



Boss Man

Red Rose Publishing™



Marie Rochelle

Tycoon Club: 2

Boss Man

By

Marie Rochelle

Dedication:

To Patrick:

*Thank for all the joy you have given me
over the years.*

Marie



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Chapter One

Fancy Shayne sat outside the closed office door wondering for the fifth time what in the hell she was doing here. Sure, the job ad had read perfect in the newspaper but did she really want to apply for it. The Tycoon Club money was excellent. However, if she landed this job she could quit the club and save up money faster.

Wiping her sweaty palms down the front of her pants, she tried to calm down her racing pulse. It wouldn't do her any good to show him how nervous he actually made her. She was here to land this job not drool all over the man who was about to interview her. Headley was so wrong thinking she would land the job because of their friendship. Hell, half the time he wouldn't even acknowledge her when he walked past her on the sidewalk in town. Why would he invite her to live under the same roof as him?

No, this was a mistake. She had to get out of here before she made a huge ass out of herself. Standing up, Fancy was about to head for the front door when the door swung open in front of her. Her feet froze in the middle of the carpeted floor as the man she had a Texas sized crush on filled its doorway.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, Ms. Shayne,” Maxwell Reed apologized in a deep Texas drawl. “I was on the phone. Why don’t you come on in and we can get this interview started.”

Fancy sent up a silent prayer as her feet moved toward the gorgeous hunk watching her with an unblinking stare. She really needed this job. Working at the Tycoon Club was a good stepping stone to building up her bank account, but she wanted a more stable job in her life and benefits would be great. Plus work wasn’t the same since Headley married Troy and no longer worked there. She had debated for almost a week before finally applying for the personal assistant/cook position at *CrossStar Ranch*.

Maxwell Reed didn’t know this, but he had been a part of a hot and cold relationship in her life for years now. Ever since he retired from bull-riding, came back to town, sold his father’s business and started one of his own, way out here on the outskirts of town. One minute she was head over heels in love with the man. However, in the next breath she hated the sight of him.

For some reason, she rubbed him the wrong way and she wasn’t quite sure what gave him such a low opinion of her. She was a good person and a hard worker. Yet, the times she built up enough courage to ask him out on a date at the Tycoon Club, he would brush her off or completely ignore her. But she wasn’t going to let that stop her from applying for this job.

Fancy plastered a smile on her face and moved in his direction. “That’s okay, Mr. Reed,” she replied, walking into Maxwell’s office. “I haven’t been waiting that long.”

Fancy heard the door snap closed behind her and she waited for Maxwell to say something to her. He had a way of making a person very nervous with his silence. It had made her very uncomfortable the first time he did it to her.

It had been at the Tycoon Club. She had asked him a question about his dinner order and instead of answering her. He had studied her a few minutes like she hadn’t spoken to him before he finally answered her question. Yeah, Maxwell Reed had an aloof quality about him that she found very sexy, but she was trying her best not to let him know that she was still interested in him.

“Why don’t you take a seat?” Maxwell waved his hand toward the empty chair in front of his desk before he took a seat behind it.

“Thank you, Mr. Reed.” Fancy sat down on the edge of the chair trying not to moan after the scent of his cologne hit her. Instead she focused her attention on how spotless Maxwell’s office was. She noticed several framed articles about Maxwell’s rodeo days on the wall. Maxwell had been a huge star about five years ago, but out of the blue he retired and no one knew the reason why.

“So, Ms. Shayne you want to work for me,” Maxwell stated leaning back in the leather chair making her draw her focus away from the wall back to him. “I was very surprised to receive your resume in the mail.”

Fancy tried not to notice how the blue plaid shirt stretched across his wide chest. She *loved* when a man looked like Maxwell: Tall, strong, and ready to make you love being a woman. She didn’t doubt that he couldn’t do it- *all night long and probably well into the morning.*

“Do you have the qualifications that I’m looking for? I read over your resume a couple of times, but I didn’t see much experience as a personal assistant on there. I have been home for several years now and I have only seen you work at Tommy’s club as a waitress... Do you know how to be a personal assistant?”

How dare he imply that she wasn’t smart enough to be his personal assistant because of her previous job? Maxwell knew nothing about her. Yet, he was trying to read her like an open book. She was able to accomplish any job she put her mind to. How hard could it be to answer the telephone, send emails, and do whatever other job Maxwell tossed her way? Tommy trusted her enough to help him from time to time in the office, so she had an idea of what personal assistant duties entailed.

“Mr. Reed, while you were gone on the rodeo circuit I graduated from college with a degree in computer information systems and my minor was in

business as you probably saw on my resume,” she flung back, not really caring if her outburst cost her job. ”In addition, you can call Tommy as one of my references. I have helped him out in the office numerous times when he was overwhelmed. I know how to be a personal assistant”. Maxwell needed to learn how to talk to people, she thought to herself.

Maxwell leaned forward in his chair pinning her with his familiar stare. “If you have a degree like that, is there a reason you don’t have a better job than working for Tommy?” Maxwell asked like she hadn’t even tossed her first answer at him. “Nothing against him, but you should be working at an office not at a gentleman’s club,”

How dare he talk to her like that! If the Tycoon Club was so bad, why had he previously come in four times a week with Troy and Cole? “I’ve applied for several jobs,” Fancy answered, trying to control her temper. “Sometimes I get called for an interview and sometimes I don’t. I have bills to pay, so I went to Tommy and since we were friends he hired me. It was an honest paycheck, so I took the job.”

“I thought I heard you mention to Headley a while back that you had another one. Why do you need this one? I can’t afford to have you here some days and gone others. I need a full-time employee and a part-time one.”

Damn, did this man remember every conversation that he had ever heard in his life? She had quit that job a week after she got it. Her boss thought working late into the night meant something different than she did and she wasn't having that. If he had touched her ass one more time, she would have broken his hand.

"I had to quit that one, so it won't be a problem. In addition, Tommy will understand if I get this job I will have to give my notice at the club. He's fine with that if it happens."

Fancy had a bad feeling that Maxwell was leaning towards not offering her the job. Why hadn't she listened to that inner voice her grandmother taught her about as a little girl? It warned her not to come here, but no she didn't listen. This was truly a lapse in judgment on her part. She should have never let Headley talk her into this.

She knew her friend was secretly trying to play matchmaker. Where had Headley gotten the idea Maxwell was in love with her? Hell, he hated her and made it clear she wasn't his favorite person. It was a horrible waste of her time and energy to be sitting for this interview... Maxwell wasn't about to hire her.

"Can you cook?" Maxwell shot the next question at her shocking her out of her inner thoughts. "That's also the second part of the position. My cook is retiring at the end of the week. I need someone to take care of that for me," he informed her. "The meals don't have to be fancy because I'm a meat and potatoes man."

Fancy let her eyes wander over Maxwell's muscular body. She couldn't agree more with his comment. He was all man and that was one of the main reasons she was so attracted to him. She wasn't ashamed to admit she dreamt about him at night naked in bed with her, but that is all it would ever be for her-a dream.

"Cooking isn't a problem for me," she replied with confidence. "I learned how to cook from my grandmother. She was an excellent cook and taught me all of her secrets. It won't be a problem if you decide to hire me."



"Miss. Shayne, you're making this a hard decision for me." Maxwell said, sliding back some in his seat. The leather squeaked under his weight and Fancy swore she had never heard a sexier sound in her life.

Fancy tried not to squirm in her seat as Maxwell studied her. She didn't have a clue what was going through that gorgeous head of his. It could be good or it could be bad with him she never knew. The only thing she knew was that they weren't friends, but she prayed that wouldn't make him not hire her.

"I have one last question for you," he stated making her wonder what in the hell he was about to ask her. This could be the make or break her question.

"What is it?"

“Do you really think you can work for me? I know we haven’t had the best history with each other. You have asked me out at least twice and I turned you down. Can we get past that history?”

Of course, he would bring that up. She wasn’t an idiot. Maxwell wasn’t in her league and she knew that now. This was definitely a trick question. She wouldn’t blow it by saying too much. Maxwell was trying to find a way not to hire her, but she couldn’t let that happen.

Taking a couple of deep breaths, Fancy rubbed her hands down the front of her pants and then looked Maxwell directly in the eyes.

“Mr. Reed, if I’m lucky enough to land this job. I’m going to be your employee and I will give you the respect you rightly deserve. I’m not here looking for a date with you because that would be very unprofessional. Any bad words said between us in the past will stay there. I know how to separate the two.” There she couldn’t do anymore, if Maxwell didn’t hire her, it wasn’t because she didn’t have a damn good interview.

Standing up, Maxwell stuck out his hand to her. “Welcome to *CrossStar* Ranch, Ms. Shayne. I expect you to have your stuff here by the end of the day. I’ll tell you the rest of your duties once you’re moved in.”

“I can’t believe it.”

Fancy quickly jumped to her feet and shook Maxwell's hand. Trying desperately to ignore the warmth of his palm and her burning attraction to him was hard to do. Yet, from this day on Maxwell Reed was her boss and nothing else. All she had to do was remember that and everything should work out fine and her saying a prayer everyday for her sanity wouldn't hurt either.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Reed. I won't make you regret your decision to hire me," she replied ending the handshake.

"I hope not," Maxwell answered, looking at her one last time before retaking his seat.

Turning on her heel, Fancy quickly left the office closing the door behind her. She couldn't wait until she got home and called Headley. This had to be the best day of her life and she wanted to share it with her best friend.

Chapter Two

Fancy worked on packing up what little clothes she had and blocking out the nonsense being tossed her way. The woman sitting in the chair next to her bed didn't have a clue what she was talking about. Headley, however, wasn't going to let the topic drop until she finally answered her.

“So, did you tell Maxwell that you had a huge crush on him?” Headley asked. “I know if I see how you look at him then he's bound to see it too. He would have to be blind or dumb not too. Hell, a blind man could feel the attraction you have for Maxwell”.

“He is a gorgeous man, but all of that hardness is a little much for me. Troy is bad enough, but I do believe Maxwell Reed is worse. However, I think you could have him. He just needs a little TLC and he'll be a softie.”

“Will you stop? I don't have a crush on my new boss anymore. He made sure of that before he hired me. If he thought for a minute I still was harboring any kind of romantic interest in him I wouldn't have gotten the job. I need this money. This job at CrossStar is very important to me”

“He’s going to be my boss and nothing else. Why do you keep pushing me towards him? You know he doesn’t see me like that. Honestly, I think he hates me. Have you seen how he looks at me?”

“Oh, don’t let that look fool you,” Headley insisted, brushing off her earlier comment with a flick of her wrist. “Maxwell likes you a lot. I haven’t forgotten how he looked at you at the club. I *know* that look. It’s the same one Troy used to give me all the time,” Headley replied. “He’s just fighting his feelings for you while Troy made his known to me.”

“What do you mean used to?” Fancy laughed. “I saw the two of you in town yesterday and Troy was looking at you like you were the love of his life. The two of you make me so sick. Hell, I think the whole town is envious of the love Troy has for you. He truly is your soul mate in every way that counts.”

Fancy was glad that Headley knew she was teasing her. Honestly, she was a little envious of Headley’s relationship with Troy. Troy knew he was in love with her best friend and didn’t stop pursuing her until he finally won her heart.

A dreamy smile covered Headley’s face as she rubbed her pregnant stomach. Headley was due in about two months and she could tell her friend couldn’t be happier about becoming a mother.

“Yeah, I guess I did luck out with Troy. He still has a few of those control issues, but he’s a lot better than he was,” Headley said.

“Yesterday, he didn’t want me to visit Tommy at the club. Can you believe that? I really hadn’t talked to Tommy since we got married and Troy was concerned I was trying to get my old job back. I swear that man has the craziest mind,” she laughed shaking her head.

“I think it’s kinda of cute the way he wants to take care of you.” Fancy wished she had the spunk that Headley possessed. Headley had always been so independent and never let anything or anyone intimidate her.

“I know Troy means well and I love him with all my heart, but he’s a little more overprotective since I got pregnant. Do you know he hired a cook? He doesn’t want me on my feet too much. I believe that there are other pregnant women in the world fixing meals for their husbands,” Headley sighed rolling her eyes.

Fancy couldn’t keep the smile off her face. She knew Troy was excited about becoming a father, but surely he hadn’t done that to Headley. “Are you serious? So, what can you do?” Reaching for the jeans on the bed, she folded them up and placed them in the side of her suitcase.

“Well, I’m helping with a lot of the financial aspects of the ranch and I love it. I think Troy just loves having me around the office. All of the employees are always smiling at us and telling me how much Troy changed when I came into his life.”

“I agree with them. Troy did change for the better when you came back home. The two of you are the perfect couple,” Fancy admitted closing her suitcase. “I feel bad sometimes because I don’t have what you do, but everyone isn’t meant to be madly in love. I’ll settle for a good job.”

“Fancy, don’t feel bad,” Headley sighed as she got up from her seat. Coming across the room, she placed her arm around her shoulder giving her a hug.

