"I'm not in the mood for any more surprises today," she snapped.

"What's wrong? Ridge asked.

"I ran into your ex."

"Where did you see Bobbi Jo?"

Holly wished she'd kept her big mouth shut. She didn't want to explain what she was doing at the clinic where Bobbi Jo evidently worked. "I didn't realize she's a nurse."

"She's a good one. Really cares about helping people. Did you two have words or something? Where did you run into her?"

"I think maybe you should speak to Bobbi Jo. I don't want to get in the middle of this."

"There's nothing to get in the middle of. Bobbi Jo and I are finished. Hell, we never even made a decent start other than our drunken wedding in Vegas. What did she say to make you think different?"

"What's your surprise?" Holly asked hoping to distract him.

"I got Brett to cover for me so I could take a couple days off to

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spend with you. I think we need to get to know one another again, and I don't want to waste any time. We've already lost ten years."

Holly felt a sting at the back of her eyes. She'd give anything to go back to when she was nineteen. Her decision not to share her cancer with Ridge had been a mistake. A horrible, ugly mistake and she didn't know how to make it right. Especially so now, with Ridge about to be told he had a baby on the way.

Ridge's cell phone began to ring. He rolled his eyes and pulled it off his belt.

Holly took a step back, leaning against the seat of her still open truck door. She tried not to listen to his conversation, but it quickly became apparent he wasn't happy.

"Bobbi Jo. Just tell me. You don't have any business coming here."

Holly couldn't believe what she was hearing. Bobbi Jo was coming to her house?

"What do you mean? What did you do to Holly? Damn!" Ridge said, snapping the phone shut and moving closer to Holly. "What did she do to you?"

"This really doesn't have anything to do with me," Holly said. "This is something for you and Bobbi Jo to settle."

"She said it was a matter of life and death. I know Bobbi Jo can be excitable at the mention of you, but this isn't like her."

"Life and death?" Could Bobbi Jo have discovered Holly had an appointment with an oncologist?

"That's what she said. And she said to keep you here if I have to hogtie you."

Holly remembered the medical file on the seat next to her and stood close the door of the truck.

"What's that?" Ridge asked.

Holly pretended she didn't have a clue what he meant. She slammed the door and turned toward the barn. Ridge put his arm out to

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stop her. For a second, she thought about swatting it away, but instead, a torrent of tears burst out of her. The harder she tried to gain control, the less she had. Ridge cocooned her in his strong arms while he stroked the back of her head.

"It'll be okay, Holly. Whatever this is, we'll face it together this time."

In the comfort of his arms, her tears came easily. Unshed tears for the loss of her mother, her aunt, her cousin Connie and then finally, she cried for the loss of the parts of her body she'd once thought were vital to being a woman. Ridge had shown her nothing like that mattered. Nothing, but being together. Forever.

Or had he? Could their relationship survive a baby? Could they survive another siege with cancer? It would be asking a lot. She cried until there were no tears left.

Holly raised her face to kiss Ridge, only to discover his face was as wet as her own. She hadn't even known he was crying along with her. Their lips fused in a kiss so poignant, she felt in an instant...complete.

At the sound of a car pulling in next to them, Holly broke free. She didn't recognize the car, but the driver was another matter. Bobbi Jo Gerow.

"Whatever this is about, we're together. Right?" Ridge asked.

Before Holly could answer, Bobbi Jo was at her side. "I so sorry," she said in a rush. "What I did was unforgivable. I didn't know."

"Didn't know what?" Ridge demanded. "What didn't you know?"

"I saw your name in Dr. Pauley's appointment book. If I'd known, I'd have never told you I was pregnant with Ridge's baby."

Ridge turned pale. Holly watched the emotions play over his face.

"How can that be?" he asked. "Are you saying something happened the night you had me sign the divorce papers? Aside from tying one on?"

"Nothing happened," Bobbi Jo admitted sheepishly and gave Ridge

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an imploring look. "I lied to Holly. When I saw her at the clinic, it never entered my mind she could be there for something serious. Holly was standing outside the OB-GYN's office. Then I thought about the night I put you to bed drunk. I decided to give you both a hard time. And then, when I got to my office, I saw Holly's name in the appointment book. She was referred from a doctor in New York. That doesn't happen unless—"

"You have cancer again?" Ridge's voice cracked as he spoke.

"I didn't know you left here because you had cancer," Bobbi Jo tried to explain. "Brett told me when I called Ridge's ranch. He said Tam was the only one who knew the truth back then."

"You aren't going to have a baby?" Holly asked.

"No. I haven't been in Ridge's bed for years. I was being vindictive and mean. He never loved me. It was always you. If I'm being honest, I never really loved Ridge either, not like the two of you love each other. I've never known that kind of love."

"Holly, you didn't answer my question," Ridge insisted. "Has the cancer returned?"

Holly took a deep breath. "I think so. I'm not certain."

"I've made another appointment for you first thing in the morning," Bobbie Joe said. "You'll be there, won't you? I'm so sorry about driving you away today. So very sorry."

"She'll be there," Ridge said. "I think you better go. Holly and I need some time to ourselves."