“Maxwell is the perfect man for you. All you have to do is give him the chance to see it. You have to understand that he has been a bachelor a lot longer than Troy. So, he is going to fight his feelings for you more, but you will win him over in the end. Aren’t the best things in life worth waiting for? I bet Maxwell will end up being worst than Troy when he figures out he’s in love with you.”

Why was Headley pushing her towards Maxwell so hard? Sure, she thought the tall, muscular former bull rider was the sexiest man she had ever laid eyes on. Yet, Maxwell never looked at her with interest. She wasn’t about to embarrass herself again with him by letting her true emotions show. No, she was keeping it strictly on a business level.

“Please stop with all of the talk about Maxwell being the man for me. Once again, I got this job because I assured him we could work together. You know why I need this job. I’m not about to ruin it with my unrequited love for him. So, keep

all of this fantasy you're living in to yourself. Because if you tell Troy he'll run and tell Maxwell and I don't need him finding a reason to get rid of me."

"Fine," Headley sighed removing her arm. "You're right; however, I still think you're wrong about Maxwell. But I won't bring it up anymore, at least not for a little while anyway. Are you about ready to leave this hotel and head back to the ranch?"

Looking around the room one last time, Fancy was still finding it hard to believe that she was leaving this place. It had been her home for such a long time and a part of her was going to miss it. However, she was ready to start this new job and make a better life for herself.

"Yes, I'm ready to leave this place," she answered grabbing her suitcase off the bed. "This place is a part of my past and I'm ready to start my future."

"Glad to hear it. Now let's hit the road, but we have to make a stop first. This kid I'm carrying is always hungry. I swear for the longest time I thought I was having twins from the way I gobbled down food, but the doctor told me I'm not. Do you want something?"

"No, thanks I'm fine," Fancy answered trying not to laugh at how cute Headley looked in her maternity top.

“Well, I’m craving a double cheeseburger with fries.” Headley confessed rubbing her cute stomach again as she walked out the hotel room door in front of her.

Chapter Three

“I heard that you hired a new employee. How do you think that is going to work out?” Cole Brady asked him. “Fancy is very attractive. In the past, I might have tried something, but since we have become friends I wouldn’t do that unless she came onto me first. I’m not the kind of man to turn down the advances of a beautiful woman.”

Maxwell slowly counted to ten so he wouldn’t go off on Cole. Despite the fact he had known Cole for years; he still wasn’t used to his friend’s dry humor. Sometimes, he wasn’t sure if Cole was playing around with him or seriously meant what he said. Yet, he wasn’t pleased to hear Cole talking about Fancy like that. Shit, he wasn’t thrilled with the fact they had become good friends. He didn’t think he wanted Fancy giving Cole the looks she used to give him.

“Ms. Shayne is just going to be my employee. Nothing is going to happen between the two of us,” he informed Cole. “However, I don’t think you’re her type, so it would be best if you just left it as friendship between the two of you. I don’t need a woman mending a broken heart while working for me.”

Laughter coming from Cole's left drew Maxwell's attention over to Troy. He couldn't help but notice how incredibly happy his best friend was since he had finally married Headley. There seemed to be a permanent smile on his face.

"I don't want to hear a word from you. You're just way too exuberant since you got married," Maxwell complained.

"Hey, what can I say?" Troy answered shrugging his large shoulders. "I'm totally in love with my gorgeous wife and we're expecting a baby boy in a few months. My life couldn't be better. You should try it. You might stop walking around with that lost look on your face all the time. I'm surprised you get any dates at all."

"I'm glad you're in love, but I'm quite content being alone," Maxwell answered. "Marriage, a wife and a house full of kids have never been my thing."

Laughing, Troy looked at him and shook his head like he didn't quite believe him. "Whatever you say Maxwell," he chuckled. "However, I think you aren't being completely honest with us or yourself."

"Man, you know that you want to be just like Troy here. With a wife and a house full of little Maxwell's running around," Cole teased him. "I know that if Troy can get a woman like Headley to marry his ugly ass then you shouldn't have a problem at all."

Maxwell opened his mouth to comment, but the sound of the door opening stopped him. Headley walked in looking very cute in a black top showing off her growing stomach. He had to admit Troy's wife looked very pretty. However, Fancy looked stunning in the red and white polka dotted dress she had changed into since her interview with him.

Cole was wrong. Fancy wasn't attractive she was downright breathtaking. He loved long hair on a woman and hers flowed just past her shoulders. It would give him something to hold on to when they made love.

Whoa! Where did that thought come from? He wasn't ever going to sleep with Fancy. He was never going past the employer-employee line with her. He couldn't lie. She was a temptation that he hadn't faced in a very long time; however, he was going to fight her pull with everything he had in him.

"I'm glad to see you made it back," he stated. "I never know what's going to happen when you're around Headley."

"Maxwell, stop teasing my wife," Troy said, getting up out of his seat.

"Honey, I know Maxwell picks on me because he loves me like an older brother." Coming further into the room, Headley smiled at him before kissing Troy.

He wouldn't admit it to anyone else, but he was a little jealous of Troy's relationship with Headley. He used to want a love like that. But, it wasn't in the

cards for him anymore. He thought he might have had it once, years ago, but he was wrong. A love like Troy had found was rare and it wasn't possible for it to be out there for him. He wasn't even going to think it was.

"Okay...enough of that you two," Maxwell joked standing up. "I hate to be rude, but if everyone doesn't mind leaving. I need to show Fancy around and get her settled in. We have a lot to get done and only in a short period of time."

"All right. I guess I'll find something to do since you guys don't visit the Tycoon Club like you used to," Cole complained getting up first. "I'm going to miss seeing your smiling face there, Fancy."

"I'll miss you too Cole. I always enjoyed talking to you outside. You always had something funny to tell me."

"Thanks...I enjoyed our talks too," he answered touching Fancy on the shoulder.

Maxwell tried to keep his calm as Cole flirted and touched Fancy. Cole was a fucking liar when he said that he was just friends with Fancy. Friends don't look at each other like that. He wanted to knock Cole's hand off of Fancy, but he couldn't. She wasn't his woman, so he shouldn't give a damn, but he did. He hated seeing Cole's hands anywhere on Fancy's delectable body. Forget it, he was going to do something about all of that touching Cole was doing. Maxwell opened his mouth to say something, but Troy cut him off.

“Cole, stop bothering Fancy and let’s go,” Troy said as he grabbed Headley’s hand and headed for the door. “I’ll drop you back off at your house. You need to spend more time there instead of the club.”

“Great,” Cole replied following the couple out the door. “I’ll go home and be bored out of my mind. Maybe I need to get a hobby or something. What do you suggest?”

“I think you need to figure out what you’re going to do with your future and stop being such a playboy,” Headley yelled back at Cole.

God, if he didn’t love the three of them so much, he would have them barred from his house. Maxwell stood by his desk trying to get his thoughts together before he said anything to Fancy. She hadn’t said that much to him and he wondered what she was thinking about. Usually at the club she was talking a mile a minute and now she was quiet as a mouse. He was having a hard time figuring out what was going on in that head of hers.

“Did you get everything you need packed up and brought from the hotel?” Maxwell asked. He always wondered why Fancy just didn’t rent a house. He knew she had made enough money by now at the Tycoon Club to do that, but she didn’t. She stayed at a hotel/boarding house. Fancy was a mystery in so many ways and while she was living with him. He might just have to figure out what all of them were.

“Do I need to take you back for anything?”

“No, Headley and I got all of it. My bags are in the hallway. I wasn’t sure where my room was going to be,” Fancy replied, looking at him.

“Come with me. I’ll show you to your room. It’s upstairs. I think it’s big enough for your needs. My previous employees didn’t seem to have a problem with it. I had the housekeeper clean the room and change the sheets before she left. So, everything should be perfect for you.” Moving around the desk, Maxwell walked out the door without waiting to see if Fancy would follow because he knew she would.

I can’t believe he walked out on me like that, Fancy thought to herself, but she didn’t say a word, instead she just followed Maxwell. She was surprised when she found him staring at her two small suitcases in the hallway. What was wrong with him now? Did he not like the color red? That luggage was a gift from her grandmother when she left home at eighteen and moved here to find a better job.

“What’s the problem? Why are you staring at my stuff like that?”

“Is this all that you have?” Maxwell uttered, clearly shocked glancing over his shoulder at her. “I thought you would have more bags than this.”

Fancy tried not to take the bait, but she couldn’t let it go. She had to know what Maxwell was implying about her. “Why would you say something like that?”

Pivoting, Maxwell eyed her for a few seconds. It was like he was debating how he should answer her question. “You come across like the type of woman who would like to have a lot of material things in her life,” he told her. “Come on, let me get you settled in and then I’ll show you around the ranch.”

Wonderful, she thought. Maxwell thinks I’m a gold-digger. She wondered what he would think if he knew the real reason she needed this job at *CrossStar*. Hell, the way he acted towards her earlier he might not even care.

Fancy went over and tried to pick up her suitcase, but Maxwell brushed her hands away from them. “I’ll get those,” he said surprising her. Picking them up, Maxwell went up the spiral staircase in front of her. “Follow me and I’ll show you to your bedroom.”

Walking behind him, she tried not to stare at how his jeans hugged his tight ass and powerful thighs. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled up displaying the silky blond hairs on his arms. For his body to be so powerful and well-muscled, Maxwell moved with an easy grace. She silently scolded herself for lusting after a man who never looked at her with a hint of romantic interest. Maxwell Reed was out of her league and he always would be. He was the type of man a woman like her fantasized about, but was never lucky enough to have in her life.

“Here we are.” Maxwell stopped in front of a closed door at the end of the hallway. Dropping her two suitcases on the floor, he pushed the door open with

palm of his hand and waved her inside. "I hope you like it," he commented stepping to the side so she could go inside.

"I'm sure it will be fine. I have stayed at the hotel so long that anything now will look like a paradise to me," she said brushing past Maxwell's hard body as she entered the bedroom.

Fancy paused mid-way inside staring at the enormous room she had always dreamed of sleeping in as a child. She had never seen anything as stunning as this before. The honey-hued walls were accented with the off-white bed and yellow patterned bedspread with a tan floral design spread throughout it. Matching pillows were placed at the headboard with a few yellow and checkered designed ones mingled in.

This guestroom was fun, cheerful and perfectly fit her personality and the mood she was in most of the time. She was astounded that Maxwell would give her such a beautiful room. "This is breathtaking. I don't know what else to say about it," she whispered more to herself than Maxwell.

"I'm glad you like it," Maxwell exclaimed coming around her. "Why don't you freshen up and meet me outside in about twenty minutes." He placed her suitcases on the bed and pointed at a closed door to his left. "I believe everything you need should be in there. If not, you can go into town with me later and pick out anything else you need."

“Okay, sure,” Fancy answered as she tried to get her bearings. All of this seemed like a dream to her and it was one that she wasn’t ready to wake up from.

“I’ll be waiting for you.” Maxwell gave her a small nod and then quickly left the room closing the door behind him.



Resting his back against the closed door in the hallway outside Fancy’s door, Maxwell tried to calm his raging emotions. He wouldn’t be able to stay in there a moment longer with Fancy if someone paid him.

She was totally in the dark about how attracted he was to her. Did she not know how seductive she looked in that outfit? God, he had been sporting a hard-on since she walked in with Headley.

Why did he have to be the dumb ass to push the no romance clause between them during the interview? What man in his right mind wouldn’t want an office romance with Fancy? She was drop-dead gorgeous with a sweet smile and killer body that could make any red-blooded male hard in minutes.

He would have kissed her as soon as the trio had left. But no, he had to come across like he wasn’t interested in learning the shape of her luscious body. Fuck, he had to find a way to erase what he said to Fancy from her mind.

Maxwell didn’t know how he controlled himself less than five minutes ago. He was standing in the bedroom with Fancy’s tempting body with in touching

distance. The damn bed so close that it almost did him in, if his will power wasn't so strong he would have found a way to seduce her right there.

His cock jumped in his jeans at the thought of being buried between Fancy's shapely thighs. The thought of being able to suck on her hard nipples made him cup his erection in the palm of his hand. He was hurting so bad. He couldn't remember the last time a woman had made him this hard without anything happening between them. Fancy made him want to make love to her with only a look and she was blind to the fact. He wasn't sure if he liked or hated her indifference to him now.

"I'm not going to be able to think straight let alone tell Fancy what I need from her unless I take care of this first." Removing his hand from his stiff cock, Maxwell turned on his heel and moved in the direction of his bedroom at the end of the hallway. It would be much more pleasurable if Fancy was with him, but he would have his way with her sooner, rather than later.

Chapter Four

“I guess Maxwell is keeping you pretty busy since I haven’t seen you lately. I was going to come out to the ranch to check on you, but Troy found a way to stop me.”

Looking up from the grocery list in her hand, Fancy grinned at Headley. Her best friend looked so cute in her new maternity top with a little black bow tied underneath her breasts. It wasn’t right for Headley to get even more gorgeous when she got pregnant. Without a doubt, Troy’s and Headley’s baby boy was going to be one beautiful baby with such good-looking parents.

“Oh, you look so adorable,” Fancy exclaimed touching Headley’s stomach. “You’re getting so big.”

“Yeah, I feel huge,” Headley complained patting her stomach. “However, Troy constantly tells me I’m the most beautiful woman in the world. I shouldn’t believe him, because it’s a lie. He knows I’m big as a house.”

“That’s so sweet. Troy really has changed since the two of you got married. He’s a lot happier.” She hoped Headley didn’t hear the envy in her voice. She would love for Maxwell to be in love with her like that, but she knew it would never happen.

“Oh, I think someone else might be having a wedding in their future pretty soon,” Headley informed her.

“I didn’t know Cole was getting married,” Fancy frowned. “Who is he dating? God, I never hear anything anymore since I started working for Maxwell. He keeps me so busy at the ranch. Today was the only free day I had to come and grocery shop because he’s out of town.”

Laughing, Headley touched her on the shoulder. “Girl, you know that I’m talking about you and Maxwell. I saw how he was looking at you when I brought you back to the house a few weeks ago.”

Lord, Headley was up to her matchmaking again. What was she going to do with the woman?

She loved how Headley was trying to hook her up with Maxwell. Sure, he was one of Troy’s best friends. Maybe Troy was thinking that Maxwell could be happy like him if he got married and had a couple of kids, but that woman wasn’t going to be her. Maxwell Reed wasn’t going to embarrass her again by turning down another dinner invitation.

“Headley, I’m glad you’re so in love with Troy. He’s a wonderful guy. You two look so good when you’re together. However, you have to understand that what you have isn’t meant for everyone. I’ve gotten used to being alone and that is the way it will stay.”

Smiling at her, Headley rubbed her back as a dreamy look came over her face. “Troy is my heart. I love him so much. I wouldn’t know what to do without him in my life. He definitely keeps me on my toes. I still have my independent streak and he’s constantly trying to calm it down some since I’m pregnant, but we always come to an agreeable ending.”

“Fancy, I know you can have the same thing if you just pursue Maxwell a little more. Don’t let his turning you down keep you from doing it again. He’s just more stubborn than Troy when it comes to knowing what he wants. Just give him some time to realize how much he cares about you, and he will come running back to you with an apology on his lips. Men are like that. They need something to go after and win over.”

If only what Headley was telling her was true. Maxwell wasn’t Troy. He wasn’t hiding a secret passion or love for her.

“I hate to go, but I need to get back to the ranch. Tonight is my first time cooking for Maxwell, because he hasn’t been home. He left for a business trip the day after he hired me, so I’m a little nervous. He’ll be coming in tonight and I want to make a good impression with my first meal.”

“Sounds romantic,” Headley grinned. “You know what they say. A way to a man’s heart is through his stomach and from the looks of Maxwell he can eat a lot of food. What are you going to fix?”

“Country fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy and green beans. Maxwell is a meat and potatoes man. He told me that he can eat a salad if he has to, but he isn’t fond of them. He loves home cooked meals.”

“I’ll let you go.” Headley gave her a quick hug and then moved back. “Come by the house soon. I want to show you the new clothes Troy got for the baby.”

Troy went shopping?

Fancy was shocked. She couldn’t imagine rough and tough Troy Christian going shopping for baby clothes. “I’ll be there later on in the week. I can’t wait to see what he got.”

“Wonderful. Come early and we can make a day of it,” Headley said before walking away.

Just to kill some extra time, Fancy decided to make one last trip around the store. She mentally ran over the grocery list in her head. She didn’t want to get back to the ranch and realize that she had forgotten something for Maxwell’s dinner.

He had been out of town for about two weeks. Everything had been running pretty smoothly in his absence, a fact she was very proud of. She hated to brag, but she was impressed with the progress she had made from the notes he left with her.

She had accomplished a huge amount of work without Maxwell being there standing over her shoulder. Being a quick study paid off, because she learned

before he left, that Maxwell liked things done a certain way. Organization didn't bother her, so she got into his routine without too many problems.

On the way back to *CrossStar* thoughts of Maxwell filled Fancy's head. He was all she thought about. It was so hard on her being in love with him and working around him. When she was employed at the Tycoon Club, she was able to pawn him off on other waitresses after he shot down her last dinner invitation. Now, that wasn't an option. Maxwell was her boss and her new job involved being around him twenty-four seven, unless he was on a trip like he was now.

Fancy prayed that she was keeping her feelings pretty well-hidden. Maxwell was a handsome man and the more he was around her. The harder it was not to blurt out her feelings for him.

This sudden trip that had come up and forced Maxwell out of town was an answer to her prayers. It was giving her the time and space she desperately needed to get her emotions in check. Maxwell had proven on numerous occasions that he wasn't interested in a personal relationship. So, why wasn't her heart and mind listening to him?

However, it was hard not to have a little hope when her best friend, Headley Christian, thought Maxwell was in love with her, but keeping his feelings to himself for some odd reason. The conflicting emotions she was dealing with when it came to Maxwell were driving her up a wall.

No...she was done paying attention to Headley's nonsense. She was going to drop it. All she wanted to do was work, earn a paycheck and move on through the rest of her days. Maxwell wasn't going to be the man of her dreams and that was the end of it. Sure, she was a little disheartened and hurt, but there wasn't anything she could do about it.

Pulling into the driveway at the ranch, Fancy got out of the car and grabbed the bags out of the backseat. She was on her way to the backdoor when someone calling her name stopped her in her tracks.

"Fancy, hold up, let me grab some of those bags for you."

Looking over her shoulder, Fancy smiled at Cole coming up behind her, not realizing how the movement brightened her already beautiful face. Over the last couple of months her friendship with Cole had grown. She didn't know how it happened, but she was glad that it had.

"What are you doing here?" she asked Cole, handing him two of the bags.

Cole waited while she unlocked the door and walked inside the house before he started talking again. "I wanted to stop by and check on you. I had to make sure Maxwell hadn't made you run out of the house screaming yet."

"No, I'm doing pretty well. Maxwell has been okay so far." Fancy placed her bags on the island and started removing items.

“Maxwell hasn’t jumped down your throat about anything?” Cole asked, amazed. “I know how the two of you used to get into it at the club all the time.” He took the groceries out of his bag placing them on the counter next to her.

“He doesn’t spend enough time around me to jump on me about anything.” Fancy finished placing the last of the food up and leaned against the island. She wouldn’t mind if Maxwell tried jumping on her once in a while, but that only happened in her imagination not in reality.

“Enough about me,” she said. “You’re here for a reason. What is it?” Is something wrong?” She knew Cole well enough by now to know he wouldn’t just show unannounced for nothing. He was on a mission, but for what she didn’t know.

Cole shrugged his shoulder. “I’m fine. I really wanted to check on you. I don’t get to see you much anymore since you quit the Tycoon Club and came here to *CrossStar*. The other waitresses aren’t as cool as you. They don’t know how to take my jokes,” he complained, crossing his arms over his wide chest.

Fancy secretly wished that Cole was the man she had fallen in love with. He was a good-looking man with a killer sense of humor. Dark brown hair that almost looked black when the light hit it covered his head. Hazel eyes with more gold flecks than brown stared back at her from a chiseled jaw with a hint of a five

o'clock shadow, strong nose, and firm lips finished off Cole's ruggedly gorgeous package.

Most people in Paris, Texas thought Cole was cocky because his money came from old money. His great-grandfather was in the oil business and the money just got passed down through the family over the years. But they were so wrong, Cole Brady was a good man and the closest friend she had besides Headley. In addition, he was the only other person that knew about her real feelings for Maxwell.

"You're a sweetheart to be concerned about me, but I'm doing fine. I'm just staying busy with cooking and working on the office part of my job."

"How about I treat you to dinner since Maxwell is out of town?"

"I can't," Fancy sighed, moving away from the island. "Maxwell is coming back tonight and I need to fix dinner, but can I get a rain check?"

"I guess I'll have to eat alone again," Cole complained as he moved toward the back door.

"Can I get that rain check or not?" Fancy asked again. She tried not to laugh at Cole. He could call any woman in town and two minutes later she would be at his house ready to go. If she looked up playboy in the dictionary Cole's picture would be there.

Cole opened the back door and took a step outside. She thought he wasn't even going to even respond to her, but like the typical flirt he was. Cole spun back around winked at her and then said. "Of course, you can get a rain check, 'doll face'." He strolled out the door allowing it to slam shut after him.

Fancy was still smiling at Cole's comment long after he was gone. He was such a charmer. It was such a shame he wasn't using those skills on a woman he wanted to romance. Maybe if he hadn't run the love of his life off, he wouldn't be here teasing her all the time.

"I better get this meal started or it's not going to be done in time for Maxwell," she said to herself as she walked across the kitchen and pulled ingredients out of the cabinets.



Walking into his house, Maxwell stopped dead in his tracks in the living room as his senses were seduced by the wonderful smells sneaking in from the kitchen. His last cook never had aromas drifting towards him the second he walked through the door. Leaving his luggage by the door, he made his way into the kitchen. He hung in the doorway staring at the exquisite sight before him. Fancy was moving around the place like she had always lived there. It was like it should have been this way all along. Why wasn't he being more like Troy and

going after what he wanted. Usually, he was his own man but this time he might have to steal a page out of Troy's playbook when it came to women.

Maxwell allowed himself a few more minutes of staring at Fancy before he made his presence known to her.

"Looks like you're pretty busy in here," he said moving further into the room.

"Oh my God, you scared me too death," Fancy gasped spinning around with her hand against her chest. "I didn't know you were home yet."

Maxwell noticed a fleck of flour on Fancy's creamy brown cheek. He wanted to resist the urge to touch her, but his feet were already inching closer to her. "It looks like you have been really into your cooking." Reaching out, he brushed the flour off Fancy's face.

The warm smoothness of her skin against his finger made Maxwell's cock stand up at attention. He quickly removed his finger and shoved his hands into the pockets of his slacks.

Grab her and toss her down on the floor. Make love to her until neither one of you know what day of the week it is. Do it now! His mind screamed at him over and over as he continued to stare at Fancy.

What in the hell had come over him? He had made it clear to Fancy that he wouldn't hire her if she couldn't be professional. Shit, he ruined his own lecture

by, running his finger down her cheek. *Great*, he wasn't in control of his feelings as well as he thought. He had to change that and soon.



Fancy wasn't sure what she should do. Her heart was pounding a mile a minute in her chest. Maxwell being home this early was a surprise to her. She wasn't expecting him for another two hours. Did he see how fast her heart was beating underneath her shirt? How could he stand there and act like he didn't feel the spark of attraction between them?

God, why did she have to be in love with a man who was so damn HOT and so wrong for her on so many levels? She silently hated that Maxwell slid his hands inside his pockets. Maxwell was such a manly man, so he would hate if he knew she thought his hands were beautiful, but they were. They looked so big and strong with the fine blond hairs that brushed his knuckles.

The dark gray suit made him look very powerful, his chest wide and muscular. Even the crisp white shirt opened at the collar stood out against his perfectly tanned skin. Maxwell Reed was the perfect example of a man who carried himself with a commanding air of self-confidence and she found that sexy as hell.

"Yes, I have been busy working on the list of things you gave me. After dinner we can go over them if you want to." She wanted to spend as much time

with the hunk in front of her as she could. Hell, even if it meant using work as an excuse. She was willingly to do it.

“Everything smells so good,” Maxwell praised. “What did you fix for supper? I didn’t have anything to eat on the plane so I’m starving.”

“Country fried steak, mashed potatoes, green beans and home-made biscuits. There are only a few more minutes on the biscuits and they will be done.”

“Fine. I’ll go upstairs, shower and change. After we’re finished eating we can go over the reports I brought back with me.” Turning on his heel, Maxwell left the kitchen leaving the scent of *Devin* cologne in the room.

Chapter Five

“You really have done a lot of work while I’ve been gone,” Maxwell commented looking over the spreadsheet in his hand. He was a little skeptical about hiring Fancy, but she was slowly proving that she might have what it takes to work for him.

“I told you during my interview that I had what it took. I know you didn’t believe me,” Fancy said, watching him closely. “You thought of me as a waitress at a bar and nothing else.”

Maxwell wanted to deny his first opinion of Fancy, but he couldn’t. She hadn’t shown him anything else but a flirtatious waitress at the club. How was he supposed to think anything else? It was hard enough then to keep his attention focused on Troy and Cole when Fancy came around.

Her tight red t-shirt always had his mind wandering to other things that he was trying hard to ignore, she never knew how many times he would come home and think about different scenarios of stripping her hot little body out of that t-shirt and those ass hugging jeans.

His cock sprung to attention at the memory and Maxwell pushed his chair further under the desk so Fancy wouldn't know. He couldn't let her find out that he was dying to make love to her.

He might even be wasting his time now having fantasies about her. Not once since Fancy started working for him had she approached him or even looked at him in a romantic way. Maybe she had gotten over her crush on him. Maxwell didn't know why the thought hurt him, but it did.

"Mr. Reed, have you been listening to me?" Fancy's sweet voice asked cutting into his thoughts.