* * *

Ridge had never thought he'd get a second chance with Holly. "I'll be damned if I'll let this come between us now."

Holly huddled in her fluffy bathrobe on the edge of her bed as he knelt in front of her and towel dried her hair. Even the hot shower they'd shared hadn't stopped her from trembling like a leaf in the wind.

"You've already given me more than I could've hoped for," she

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said. "You made me feel like a whole woman. I felt sexy again when you made love to me."

"Glad I could help," he teased. "Remember how many times we made love right here in this room? If I were to guess, I'd say over a hundred times."

Holly smiled sweetly at him, a gesture so fragile he felt its touch deep inside his heart.

"You're the most honorable person I've ever met," she whispered softly. "If only..."

Ridge touched his fingers to her lips. She stopped speaking and brought both hands up to capture his. She kissed his fingers one by one. Her touch traveled straight to his cock after passing through his healing heart.

"Welcome home, sweetheart," he told her. "You're back where you belong. And you're here to stay."

"Where I've always belonged."

"Forever," he whispered, trying not to choke up.

Whether they had one day, a year or a lifetime, Holly was *his* again. He'd be damned if he wasted a single moment with regrets or fear. He pushed her back until she laid flat in front of him. A single tug on the belt of her robe and it opened. He ran his hands up to open it to his needy eyes. Her breasts weren't the same, but he hadn't fallen in love with her breasts. He could tell she wanted to see his reaction. He smiled.

"I'm going to enjoy fattening you up some. You need some meat on this rib," he told her and kissed the first rib he could see. "And this one," he said working his way upward. When he got to her breasts he stopped. "And, these...I have to make up for years of neglect. Do you even touch them?"

Holly looked horrified by his question.

"Shame on you, Holly. You used to love to touch your breasts."

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Touch them now. Do it for me.” He didn’t wait on her response. Taking her hand in his, he brought it to her breast, allowing his knuckles to brush across her nipples first. The satisfyingly sharp intake of breath told him how she was affected.

Trying not to make too much of an issue this first time, he kissed her fingers like she had his. Only between each kiss, he kissed her other breast. By the time he’d kissed three of her fingers, she held her breast firmly.

“I love you,” she moaned.

He felt so powerful, he nearly came right then.

Holly had always known how to read him. She shifted on the bed until she could reach his balls. They were tucked in tight, elevated against his body and ready to fire. With her thumb and forefingers she gently pulled on his sac, just above his sensitive, engorged balls. She patiently urged them back down again.

“No one has ever done that except you. You know me as well as I do myself. Together we’ll discover everything new and different about you too, Holly.”

“I’m already rediscovering myself,” she said with a smile. “I feel you from my hair follicles to my toenails. Is that possible?”

Ridge felt reborn. Every second of life from this day forward would not be taken for granted. He wanted to kiss her everywhere. There was nothing to stop him.

He began to move back down her ribs to her belly button and down to where he most wanted to be. Inhaling the sweet smell of her, he urged her legs wide apart and spread her silky lips with both hands before he delivered an open-mouthed kiss. The taste and velvety texture nearly sent him over the edge again. He couldn’t be every place he wanted to be at once. He laved her from her honeyed core to her clit, gently sucking her sensitive button into his mouth.

Holly’s hips lifted toward the ceiling in response. He went with her,

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keeping pressure applied to her clit without letup. By the ragged sound of her breath, he knew she was about to reward him. He slipped first one finger and then two into the tight walls of her sweet center. An instant later, he felt the shimmering tremors of her orgasm. At first slight, they built until she jerked and squeezed his fingers over and over. He released her throbbing clit and watched her finish coming for him.

“I need to feel you milk my cock like you just did my fingers. Can you do that for me, Holly?”

Her eyes were glazed when she focused on him, but she managed to nod.

The twin-sized bed was perfect. On his knees in front of her, he was the perfect height to enter her. He pulled her to the edge of the bed and, with one hand, guided his painful erection to her wet core. He dipped the head of his thick cock into her. Holly was on her elbows watching him enter her.

He poised like that until she met his gaze.

“More?” she questioned.

“How much more?” he asked and moved inside just a fraction until, she began to wiggle impatiently. The walls of her pussy clutched and released repeatedly. Once again, he waited until she stopped looking at his cock and met his eyes.

She smiled a bright brilliant smile. “I know what you’re trying to do. You always were jealous of your own cock. I love looking at it, so get over it.” She looked back down to where they were joined, only this time she didn’t just look. She wrapped her fingers around him and pulled until she couldn’t get more without removing her hand.

“All the way,” she whispered.

Ridge moved slowly as her walls stretched and swallowed him to the hilt. He was fully engulfed in her and never wanted to leave. The desire to pump drove him to pull back. The walls of her tight pussy

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collapsed around him and the second push inside her was almost as tight as the first.

“I know what’ll light a fire under you,” she said.

Holly reached her hand down to her clit and began to rub. The sight drove him crazy. Before he pulled her hand away, he felt the pulsating throbs signaling she was coming again.

“That’s cheating,” he said and began to thrust harder, until she was making the sweet sounds he’d thought he’d never hear again.