He hated that Fancy called him Mr. Reed instead of Maxwell now. He had told her not to but she thought it was more professional. "No, I was thinking about some expense reports," he lied. "Can you repeat it?"

Tilting her head to the side, Fancy looked at him like she didn't know if she believed him or not. "I asked is there anything special you want for dinner tomorrow night or will meatloaf be fine."

"Meatloaf is fine. It has been awhile since I had one. My last cook wasn't fond of making them. Honestly, his last assistant/cook spent more time trying to get into his bed than doing the job he paid her to do.

"Wonderful," Fancy said with a smile. "If you don't need me for anything else I'm going to bed. It has been a long day."

Oh, I need you all right. I'm just thinking of the right way to seduce you, Maxwell thought, but he didn't voice his thoughts. Now wasn't the time. However, the time was coming sooner than Fancy knew.

Glancing at the clock on the desk, Maxwell was surprised to see it was almost one o'clock in the morning. He shouldn't have kept Fancy up this long. He was used to these late night hours, but she probably wasn't. He never saw her at her old job this late at night.

"Go ahead. We can go over these other spreadsheets tomorrow."

"Are you sure? I can stay if you need me to."

"I'm sure. Go and get some rest. You did an excellent job while I was gone, Fancy. I'm very impressed."

"Thank you, Mr. Reed," Fancy said before getting up and leaving the room.

Long after Fancy was gone Maxwell couldn't stop thinking about her. She was more complex than he had given her credit for. When he gave her the list of things he wanted done while he was on his trip. She didn't even blink.

Fancy took the paper from him and said "Don't worry about it. Everything will be done the way you want it."

True to her word, Fancy had done his list perfectly. There wasn't a thing he had a problem with it. What was it about Fancy Shayne that made him stop and take notice? Sometimes her personality reached out to him like a trusting person

hungry for love and attention ready to return it tenfold. But he couldn't...no wouldn't be that man to bring it to the surface. He was too broken for that. If Fancy was looking for the love of her life it wasn't him.

Yet, if she was searching for a man that could give her pleasure every day of the week he was perfect for that job. He was done with the whole love thing. It had gotten him nothing, but heart break and disappointment in the past.

Dropping his hand under his desk, Maxwell slipped it inside his running shorts and rubbed it over his aching cock. Shit, he was hurting and only Fancy was going to be able to relieve this pain.

"Yes, my plan to seduce Fancy has to start in the next couple of days or I'll drop dead from wanting her and not having her." It was only fair he went after her because she sure in the hell chased him enough times at the Tycoon Club.

Chapter Six

Standing inside the kitchen the next morning, Fancy sipped on a hot cup of coffee while staring at Maxwell outside talking to one of his ranch hands. He had purchased a new bull and it was arriving later on today. The other bull he owned was getting too old to be a stud.

While he was gone she had found a way to knock an extra two hundred dollars off the purchase price. She could tell Maxwell had been impressed with her business savvy even before he congratulated her on doing a wonderful job.

She was ashamed at how his surprise thank you sent her heart in a tailspin. However, she was thrilled that the business side of her had done something superb; however, she was still pissed that he wasn't interested in her sexually. He was impressed with her mind now, yet her body was something that Maxwell wasn't interested in.

What was so wrong with her? Absolutely nothing in the world, but Maxwell acted like she was going to fall down on her knees any day now declaring her unrequited love for him.

Hell, she wasn't about to do that, even if her life depended on it. Without a doubt in her mind, Maxwell had probably broken more hearts and destroyed more

promises than could be mended with super glue. She tried fighting off the incredible physical magnetism that was scorching between them. The sad thing was it had come to the surface more since she arrived at the ranch.

Earlier this morning her hand had accidentally brushed his while passing the maple syrup for the pancakes. Her heart had sped up, her body got all hot and bothered by the contact, but she didn't say anything. Instead, she just let go of the bottle and started eating her food. Thank God, Maxwell never knew how his touch had affected her or she would have gotten another one of his lectures.

Why should she bring something up that Maxwell would only lie to her face about? The chemistry between them was getting more difficult for her to blow off. No matter where they were in the house they always seemed to gravitate towards each other, but that was her opinion not Maxwell's. He probably thought she was following him around on purpose, which wasn't the case at all.

Placing her empty cup on the counter, Fancy continued to stare at Maxwell as he finished up his business deal outside. She loved how the sunshine shone off his thick blond hair adding to his masculinity. Last night, she lay in bed for hours living out her fantasy in which Maxwell had paid her a late night visit, but of course that never would happen.

Maxwell stayed on the straight and narrow way too much to ever take a side road in her direction. Those things only occurred in her foolish dreams and it was about time she stopped having those. They weren't doing her any good.

"I can't stand here and gawk at him any longer. I need to get those cattle expenses entered into the computer. They aren't going to enter themselves." Fancy sneaked one last peek at Maxwell before she left the kitchen and headed to his office.



"I've been looking all over this house for you. I didn't know you would be hiding out in my office."

Glancing up from the accounting program on the computer monitor, Fancy frowned at Maxwell standing in front of her wearing a tailored black shirt and matching suit. He looked good enough to eat with a damn spoon and make her go back for seconds after her first helping. Something was up and she would bet a million bucks she wasn't going to like it.

"Aren't you a little dressed up for a meatloaf dinner? I'm about to get it started. It's my grandmother's recipe."

"I'm not going to be here for dinner. I got invited out to a business dinner. I wanted to stop you before you got everything ready," Maxwell told her.

Fancy tried to keep the disappointment from showing on her face.

She had wanted to impress Maxwell with her grandmother's meatloaf recipe. Why, she really wasn't sure. "Thanks for letting me know. Have a nice time."

Maxwell stood there a few minutes looking at her. He almost acted like he was regretting canceling on her. "Do you want me to bring you something back?"

"No, I'll be fine," Fancy answered dragging her eyes away from him and back to the computer monitor. "I'll fix myself some kind of a snack. Don't worry about it. I'm used to taking care of myself."

"I apologize again for the short notice. Maybe you can reschedule the meatloaf for later on in the week? I love meatloaf, so don't take it off your menu."

"I won't Mr. Reed," she said. "You better go before you're late." Fancy kept her eyes focused on her work until Maxwell left and only his wonderful smelling cologne remained.

For the next hour, Fancy worked steadily until her stomach started growling loudly in the empty room, she hadn't had anything to eat in a while. She saved the information she had been working on and then turned off the computer so she wouldn't lose any of the report.

"I want more than a snack after all of those figures I entered into that accounting program. A BLT with extra fries sounds perfect to me." She knew the

only place to find it was *Tony's* in town. She hurried out of the office, and grabbed her purse and keys off the table before going out the door.



On the way back from her delicious dinner alone, Fancy sucked on her diet coke through the straw as she passed by the new Italian restaurant she had been secretly hoping Maxwell would take her to on a date.

She glanced at the couples inside on their dates. Everyone looked so happy and in love with the intimate, romantic setting surrounding them. She was about to keep moving until something caught her eye. Making her stop dead in her tracks the drink totally forgotten in her hand.

Towards the middle of the restaurant but a little off to the side sat Maxwell with Natasha Rogers. She watched as Natasha ran her finger across the back of Maxwell's hand. Her heart caught in the middle of her chest as Maxwell smiled at Natasha.

He lied to her face!

He didn't have a business date. He was out with Natasha having a romantic dinner. She quickly blinked away the sudden rush of tears. Well, if this didn't prove Maxwell wasn't interested in her nothing would. She was done wasting her time with him in hopes his feelings would change. Fancy hurried away from the

window. She didn't need to further embarrass herself in front of the restaurant or Maxwell.

"Well, if he's out having a good time. There isn't any reason for me to be at the ranch." Tossing her drink container into the trash, Fancy walked the rest of the way to her car, got inside and drove off.



If I have to smile at Natasha one more time I'm going to lose my mind, Maxwell thought as he brushed her hand off his leg for the third time that night.

"Natasha, I thought your father was going to be here. I could have stayed at the ranch instead of wasting my time fighting off your wandering hands."

"Daddy is gone out of town. He left an hour before I called you. I thought since you were doing business with my father I should get to know you better," she whispered right before placing her hand directly over his penis. "I'm still upset you didn't hire me to work for you. I would have been a perfect assistant to you. I would have given you everything you need."

Maxwell quickly removed Natasha's hand and placed it on the table. "Natasha, you need to stop. I'm a grown man. I don't mess around with teenagers."

"Maxwell, I'm not a teenager anymore. I turned twenty two months ago. So, you can play around with me all you want." Natasha leaned forward so some more of her breasts would be exposed.

Okay, that was enough. I'm out of here.

Standing up, Maxwell tossed a hand full of bills down on the table. "Ms. Rogers, I'm not going to stay here and let you throw yourself at me. I'm leaving." He walked out of the restaurant without a second thought.

All the way back to his house, Fancy was on Maxwell's mind. He was throwing every obstacle he could in his way to keep him away from her, but it wasn't working. She was beginning to wear him down each day she was within arm's-length of his body. Her honesty and refreshing frankness would make any man's heart respect her.

Fancy possessed other qualities that turned him on too. She was compassionate, warm, and supportive of any idea that he tossed her way. Plus her creative side just blew his mind. The website she was working on would bring more business into *CrossStar*. There was more to her than she was letting on, and he loved peeling away a new layer each and every day to find the new woman beneath all of her hidden layers.

Pulling into his parking space at the ranch, Maxwell made record time getting out of his car and heading for the front door. He was done trying to fight of his attraction to Headley. He shouldn't have changed his mind about trying to seduce her. After spending time with Natasha, he saw that he wasn't interested in

dating women like her anymore. She reminded him too much of the women he always fell into bed with back during his rodeo days.

Instead of becoming a bull rider, he should have taken up acting because he honestly had Fancy believing he wasn't interested in her. How could she think he didn't feel the strong chemistry between them? It increased every time he got within twenty feet of her.

Fancy wasn't going to fall into his arms right off the bat. He would have to approach this slowly with her. He had pushed her away so much that she wouldn't believe that he might actually be drawn to her.

"Fancy, where are you?" Maxwell yelled once he got inside and headed straight for the kitchen. It was awfully quiet. He didn't hear any sounds coming from upstairs. She wasn't playing any of her music that had taken a while for him to get used to. He had never heard of Keyshia Cole, Nelly or Ciara until Fancy came into his life. After listening to them for a couple of days they weren't as bad as he first thought.

Where in the hell was Fancy? Maxwell thought again as he left the kitchen. She was usually in there getting everything prepared for the next day's meal. He was about to go upstairs to her bedroom when his cell phone rang in his pocket.

He pulled it out frowning at the number on his Caller ID before he answered it. "Tommy, what can I do for you?"

“Maxwell, you need to come down to the club.”

“Tommy, I’m not interested in any new girls you hired at the club. I’m busy right now.” He hadn’t thought about the Tycoon Club since Fancy started working for him.

“I really need you at the club. I couldn’t get hold of Headley to come and pick up Fancy. So, you were the second person that came to mind since she’s working for you now. She has been drinking.”

“Fancy is at the club drinking!” Maxwell snapped. “What in the world is she doing there? Why are you letting her drink? Doesn’t she have a low tolerance to alcohol?” He was going to kill Tommy when he got his hands on him.

“Don’t yell at me!” Tommy shouted back. “The new bartender gave it to her. I didn’t know she was here until ten minutes ago. I took the Long Island Ice tea away from her and called you. “She’s in my office pissed as hell.”

“Keep her there. I’m coming to get her.” Maxwell snapped the phone shut and stormed out of the house. Fancy was driving him crazy. He wasn’t used to spending this much energy dealing with a woman. It almost seemed like riding a bull was easier than putting up with Fancy.

Chapter Seven

“What are you doing here drinking instead of back at the ranch where I left you?” Maxwell yelled at the woman sitting behind Tommy’s desk.

“First, you aren’t the boss of me I can do anything I want. However to answer your question, I wasn’t drinking. I was here visiting friends and having some fun. Why are you here anyway? I thought you were having a business dinner in town.” Fancy glared at him before she sat up straighter in the chair. “I don’t need your help. I can find my own way home. So, why don’t you leave?”

“My dinner ended over an hour ago. I was at home looking for you and you weren’t there.” Maxwell retorted angry.

“Really,” Fancy said cocking her head to the side causing her black hair to spill over one shoulder tempting the hell out of him. “I didn’t think she would let you get back to the ranch alone.”

God, how was it possible that Fancy had gotten sexier since the last time he laid eyes on her?

“She...how did you know my dinner was with a woman?” He frowned.

“Forget it. You wouldn’t give me an honest answer anyway. I know what I saw so I don’t need to hear any lies from you.” Standing up, Fancy moved around the desk stumbled a little before she steadied herself.

“Fancy, I asked you a question. Give me an answer.”

“Come on, let’s go. Mr. Reed, if you’re going to lecture me it will be at the ranch and not the club for people to hear you. I’m not going to get into how you were allowing Natasha to throw herself at you in a room full of people.”

Maxwell couldn’t keep the smile off his face. Fancy was jealous. Somehow she had seen him out with Natasha. Maybe he wouldn’t have to work as hard as he thought to get Fancy to trust him.

“Tell me how you saw me with Natasha. I thought you were going to stay at the ranch for the rest of the night. What made you come into town? Did you want to know what I was doing? Did you miss having me around?”

Fancy stopped walking and glanced at him. “I went to get something to eat. I saw you through the window of the restaurant. You looked very cozy together. Almost like a match made in heaven. I never knew you went for such younger women. No wonder you never looked at me twice. I wasn’t too young for you. I was too old.”

“Fancy, are you jealous? Did you want it to be you instead of Natasha touching my leg?” Maxwell asked inching closer.

“I really get upset when people assume they know what I’m thinking and feeling. I don’t want to be Natasha.” Fancy tossed him one last look before she opened the office door and stormed out of the room.

“Ms. Shayne, I think you’re lying to yourself,” Maxwell chuckled to himself as he followed Fancy out of the Tycoon club into the warm night air.

He caught up with her as she was wandering around the parking lot looking for his truck. “Come on, I parked at the side of the building.” He grabbed Fancy by the arm, but she jerked away from him causing her to stumble and fall against his chest.

Wrapping his arms around Fancy’s body Maxwell pulled her closer to him. “I think I like it when you’re close to me like this. It feels right, don’t you think so?”

Maxwell slid his hands down Fancy’s back and cupped her tight ass yanking her closer to his growing erection. Yeah, he loved the way his body jumped to attention when Fancy was this close to him.

Easing her hands between them, Fancy tried to shove him away, but he wouldn’t let her go. “Have you been drinking?” she questioned.

“No, I haven’t. Why?” he questioned against her ear.

“You’re acting strange.”

“Strange...how?”

“You are almost making me believe that you like me,” Fancy replied.

Moving his hands upward, Maxwell used them to cup Fancy's face. "How do I usually act in your opinion, sweetheart? Tell me so I can change whatever negative image I have given you about me."

"Truthfully," she asked leaning into his touch.

"Yes, I want you to be honest with me." He wouldn't expect anything less from her. One thing he always loved about Fancy ever since he had known her was her direct nature. She called it as she saw it. He wanted to know how she thought he felt about her. It would give him a better insight to get things on the track he wanted.

"You act like the sight of me bothers the hell out of you." Fancy pushed him away from her and stalked over to his vehicle. "Let's go. I want to get back to *CrossStar* and go to bed. I'm done talking to you."

Maxwell used his key to unlock his truck for Fancy and watched as she got inside slamming it shut behind her. He was surprised at how much more spunk Fancy had to her when she had some liquid courage. Her fighting with him was sexy and it was making him crave a night in her bed even more. Now he merely had to find a way to make Fancy express her feelings like this more often, however, only when she was sober.

This new side of Fancy was hot not that she wasn't a hot woman before, but her attitude tonight was like sex kitten hot. It was making him really see her in a whole new light.

Reaching down, he adjusted his hard-on before he made his way around his truck and got inside. He glanced at Fancy, but she turned her head away from him. He tried not to smile, but one spread across his face anyway. Fancy was a passionate little thing. Now it was left up to him to make it grow into something that he could work with.

"Are you going to give me the silent treatment all the way back home?" Maxwell asked as he pulled out of the parking lot and drove away from the club back to *CrossStar*.

On the long drive back to the outskirts of town, he kept sneaking peeks at Fancy from the corner of his eye. She was trying to fight off the effects of the alcohol, however the mixed drink won and Fancy fell asleep with her head against his shoulder.

Once he got back to the ranch, Maxwell didn't waste any time picking Fancy up and carrying her up to her bedroom. Laying her down on the bed, he removed her shoes and covered her body up with a blanket from the foot of the bed.

Maxwell wanted to leave but instead he sat down on the edge of the bed. Fancy looked so angelic and peaceful. She was slowly scratching away at the wall he had built around his heart.

What was it about her that fascinated him so much? He had dated countless women over the years because of his former job. Truly, he never knew if a woman wanted him for him or because he was a semi-celebrity from his bull-riding days.

Yet, Fancy never looked at him with the glazed over groupie look in her big brown eyes. She stared at him with plain old attraction, want and desire.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do about you. I’ve been keeping you at arm’s length for over a year, but now I’m beginning to think that was a mistake on my part. You aren’t what I first thought. You have much more going on with you.” Getting up from the bed, Maxwell gave Fancy one final lingering glance before he left the room and went to his for a cold shower that he desperately needed.

Chapter Eight

I know I don't have a woodpecker living in my head, Fancy thought as she cursed her stupidity for the third time that morning. She wasn't a drinker so why did seeing Maxwell with Natasha send her to a mixed drink? She didn't have to think long about her answer.

The age old, green-eyed monster made an appearance in her life. It was something she vowed not to let happen ever again. She would handle her feelings about Maxwell in a different way from now on. Maxwell Reed was her boss and nothing else.

"How is my favorite little drunk doing today?" A familiar voice laughed from the open kitchen doorway.

Of course, he would show up to tease me now when I'm not feeling good.

"Cole, what do you want?" Fancy moaned lifting her head off the table. "How did you even know I had something to drink? You weren't out with me last night. I didn't call you to give me a ride home."

"Maxwell is at Troy's with Headley having breakfast. I was there when he was talking about the wild night you had," Cole chuckled.

“Stop laughing at me. I remember you got drunk a while back and I didn’t laugh at you. I didn’t even tell anyone you showed up on my doorstep and crashed on my couch in my room.”

Fancy watched as an indescribable looked passed across Cole’s handsome face. “I don’t want to talk about that incident. It’s in the past. Let it stay there.”

“Cole, you should have gone after her. I was so surprised that you didn’t.”

“Fancy, please drop it. She’s gone now. I won’t get a second chance. She was a special woman and I ruined my chances with her. Let the past stay where it is, the past.”

“Never say never,” Fancy said. “Look at Troy and Headley. They were apart for ten years and now they’re happily married with a baby boy on the way any day now.”

“They were meant to be,” Cole sighed joining her at the table. “I wasn’t meant to be with Lauren. She came to me and I pushed her away.”

“It wasn’t your fault things and life happened. I know your chance at happiness is out there.” Reaching across the table, Fancy touched Cole on the back of the hand, her pounding headache forgotten for the moment at her friend’s distress.

“I could say the same thing to you. Maxwell is meant to be with you. You just need to give him some time. He’s very stubborn, but he’ll come around in the end.”

“No, you’re wrong about that.” She moved her hand away from Cole. “Maxwell isn’t my soul mate. I’m only his employee and nothing else.”

“Are you positive about that?”

“I’m positive. I love you, but you’re wrong about this.”

“I love you too,” Cole said, “but I’m more than sure Maxwell will see things your way.”

“Oh...you love me. How much do you love me” Fancy asked with a smile. “Enough to let me drive that black Mustang you have parked in your garage. You know how much I’m itching to get behind the wheel.”

“I said that I loved you. I never said I was crazy.”

Fancy and Cole were so into their conversation that they never saw the tall, handsome blond man standing in the doorway before he stepped away.



Maxwell fought down the boiling need to run back into the kitchen and punch the hell out of Cole. Why in the hell was Cole telling Fancy he loved her? The only thing Cole loved was his reflection in the mirror.

He had cut his weekly breakfast short with Troy so he could get back here and check on Fancy. He felt bad for leaving her this morning with only a note on the kitchen table. He thought maybe now they would be able to get everything out in the open after what happened last night. But it wasn't worth his time even thinking about Fancy, because he was the last thing on her mind at the moment. Why was he putting so much effort into her?

She was flirting with Cole like she was never interested in him. Maybe her personality wasn't the only thing loosened by liquor; maybe her libido was set free too. Well, it was better that he found out now rather than later, because he almost made a mistake trying to start something with her.

For a split second, he foolishly thought Fancy was different from Natasha, but he was wrong. She wasn't what he imagined. Fancy came across as thoughtful, and able to give him meaningful insight into any situation he needed help with. Plus, a woman with a caring presence that could have a stabilizing effect on him, but all of it was lies.

He was very aware of what people thought of him. He had wanted to change their opinion of him since he was older. For years, work seemed like the most important thing to him instead of friends or family, but that wasn't true. He craved having a family more now, especially after spending more time with Troy and Headley.

However, he would never have the wife and child thing. It wasn't in the cards for him. So, instead of trying the family and happily ever after he became more self-directed and aimed at setting new goals for himself over the years.

Financial security was very important to him. It was something his father taught him from a very young age. 'You don't make money for people. You make the money for yourself.' If he hadn't gotten that after school job at that local ranch to earn extra money, he would have never gotten into bull riding. It was the best thing that ever happened to him. Bull riding gave him the freedom to travel and make money doing a job he loved.

He learned quickly while on the road that it was easy to impress the opposite sex with charisma, success and strength. Some women told him with all of those combined qualities sexiness oozed from him, but he didn't believe them. His money is what kept them coming back, nothing else, and they were lying if they told him anything otherwise.

"I'm not going to get fooled by Fancy's energetic and outgoing personality again," he said to himself. She was ambitious and attention seeking, like most of the women he had the misfortune to run into over the years.

Resting his shoulder against the window frame, Maxwell continued to look out the window at the acres and acres of land that he owned. This place was the best place for him to come and think.

When he first laid eyes on this property it had been an eyesore, but with the time and money he put into it the past five years, it had become one of the most talked about ranches in Texas. It was well over three thousand acres with several cow/calf pairings, along with more than a load of yearlings that were raised right here on his land.

He spent more money than he wanted with extensive weed spraying and other programs to improve the condition of the grass to help him and the wildlife population around *CrossStar*. With all the added expenses he invested in the soil it became an excellent habitat for his horse operation. He also made sure that he had a well managed grazing system and several sets of corrals in place to make the transportation of cattle very easy.

In addition, to his cattle and horse operation he made extra money off the Pecan trees that he had harvested on the far end of his property. He was surprised by how that additional income went a long way when combined with his other money.

After he had gotten the outside taken care of he moved to the inside of the run-down house and totally remodeled it. The foundation of the house was in good condition, but it needed a lot of work to rehab it into what it used to be. He added on, making it into a large three thousand, five hundred square foot main house. A

foreman's house was off to the side along with one ranch hand's house a little farther down.

It was far from town and he seldom got visitors unless it was someone who wanted to make the long trip. *CrossStar* was the perfect setting for him just to work and forget about all the things he would never have the ability to do.

"Mr. Reed, when did you get back home? I thought you were at Headley's with Troy eating breakfast." Fancy asked from behind him.

Pivoting, he faced Fancy trying not to notice how gorgeous she looked in her dark blue shirt and jeans. Everything she placed on her body made him want to remove it and have his way with her, but she didn't want the same thing with him. She was in love with his best friend.

"I have been back a while, but you were busy talking to Cole in the other room, so I didn't bother you. I knew when you were ready to work that you might make your way in here."

"Remember Ms. Shayne, I'm not paying you to flirt with my friends. If you aren't going to take this job seriously then maybe I need to find someone who will." The words were out of Maxwell's mouth before he could stop them, but he was still seething that Cole was more important to Fancy than he was.

"What is your problem?" Fancy snapped, placing her hands on her hips. "I do my job damn well and we both know it. Now, if you are still pissed that you

had to leave Natasha last night to come and help me. That is your problem and not mine. I didn't ask for your help. Hell, I know better than to do that. You aren't my friend and never will be."

"Furthermore, Cole is my friend and we talk about things. It doesn't mean that we are going to jump into bed with each other and have sex. Don't you know that men and women can be good friends without having sex, Mr. Reed?"

Fancy's outburst made Maxwell's body burn to get closer to her. Storming across the room, he wrapped his hands around her upper arms and jerked her against his chest. She gasped softly as her eyes flew up and connected with his. He noticed a hint of fear mingled with a lot of longing.

He couldn't keep the smug smile from spreading across his face. Fancy might be in love with Cole, but she was attracted to him and he was going to use that in his favor.

"Which category do I fall into Fancy?"

"What are you talking about?" She whispered her eyes dropping down to his mouth before quickly returning to his eyes.

She wants me to kiss her, Maxwell thought as he moved one of his hands up to her mouth. Using his index finger, he ran it across Fancy's full bottom lip.

The soft texture was tempting him to give in to what both of them wanted. Putting his other hand on her waist, he drew her body to him. *Was it right for his skin to tingle when Fancy was this close to him?*

“I’m talking about do you think we can be friends and not have sex? Or would you rather be the kind of friend that is a little more special? You walk around this place acting like you aren’t interested in me when we both know you are,” Maxwell commented dropping his finger. “Confess. Tell me what you want.”

Her gaze was riveted on his face then moved slowly over his body. There was a tingling in the pit of his stomach at the intense look in Fancy’s eyes. “You’re wrong. I’m not interested in you,” she denied. “I only want to work for you and nothing else. If you think any differently, that is your problem, not mine.”

Don’t do it, a warning voice whispered in his head but Maxwell didn’t pay any attention. He had a point to prove to Fancy.

Before Fancy had a chance to react his mouth crashed down on hers, devouring the sweetness he found there. Kissing Fancy was a delicious sensation something that he didn’t want to stop doing.