The sound traveled to his balls, making them pull up tight against his body like a cocked gun. Three more hard thrusts and he went over the top, firing into her. A deep growl rattled the back of his throat. With each breath he filled her repeatedly until he thought he’d never stop. He lost track of how many contractions sent his hot seed into her until he had nothing left to give.

CHAPTER 5

Holly's head was swimming when she handed her thick file to the doctor and sat shivering in a thin, backless gown on the examining table. Ridge had wanted to come into the examination room with her, but she'd made him wait outside.

Bobbi Jo, however, wouldn't take no for an answer. She held Holly's hand, patted her, and generally made a nuisance of herself. But Holly didn't mind. In fact, it felt good to have her there.

"Bobbi Jo has been filling me in on your family history. You've been through a lot for someone so young. She also told me about the rotten trick she played on you yesterday."

Bobbi Jo shrugged her shoulders. "I thought he should know how I affected your emotional state."

"This will take me a few minutes," the doctor said as he began to leaf through the numerous pages. After what seemed more like an hour, he looked up at her. "You had a thorough work-up only six weeks ago.

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What makes you believe the cancer has returned?"

"I have a lump under my arm," Holly told him.

"Let's have a look."

Holly raised her right arm, and he began to push and prod the offending lump. "Where did you say it is?"

Holly began to point it out, but couldn't find it. "Maybe the swelling has gone down."

"I can't say for certain, given your history, but I'm not sure what you think you felt under your arm. I'm only feeling healthy tissue and no lumps. We'll run a few tests to make certain, but I'm confident enough to say I don't think you have anything to worry about if that was your only symptom and now we can't find anything. You've had no other complaints?"

"Nothing," Holly told him. "That's why the lump surprised me."

"I advise taking better care of yourself. You could stand to gain a few pounds. I'm going to prescribe a vitamin supplement for you and I have a weight-gain regimen I'd like you to follow while we are waiting for the results of the tests we'll run."

"Okay," Holly said. This time when Bobbi Jo squeezed her hand, Holly squeezed back.

The doctor made some notes in the file before he turned back to her. "Bobbi Jo will take some blood. If you have any questions, let her know and she'll get you the answers you need. And try to avoid stress," he said while staring pointedly at Bobbi Jo who appeared crestfallen at his admonition.

Immediately after the doctor closed the door behind him, Bobbi Jo came to life, jumped up and began a happy dance. "I'm sorry," she said. "I can't help it. If it turned out you had cancer again after that stunt I pulled, I'd have shot myself. I'm not normally a vindictive bitch, I promise."

"Ridge vouched for you. He told me any problems the two of you

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had were because of him,” Holly said. “The doctor sounded pretty confident about my lump.”

“Trust me, Dr. Pauley wouldn’t have gone out on a limb like that unless he was. I’ve worked with him for five years and I can count on the fingers on one hand the times he’s said anything without the tests in his hand.”

Holly wanted to get up, despite her paper gown and do a happy dance too. “Do me a favor,” she asked.

“Anything.”

“Go get Ridge for me. I can’t wait to tell him.”

“My pleasure. Really.”

When Bobbi Jo closed the door, Holly jumped from the table and began to dress. She stood with her underpants on and her bra backwards as she fastened it when Ridge arrived.

“Bobbi Jo looked happy.” Ridge sounded hopeful even as his worried eyes sought hers.

“The doctor seems to think I panicked for nothing. Bobbi Jo says he wouldn’t tell me that unless he was certain.”

Ridge turned away from her. At first Holly didn’t understand why until she saw his shoulders shaking. Forgetting her bra, she grabbed him from behind to hug up against him. He twisted around and kissed her, wet face and all.

Holly kissed the tears on his face, thinking nothing had ever tasted so sweet—or a moment more intensely intimate. “If not for you, I’d be going through this all alone,” she told him.

“You’re never going to be alone again,” Ridge said, taking a swipe at his face. “Let’s get you dressed. We have a wedding to plan. And an old house to rebuild.”

“You meant what you said about the old homestead? We can fix it up and live there together?”

“Holly, do you realize you’re a rich woman? The land you own is

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pure gold.”

Holly laughed. “That’s what they tell me. Funny, money doesn’t make me feel rich, but you do. You’re pure gold. You always have been, to me.”

“Forever, Holly.”

“Forever,” she whispered back.

BRIT BLAISE

Brit Blaise lives and writes in hot and steamy Phoenix, Arizona, where she owns a mountainside home among the Saguaro cacti, rattlesnakes, smoldering temperatures and lots of real cowboys. She has a husband, three children and two Labradors. Brit loves the history and adventure of the sunny southwest even if she doesn't love the heat (that kind anyway).

Brit started seriously writing in 2002. Her first contemporary comedy was a finalist in the 2002 Realizing the Dream Contest by Phoenix Desert Rose and since then she's added to her list of achievements.

She enjoys writing and reading above all else, but her hobbies include needlework, quilting, gardening and arena football. Go Phoenix Rattlers! She likes to hear from readers; you can visit her website at www.Britblaise.com.

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