Maxwell unhurriedly ran his tongue along the edge of Fancy’s mouth until she opened it. Slipping his tongue inside, he licked at the unique taste hidden there drawing a sample of it back into his.

He didn't protest when Fancy stood on her tiptoes wrapping her arms around his neck. He heard the low moan that escaped from her mouth, and it pushed him to go further. Shoving his hand between their bodies, he eased his hand under Fancy's shirt and ran his hand over her smooth stomach.

Leaving her mouth swollen from his kisses, Maxwell moved his lips over her jawbone, down the side of her neck. He moved the edge of her shirt out of the way and took small nibbles at her shoulder breathing in her warm and perfect scent.

"Do you know how good you smell?" He breathed against her skin. "I could stand here and remain engrossed in you all day." Maxwell unsnapped Fancy's jeans and slipped two fingers inside her cotton underwear. The heat from her body burned his skin.

"Oh..." Fancy purred dropping her head against his chest.

"Do you like that?" Maxwell asked as he shoved the tip of his finger deeper inside her tightness.

"You know I do Mr. Reed," she moaned into his shirt.

"Maxwell." He stopped moving his hand to get Fancy's attention.

"What?" Desire gazed eyes lifted up and stared at him.

"My name is Maxwell," he corrected. "Not Mr. Reed, call me by my name."

Fancy shook her head. “No, you’re my boss. I can’t call you that.” She wiggled around trying to get free, but he didn’t let her go. This was his time to spend with Fancy. He was in control not her.

“Don’t you think we have passed the point of being professional a while back?” A second finger joined his first one inside of Fancy. Leaning in, he licked the thin line of sweat sliding down her neck.

Why in the hell had he waited so long to do this? Fancy’s body had a death grip on his fingers and he loved it.

“I can go back,” Fancy uttered shocking him.

“Can you really? Do you want me to stop making you feel good?” Maxwell was going to prove that Fancy wanted him...more than Cole. He wasn’t going to allow her to hide from the dizzying current that taunted both of them.

“I don’t know,” she answered, honestly wrapping her hand around his wrist. “I’m so confused right now.”

His curiosity was aroused by Fancy’s comment. Most women would have told him to keep going and her hesitating made him want her even more. He removed his hand from Fancy’s body and fixed her clothes.

“I’ll give you time to think of an answer before I ask you again, but I do want an honest answer from you. I’m a man used to getting what I want out of life. I’m telling you now that I want you Fancy.”

“Cole isn’t the man for you. I won’t let him have you I hope you understand me. You have been after me for over a year and now I’m going to allow you to have me. If you think you’ll use Cole as a replacement because you saw me with Natasha you’re crazy. I will do everything in my power to get you. I’ll give you time to think. I hope you make the right decision or I’ll do it for you. ” Maxwell gave Fancy a quick kiss on her mouth, then moved around her and left the room.

Chapter Nine

Give me time to think? What else am I going to be thinking about, but how it felt to have Maxwell kissing me? Fancy wandered around the room with her hand pressed against her lips. She felt the warmth from Maxwell's mouth still on there. She didn't know what to do. She had waited so long for Maxwell to give her a sign that he desired her and now she had it.

What if this was just jealousy talking? She knew how competitive Maxwell was. She had heard that he hated to lose when it came to business, but she wasn't a part of his business. She was a living breathing person with feelings. Shit, why was Maxwell throwing this on her out of the blue?

Should she go for it? Or was she reading more into the kiss than Maxwell was? She had been working so hard to make Maxwell a part of her life for over a year now. However, she wasn't going to settle for anything less than she deserved. She wanted a partner to experience a relationship with that was unique and intense.

Was she making herself clear enough to him? She wasn't about to make a stupid mistake by saying yes if Maxwell was only thinking about a quick fling because he was horny and thought she would be a nice hot body to warm his bed. She wasn't used to being aggressive, but with him she might just have to be.

Watching how Headley dealt with Troy had taught her a lot about men. Her best friend didn't settle for just crumbs and she was about to walk out of Troy's life. Until he finally admitted that he loved her more than anything else in the world. She was good enough to have that same kind of passion given to her. As much as it pained her, she had her answer for Maxwell and she was positive he wasn't going to like it.



"I don't believe you," Maxwell said, watching her closely. "You're holding out for some reason. Tell me what it is and I can help you move past it. I know you want to be in my bed as much as I think about having you there."

Great, he only wants to have sex with me. Fancy shook off her hurt as she realized what Maxwell truly thought about her.

He didn't mention a thing about commitment. Or even give the slightest hint that the two of them might try to be more than boss and employee involvement. No, all Maxwell was thinking about was having sex with her. Because he thought she was that needy for attention from him. Well, she was about to prove him *wrong*. Maxwell Reed was about to see how strong she could be when she put her mind to it.

"I can't just fall into bed with you for sex. I deserve more than that. If I gave you the illusion I was that kind of woman, than I apologize. I can't sleep with you

in a no-strings attached relationship. I crave more than what you're trying to sell me."

"I know you want me," he shot back. "I see it in your eyes every time you look at me."

"Maxwell, you could make a nun want you, but I'm still telling you no. I can't sleep with you like it's meaningless and then go on after the fling is over. I need this job and right now it's the most important thing to me."

"Are you serious?"

Maxwell was giving her an opening to change her mind, but she couldn't and wouldn't do it. She had to prove to him and herself that she could resist what he was offering her and hold out for something more.

"Yes, I'm serious. I think we should keep things strictly professional between us."

"If that's the way you truly feel then I don't have anything else to discuss with you," Maxwell said, barely controlling his anger. "Why don't you go ahead and leave. I have some business to attend to which doesn't require your help. I'll find you later when I need you to do something."

Fancy swallowed the hurt at the way Maxwell dismissed her, but she was going to hold strong to her convictions. She wasn't going to fall into bed with him because he was used to it happening to him. She saw how Natasha was all over

him at the restaurant. She couldn't become another groupie for the former rodeo star. She was more than another conquest for his bedroom.

"Yes sir," she replied and then walked out of the room wondering if she had just made the worst mistake of her life.



"Don't you dare doubt your decision," Headley scolded her. "Maxwell has some nerve talking to you like that. You aren't one of those sluts from his past. I'm going over to that ranch and give him a piece of my mind. He doesn't treat my best friend like that!"

"Headley, calm down. I don't want you getting all excited and hurt the baby. Troy would kill me if you went into labor early." Fancy knew she should have kept her mouth shut but after the way Maxwell had spoken to her she needed someone to confide in. So, she left Maxwell's house and came over to see Headley.

"Troy knows how I am. I'm fine and so is the baby. He was kicking up a storm before you can over. I think he's going to be a football player," Headley laughed touching her stomach.

"I'm so glad that you're happy," Fancy said. "I remember how you thought Troy wasn't the one for you and you were going to move back to New York."

"I do too, but I'm glad that Troy came to his senses and finally made me understand how much he loved me."

“It must be nice to have a man love you like that.”

“Hey, don’t you let Maxwell get you down. You’re a gorgeous woman and I know you’ll find your Mr. Right out there. He isn’t worth anymore of your time if he only wants to use you.”

“That’s easy for you to say. You ended up with the man you were in love with. I can’t say the same thing,” Fancy complained.

“I still think Maxwell is fighting what he feels for you. He wouldn’t have offered you that agreement if he didn’t feel something. No man wants to sleep with a woman he isn’t attracted to.”

“See you’re wrong there. Maxwell spent years on the road as a bull rider. He’s used to having women fall at his feet to spend a night in his bed. He isn’t used to hearing the word *no*.”

“So, when I told him the ‘*no*’ word it pissed him off. He is done with me. He thinks I was just playing around with him to get some attention. Maxwell isn’t in love with me and he will never be. I have to find a way to get over my feelings for him and move on.”

“Is that possible with you living under the same roof as him?” Headley inquired, concerned. “Don’t you really need this job? Can you go back to the Tycoon Club to work? Do you think Tommy will give you your old job back?”

Fancy ran her fingers through her hair. “Headley, you know why I need the job at Maxwell’s ranch. I make three times the money there than I did at the club being a waitress. I have responsibilities. I can’t back out of them now. I’m needed and I’m going to live up to this. It wouldn’t be right of me not to do this.”

“Maybe I can talk to Troy and he can find you a better job in town. You shouldn’t have to spend time with Maxwell if he’s going to be cruel to you. I still say I need to give him a piece of my mind. He doesn’t scare me. He isn’t all that tough.”

Laughing, Fancy shook her head at her hormonal friend. “I’ll be glad when you have this baby so you’ll stop threatening to give Maxwell a piece of your mind or worse a beating. I think your husband would step in before anything happened.”

“Is Fancy excited about becoming an aunt? Because I know you aren’t blaming hormones on the way I’m acting. You know that I have always been this type of woman. I know how to stand up for myself.”

“Me...” Fancy grinned pointing at herself. “I would never blame your extra spunkiness on those pregnant hormones running wild in your body.”

“Keep it up and see what happens. I’m going to make so much fun of you when you get pregnant and then you’ll see how it feels,” Headley laughed.

“I’m not even going to get married and have kids. I’m going to be single and childless for the rest of my life.”

“Never say never. You don’t know what the future holds for you. You’re a smart, gorgeous woman and Maxwell will come to his senses sooner than you think; bet on it.”

“I believe Maxwell has probably already moved on to Natasha Rogers,” Fancy exclaimed. “I saw how she was looking at him at their ‘business dinner’. She held up her hands and did the quotes in the air before dropping them back into her lap. “She wants him and Maxwell is most likely to take what she’s offering him.”

“Natasha Rogers...?” Isn’t she a little young for him. Isn’t she like twenty or twenty-one? Surely, he wouldn’t be dumb enough to get involved with the likes of her. She’s a gold-digger and will totally run through Maxwell’s money like water.”

Fancy didn’t want to think about the things Natasha and Maxwell would do together. She was over him anyway. She was moving on to bigger and better possibilities in her life and Maxwell wasn’t a part of it.

“I’m done talking about Maxwell. I thought I came over here to see all of these baby clothes that Troy had filled this nursery up with. I still can’t believe he went shopping all by himself. I’m very impressed.”

“I think Troy thought I was having four babies instead of one. He practically brought the entire baby store home with him, but he looked so cute carrying all

the bags in. I didn't have the heart to tell him to take anything back." Headley pushed herself up from the chair and waited for Fancy to get up.

"Troy is in love with you and he wants to make you happy. How can you not love him for that?" Fancy asked as she got up from the chair.

"I know, but between him and my father. This little boy is going to be so spoiled. I won't be able to get a handle on him."

"How is your father doing? Is he still in physical therapy?"

"He's about ninety-five percent back to normal. We invited him to stay here with us, but he won't hear of it. So, we hired a nurse that goes to his house to check on him. It's a good thing he lives so close to us. I can get in the car and drive over there."

"Are Troy and Douglas getting along better now? I know your dad was upset about not being at your wedding?" Fancy followed Headley out of the living room and down the hall towards the nursery.

"Yeah, they have gotten over that. I'm glad because I didn't have the time or energy to be a referee between those two while I'm pregnant."

"Don't they say a baby brings out the best in people?"

"I believe that saying is true because Troy and my father are acting like the best of friends now. I would never have believed it unless I saw it. Now, if I can get you married to Maxwell and Cole a girlfriend everything will be perfect."

“I think you’ll have a better chance of getting Cole that girlfriend then you would having Maxwell putting a ring on my finger.” She wasn’t the type of believe in the long shot. She was a realistic, and Maxwell was going to put a barrier back up between them that a bomb couldn’t tear down.

“We’ll see,” Headley said, stopping in front of the nursery door.

“Headley, leave it alone. I have come to grips with it and so should you,” Fancy warned.

“All I said, is we just have to wait and see. Men change their minds all the time. Who are we to say that Maxwell won’t recognize what an ass he is being about all of this and come crawling back to you begging your forgiveness?”

Fancy sighed wishing that Headley understood how Maxwell’s mind worked, but she didn’t. “I know that he won’t. Maxwell isn’t the type to say I’m sorry or beg for anything. It isn’t part of his personality, so please let it go.”

“Are you sure?” Headley asked a hint of doubt in her soft voice.

“Positive.” Fancy answered with all the honesty that she could.

Chapter Ten

Two weeks had passed since Maxwell had given Fancy his indecent proposal and she turned him down cold. He was beginning to think it was a mistake hoping Fancy would take him up on it.

He wasn't stupid. He saw how she would only deal with him when she had to and she kept her distance the rest of the time. He wasn't used to women trying to stay out of his way. Most of the time he couldn't fight them off quick enough because there was always another one to take the first ones place.

He hated to admit it, but he missed the way Fancy used to look at him. Like he was the best thing in the world even when he pretended not to notice, he did. It had been so good for his ego to know that she only wanted him and nothing else. Now he had blown it by becoming a bastard to her and demanding something he shouldn't have.

"I can't keep this going on like this. We used to be cordial to each other. Now, we are like sworn enemies forced to live under the same roof." Maxwell sighed getting up from behind his desk. He was about to leave the library and search for Fancy. But he didn't have to because she came through the door carrying his lunch tray.

Sitting back down, he waited until Fancy placed the tray in front of him and debated how he was going to be the better person and apologize. She wasn't in the best of moods lately and he didn't want to upset her any more.

"Fancy, could you come here for a minute?"

Moving around the table, Fancy came closer until she was within touching distance of him. This might work out better than he thought. He wouldn't have to reach out too far to bring her to him.

"Yes, what can I do for you sir?"

First, stop calling me sir. I'm not that damn old, Maxwell wanted to yell, but he didn't. Fancy had started calling him that the next day after she turned down his sleeping proposal. She was already looking at him like she hated him and he didn't want to make it worse, so he kept quiet. He'd let her have that battle and move on to something better, something that he might be able to win.

"I was just wondering how things are going with you. We haven't talked in almost two weeks. You just work and then go to your room. I thought maybe you want to do something together to celebrate being here almost two months."

She eyed him with a skeptical expression. "I got the impression you didn't want to be bothered with me after I turned you down. What is this sudden change in your attitude about? Is this a test or something to see if I'll change my mind? I'm

not fond of people playing games with me. You might think I'm easy and dumb but I'm not."

"I should apologize for that. It was wrong of me to toss that ultimatum at you. I was frustrated and I took it out on you. Can you shove that in the back of your mind and try to let us have a non-hostile working situation?"

Maybe move slowly and I might end up getting what I want after all. He wasn't a patient man, but he was trying to get better at it. Yet, it was hard when all he was dying to do was kiss the hell out of Fancy.

Fancy was so good at keeping her features deceptively composed that he couldn't tell what she was thinking. "You tell me that you want to sleep with me in a no-strings attached proposal and now you expect me to just forget about it? I can't believe you. You are out of your mind."

Spinning away from him, Fancy tried to leave but he grabbed her by the wrist and yanked her down into his lap. When she tried to get up he wrapped his arm around her waist anchoring her softer body to his harder one.

"Let me go," she snapped struggling in his tight grip. "I'm not going to be your plaything. I'm insulted if you think I would."

"How about we start out as friends and see where it leads?" Maxwell whispered against the back of Fancy's neck when she finally ceased her struggling.

"You have never wanted to be my friend before. What has changed?"

“I guess I had a change of heart. I’m not really the bastard I came across as. I’m usually a pretty nice guy when you get to know me. Do you want to get to know me, Fancy?”

“You never stay around long enough for me to know anything about you. You avoided me as much as you could at the Tycoon Club. Plus since I got the job here all you do is bark out orders and then storm out of the room. I can’t learn the real you if you’re constantly trying to find ways not to be around me.”

Breathing in her scent, he rubbed his nose against the side of her neck while his fingers massaged her stomach through her shirt. “Are you saying that if I act better you are willingly to give this friendship thing a decent try?” He wanted more than friendship, but he knew Fancy was still too pissed at him to hear that. One day at a time.

He had to approach this really easy like she was a new mare he just got. Too much at one time would scare her away from him. He wasn’t about to send her running to Cole for any kind of help or advice. Just the thought of Cole’s hands anywhere on Fancy’s body made him see red. No, that shit wouldn’t happen not in a million years.

“Do friends touch each other the way you’re touching me?” Fancy asked as her cute little ass squirmed over the erection growing in his jeans.

“Only the real good ones do,” he replied as his fingers moved up and traced the underside of her left breast. Only a few more inches and his thumb would be able to brush over her nipple.

Fancy was a hot little number with her thick black hair, slender neck, perky breasts and shapely thighs. Her body so well put together he was calling himself all kinds of names. For not ever accepting any of her dinner invitations at the Tycoon Club, he never took any of them seriously back then. He just thought Fancy was flirting with him because she liked to flirt with the male customers.

He was seeing a totally different woman than the one he thought Fancy to be. This Fancy was a little more spunky and take-charge, two personality traits that he found very sexy in a woman.

“What do you say Fancy? Can I be your friend?” Moving his hand from her waist, Maxwell used it to loosen Fancy’s ponytail and run his fingers through her full hair. He smiled at how her body shivered at his touch.

Good, she was still attracted to him despite the fact she was doing a damn good job at hiding it for the past several days. Taking one of his hands out of her hair, he placed it on her breasts running the thumb over her hard nipple.

Fancy grabbed his hand stopping its slow movement over her nipple. “You want to be my friend the same way Cole is?”

There's no way in hell Cole better be Fancy's friend in the same way he was thinking about. His buddy would end up with a black eye and maybe a broken rib or two. He wasn't sure what would happen when he got his hands on Cole. He hoped that neither one of them would ever have to find out.

"I would like to be a step above that. Does Cole ever kiss you?" He breathed next to her ear.

Fancy's head spun around and her eyes locked with his. "No, we don't kiss. Cole is like a brother to me. He picks on me and I pick on him. We love each other, but not in a sexual way. I can talk to him about anything and I hope he feels the same way about me."

Maxwell's body flinched at hearing Fancy tell him that she loved Cole. Wasn't it possible for her brotherly love of Cole to turn into something deeper? He wasn't the kind of man that believed a man and woman could be friends without having sex. He never had those kinds of female friends in his past.

He moved his thumb alongside Fancy's jaw until it came to rest at the bottom of her lower lip. "I sure in the hell don't want you placing me in the brother category."

Her eyebrows shot up at his comment. "You don't?"

"No, I don't sweetheart." He placed his thumb on her bottom lip and played with it. "Open your mouth."

Fancy's eyes widened and she shook her head at him. She was testing him and it was making him hot as hell. "I'm not a man who likes to repeat myself."

Slowly, Fancy's full lips opened up and he eased his thumb inside until it rested on her tongue. "Close your mouth and suck on it until I tell you to stop." Without being told again, she shut her mouth and did as he told her.

Maxwell swallowed down a moan as his cock grew thicker and harder beneath Fancy's ass. He was pleased as hell that Fancy was wearing a skirt today instead of her usual blue jeans. Taking his hand away from her breast, he slipped it underneath her skirt into her underwear.

The sucking stopped as he wiggled his thumb inside of Fancy's wetness. "Don't stop sucking," he whispered. "It's going to be okay. I just want to touch you like I did before. You just felt so good. I had to feel it again. Spread your legs a little wider, beautiful."

Minutes ticked by as Maxwell waited for her to make a decision. He would rather have his cock buried deep in her, but he could handle his thumb for now as long as he got to touch her.

Little by little her legs spread open and Maxwell maneuvered most of his finger inside of Fancy as she resumed her lip action that was slowly driving him insane with lust. He slipped his digit in and out of her until her juices were covering most of his hand.

He thought having sex with a woman was the best thing he could do, but he was so *damn* wrong. This little foreplay with the stunning woman in his arms was driving him to the point of no return. He had to stop them before he came in his jeans. They were already painfully tight and much more of this wasn't going to help him. His first time with Fancy wasn't going to be with him coming inside of his jeans. No, he was going to be buried to the hilt inside her tight, warm body.

As much as he hated it Maxwell removed his fingers from Fancy's body despite her protest. He shouldn't have let things go that far. He was trying to show Fancy he could be her friend and he didn't last five minutes when she was within arm's reach of him.

"That was..." Fancy whispered as she searched for the right words to describe what just happened between them.

"Wrong," Maxwell answered filling in the blank as he moved Fancy off his body. His erection was hurting so bad and he fought off the urge to rub away the ache in front of her. He would do that later when he was in the shower tonight.

"I was trying to seduce you again after you told me not to." Maxwell pushed his chair away from the table, so he would have something to do with his hands beside touch Fancy again.

"I was enjoying what we were doing," Fancy confessed, softly stepping closer to him.

Christ, why did she have to say that now?

He was a second away from ripping both of their clothes off and taking her where she stood. Fancy needed to learn how to stop tempting him all the time. She was making it hard for him to not want her in his bed.

“Baby, I did too, but we have to stop. I’m good at seducing women. I know how they like to be stroked and touched. I don’t want to use those skills on you. I need your attraction to me to be genuine and not forced.”

“I have been attracted to you for a while. You know that,” she confessed, placing her small hand in the center of his chest. Why didn’t he stay in the chair instead of moving to the other side of the room? He needed to put some space between them.

Yes, he knew that and he wasn’t going to use that to get Fancy into his bed anymore. Sure, he hadn’t been with a woman in a while, despite what Cole and Troy thought, but Fancy was too appealing for a quick roll in the hay. He should have never placed her in that box.

“Fancy, I need more than what you can give me,” Maxwell lied, praying Fancy would get mad and storm out of the room. I’m trying to be the good guy here instead of dominating you the way I want. I hope I’m making the right decision and won’t regret it later, he thought.

“What are you talking about?” She frowned removing her hand and easing back from him.

“I need a woman who knows the score. I’m not searching for a woman who wants marriage and kids. I don’t want that in my life and I never did. I’m not Troy. He was pining away for Headley for years. I’m not holding out for any woman like that.”

“Everyone wants to get married and have a family.”

“Not me,” Maxwell denied. “I didn’t stop being a bull rider to be a family man. I quit because my body was getting too old and I wanted to leave while I was still young enough to have a life.”

“You truly mean that?” Fancy asked disbelief clear in her voice. “I’m not buying that story for one minute, because even Cole wants to get married and have kids.”

“Cole asked you to marry him,” Maxwell growled. He wasn’t trying to be a good guy here for Cole to sneak in and take Fancy away from him.

Rolling her eyes, Fancy walked away from him. “We have already been over this. I’m not attracted to Cole. I have no urge to sleep with him either.”

Maxwell was proud that Fancy told him she didn’t want Cole, because if she did he would put a stop to it. Cole wasn’t the kind of man Fancy needed her in life. He was too much of a clown. The type who would let her run circles around

him and she needed an older man. A man that would be able to give her what she wanted time and time again.

“Do you want to sleep with me? Do you dream about me in your bed at night?” He was pretty sure that he already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear it come from her pretty lips.

“Didn’t you just tell me you weren’t going to try to seduce me anymore?” Fancy asked crossing her arms under her breasts.

Maxwell’s eyes dropped to the hard nipples poking through the fabric. He ran his tongue across his top lip. He was dying for a taste of them. There were only two things he could do. One was giving in to his need to make Fancy his or give her up and move on. He already knew what he was going to do without giving it another thought.

“Maxwell, stop staring at my breasts and answer me,” Fancy demanded.

“Would you rather me do something else to them beside stare?”

Throwing her arms up in the air, Fancy turned away from him and stormed off towards the door. Maxwell smirked at her back. She was mad at him. He loved how fiery he could make her with only a few words.

“Fancy, where are you going? I thought you wanted an answer to your question.”

“I’m going to get supper started. It’s going to take me a while to cook that pot roast,” she yelled back at him.

“If you need any help let me know. I’m very good with my hands.”

The door slamming shut was his only answer and Maxwell’s face broke into a full smile. He was beginning to see how Troy fell in love with Headley having a passionate woman around was a real turn-on.

Chapter Eleven

A week later sitting upstairs in the VIP section of the Tycoon Club, Cole tossed back another drink pissed that Troy and Maxwell both had cancelled on him. Troy hardly ever came to the club anymore unless Headley told him that she needed a break from him hovering over her.

He thought it was so funny how Troy changed the minute he found out Headley was in love with him. He used to come here every night to blow off steam and now Troy spent every second he had around his new wife.

Now Maxwell was becoming just as bad. He kept saying he wasn't interested in Fancy all the while she was a waitress here; however, the second Maxwell hired her to work at the ranch he was there and not here. He wasn't quite sure if his buddy knew he was falling for Fancy, but he was slowly headed that way. Maxwell was as stubborn as they came. Something huge would have to happen to make him admit his growing feelings for Fancy.

He noticed how Maxwell would find ways to hang around longer when Fancy invited him over for dinner or lunch. Maxwell thought he wanted Fancy which was laughable. She was like the kid sister he never wanted, but had the misfortune to get anyway. Fancy was cute, but she wasn't *his* Lauren.

Cole was taken aback by the old name popping into his head. When was the last time he had thought about Lauren Lake? She left in such a rush with her mother that he never even got to say goodbye to her. Part of him had been thrilled and other part always wondered what could have been between the two of them.

They were different as day and night, but that never seemed to matter to Lauren. She took his flirting with a smile and tried to give it back. Yet, she wasn't experienced enough to do it as well as him.

"Enough about Lauren," Cole said to himself. "I need to stop hanging around Troy and Maxwell. The two of them are making me soft and I can't have that. One of his best friends was already married and Maxwell was inching in that direction step by step. He just wasn't sure if Fancy realized it yet or not."

Placing his empty glass on the table, Cole got from his chair and headed down the steps for Tommy's office. He could always get Tommy to have a drink with him when he was having a bad night and tonight was one of those nights.



Cole didn't even bother to knock before he strolled into Tommy's office at the side of the bar. "Tommy, when are you going to stop hiding in this office? I want you to come out here and have a drink with me."

He slammed the door behind him and looked around the office. He noticed that Tommy's chair was turned away from him facing the wall, which was kind of odd. Tommy usually liked seeing who was coming inside his office.

"Man, are you listening to me? I don't have anyone else to hang around since Troy got married and Maxwell's fighting his emotions for Fancy."

"Tommy isn't here. He's down in the basement checking the Vodka supply," a soft feminine voice said as the chair slowly spun around.

Cole stood frozen as his eyes connected with a woman's dark gaze that he never thought he would see again in his life time. *Why didn't Tommy warn me about this?* Weren't they supposed to be friends? He could have come out there in the club, pulled him to the side and given him the heads up about this.

"What are you doing here? I thought you promised never to come back to this town again?" Cole asked not moving an inch. Those words were the only thing he remembered from their heated argument. The rest is a blur because he got on a drunk and passed out on Fancy's couch.

"I'm here visiting my stepbrother. Is there something wrong with that Mr. Brady?" Lauren asked getting up from the chair.

He tried with everything in him not to notice how the off-the-shoulder gray dress hugged all of Lauren's beautiful curves, but he couldn't do it. He had been

secretly lusting after Tommy's stepsister Lauren for years until she moved out of town with her mother.

Tommy's father married Lauren's mother when they both were in high school and stayed married until their divorce last year. At first, the interracial marriage had turned heads in Paris, Texas, but all the attention died down after their second year. At first, Tommy hated having a stepsister, but he grew to love Lauren as a little sister.

Cole loved how Lauren always found a way to interrupt him and Tommy when they had girls over to the house. It didn't matter that he was already a freshman in college and Tommy was a junior in high school. They were the best of friends and did everything together when they were younger.

"I'm not that much older than you, so you can drop the mister crap," Cole tossed back. Lauren loved pushing his buttons and he enjoyed how it made him feel too. However, Tommy would throw a colossal fit if he messed around with his step-sister.

"Seven years is a lot to me." Lauren replied. "So, I want to show you the respect that you deserve. Isn't that what you told me you wanted?"

"Lauren that was a long time ago," Cole sighed. "You were so young and didn't know what you wanted." He hoped that she hadn't remembered how he turned her down that time.

“You were right,” she agreed. “I didn’t know what I wanted, but now I do and I have you to thank for it.”

“So, what did the Princess decide she wanted?” Cole shouldn’t let Lauren drag him into this conversation, but there was just something about her that touched a part of him.

“Oh, it isn’t anything for you to worry about. I can take care of myself now.” Lauren tried to push past him, but he reached out and wrapped his hand around her arm. The softness of her skin almost made him groan from pleasure. His cock grew harder from the light scent of her perfume.

He was dying to run his fingers through her chin length bob hair cut. Lauren had truly grown into a beautiful woman. It was such a shame he would never be able to sample any of her treasures. Just thinking about tasting her dark caramel skin made his erection thicken and grow another inch.

“Have dinner with me tonight. Fill me in on what has been going on in your life.”

Shaking off his touch, Lauren looked at him a few minutes before answering. “Sorry, I can’t. I already have other plans, but maybe I’ll see you around town before I leave.” Winking at him, Lauren brushed past him and out the door closing it behind her.

Cole tried to slow down his beating heart, but couldn't, Lauren was that one woman that could have been his *forever*. However, he'd burnt that bridge a long time ago. She wasn't going to give him a second chance with her. She thought he didn't want her and that assumption was so far from the truth. He craved her badly and would love to show her how much.

Yet, he kept his distance throughout the years and prayed another woman would make him feel the same burning passion, but it hadn't happened. Maybe this was his second chance. Lauren was back in town. He didn't know for how long, but he was ready to see where things could go between them. However, he needed some advice and there was only one woman that he knew to ask and who would give him a straightforward answer.

Chapter Twelve

“Where do you think you’re sneaking off to?” The deep, drawl asked behind Fancy as her hand reached for the doorknob.

Peeking over her shoulder, her mouth went dry at the sight of Maxwell leaning against the wall with his white shirt unbuttoned at the throat displaying his perfectly tanned skin. A lock of blond hair had fallen across his forehead.

Shit, she couldn’t let him sidetrack her she needed to have a quick lunch with Cole because he left an urgent message on her cell phone and then her last stop would be to check on Headley.

“I’m not sneaking anywhere. I’m going out for a few hours. I have finished all the paperwork you wanted and I’ll be back in time to start the lasagna for dinner tonight.”

Pushing himself away from the wall, Maxwell slowly stalked towards her. She was too excited by the dark look in his eyes. Ever since their little rendezvous in the library, Maxwell had found little ways to touch or kiss her. She never knew when it was going to happen, so her body was constantly on a slow burn.

“Tell me what you’re going to do. Maybe I’ll want to come with you. I’m not doing anything right now,” he said stopping inches from her.

“You would be bored to death. I’m not doing anything exciting. Maybe I’ll make a quick visit over to Headley’s and Troy’s and then a few odds and ends.” She left out the part about Cole since Maxwell still had a huge issue with their friendship.

“Why do I get the feeling you aren’t telling me the whole truth?” he asked pulling her into his arms.

“I’m not lying to you. I’ll be back before you know it. I know that you can handle being without your personal assistant/cook for a couple of hours. Now, let me go so I’ll make it back here before the thunderstorm.” She was terrified of storms and the thought of driving back in one freaked the hell out of her. Fancy tried to move, but Maxwell wrapped his hands around her arms pulling her to his chest.

“Kiss me and I’ll let you go.” Her eyebrows shot up to her hairline as Maxwell’s words hit her. Was Maxwell telling her what to do?

“Don’t have time to. I really need to leave,” Fancy tried to again to get loose, but Maxwell only held her tighter.

“That wasn’t a request, beautiful,” Maxwell growled at her as he lowered his head, so she could do what he demanded of her.

Girl, you better not do it, her subconscious yelled at her, but she blocked it out as she kissed him with a hunger that scared her. The strong hardness of his lips

shattered the resolve she was trying to keep intact. She wanted to control the kiss, but it never happened.

Forcing her lips open with his thrusting tongue, Maxwell used it to explore the inside of her mouth. His kiss was as demanding as it was rewarding. She couldn't keep kissing Maxwell, because it would end up with her in his bedroom.

Fancy tore her mouth away from Maxwell and pushed him away from her. She took a couple of deep breathes to clear her head. "You are so bad," she whispered touching Maxwell's lips with her fingers.

Grabbing her hand before she moved it away, Maxwell licked the tips of her fingers. "What can I say? I couldn't let you leave without sampling you. I'm thinking I'm getting very fond of how you taste."

"Maxwell, I really need to get out of here. You're going to make me not get back home before it rains," Fancy sighed as Maxwell finally let her go.

She couldn't get into this with him. He had been flirting with her on and off her days. She wasn't quite sure what he was up to, but she would figure it out later. Right now, she didn't have the time.

"I'll be back later," Fancy told Maxwell before she rushed out of the house.



“I can’t believe Lauren is back in town. What did you say to her? Did you tell her that you loved her?” Fancy asked Cole as many questions as she could because she wanted answers.

“Yes. Lauren is back in town. I saw her with my own two eyes. I even had a conversation with her. She was at the club. No, I didn’t tell her I loved her, because I don’t. So get that idea out of your head,” Cole told her. “I called you here for some advice.”

Crossing her legs, Fancy rested her back against the park bench and waited. She wanted to focus on what Cole was telling her, but she couldn’t get her mind off the kiss with Maxwell from this morning.

On a hot meter scale it was a twelve. She was still thrown by how he was treating her lately. He was being so responsive, charismatic and down-right mouth-watering these past couple of days with his kisses and touches.

Maxwell had changed so much towards her in the past two months that she had been working for him. The old Maxwell from the club was detached, cold and totally unsympathetic to anyone who was having a hard day, was gone.

It almost felt like Maxwell was beginning to have some romantic interest in her. She wasn’t going to get all excited because Maxwell was good at sending her mixed signals. So, she was just going to go with the flow and see where all of this was going to lead.

“Fancy, can you stop thinking about Maxwell and help me out?” The snapping of fingers in front of her face caused her to frown at Cole.

“What is your deal?” She complained pushing Cole’s hand out of her face. “I was listening to you.”

“Oh...really?” He taunted. “Tell me what I said because you weren’t hearing a word that came out of my mouth. What has my buddy Maxwell done now? Since you’re smiling instead of frowning it must be something good. Has he finally got his head out of his ass and admitted that he loved you? It’s about time.”

“No, Maxwell hasn’t told me that yet. But we have been spending more time together. I wouldn’t say the word ‘love’ is going to be spoken anytime soon.”

“Don’t give up hope. However, if you need me to give Maxwell a push in the right direction let me know. I was the one who got Troy and Headley back together,” he bragged.

“Oh, you were,” Fancy laughed, arching an eyebrow. “Do you think they’ll tell me the same thing?”

“There’s no doubt about it.”

“God, you are so humble. It’s so refreshing.”

Cole narrowed his eyes at her. “Okay, I get it. I’ll stop bragging.”

“Good, I think you should especially since you can’t figure out how to get Lauren back in your life. How can you let her slip through your fingers again?”

“I’ll work on winning over the beautiful Lauren when you do the same thing about Maxwell. I have never seen two people destined to be together more than the two of you. “

“Don’t toss the conversation back in my court. You were the one who called me upset about Lauren. What are you going to do to win her back?”

“I haven’t thought about getting Lauren back because she was never mine in the first place,” Cole pointed out.

“See, that is where you are wrong. Lauren was your. You were just too dumb to see it,” Fancy shot back.



Leaning over the fence, Maxwell watched as the new ranch hand brought his newest horse out of the stables into the corral. He was hoping to enter The American Saddle Horse in the Kentucky Derby next year. His last trainer didn’t work well with the animal, so he fired him and hired a new one. With any luck, Prince will win the race and bring him extra money to put back into the ranch. There were still a few more things he wanted to get done here before he considered it completely finished.

Taking his hat off his head, he ran his fingers through his hair and then placed the Stetson back on. Why was he trying to fool himself? He wasn’t really interested in watching Mickey work with the horse. He had to come out and clear

his head after the kiss he got from Fancy before she left. He was shocked as hell and rock hard within seconds after Fancy kissed him like he demanded she do.

He was curious after seeing the way Fancy responded to him taking charge. He wondered what else she would like him to take control of. He began to wonder just what she wanted him to do with her and to her. The thought intrigued him more than he wanted to think about.

Maxwell savored the feeling of satisfaction that raced through his body at the thought that Fancy would be his with the right well-spoken words. She was still curious about him because if she wasn't Fancy would have never allowed that kiss to happen. So, all he had to do now was keep leaving a burning imprint of him in her mind.

Maxwell was so deep in thought that he didn't hear anyone coming up behind him until he jumped from someone grabbing his ass. Spinning around, he glared at Natasha standing there.

"What in the hell is wrong with you?" he growled pushing his white Stetson back off his head.

"Hey Lover, I came by to see how you were doing," she answered. Reaching out, Natasha placed her hand on his chest and started to play with one of his buttons. "It's a beautiful day outside. Why don't you let me treat you to lunch?"

He brushed Natasha's hand off his body. "Don't call me Lover again. I can't let anyone get the wrong idea. I told you I don't sleep with young girls. Furthermore, I don't have time to have lunch with you now or in the future. I need to take care of things here before this storm rolls in."

"You have a crew full of strong, healthy men. Let them do all of that work. Come with me. I swear we'll have a lot of fun." Natasha wrapped her hand around his arm and tried to pull him towards her car, but he didn't budge.

"Natasha, I'm not going to tell you this again. I'm not interested in you. Find someone closer to your own age and leave me alone."

"Maxwell, you don't seem to understand that I'm interested in you. I have wanted you since I was eighteen and I *always* get what I want in life. You're going to be mine," Natasha told him with a predatory look in her dark eyes. "I'm not used to men turning me down and you won't be the first." Giving him a wink, she spun on her heel, walked back to her car and got inside driving off and leaving a cloud of dust behind her.

Maxwell didn't know if he should be scared or laugh at Natasha's little outburst. He wasn't going to be with her no matter how much she desired it. Her father had raised a spoiled brat and she needed to learn the world, mainly him, wasn't going to be within her reach no matter how much she wanted it. Thoughts of Natasha left his head as soon as he realized that Fancy wasn't home yet.

Home... Did he really consider *CrossStar* Fancy's home now instead of her work place? Yeah, a small part of him did, but he wasn't ready to let Fancy know yet. They still had too much unfinished business to work out between them, so until then he was going to romance her until she thought the same thing.



"Fancy, what are you doing here?" Troy asked as he opened the door and waved her inside the house. "Don't you see those storm clouds rolling in? I would hate for you to get caught out there in that weather. I'm surprised Maxwell allowed you to even leave the house."

"I'm free to go as I please, Troy. Maxwell doesn't tell me where I can and can't go," she laughed trying to overlook the fact he used the word "allow". Lord, Headley was a strong woman to put up with his controlling ways.

"Sorry, I guess I shouldn't have said that to you," he apologized. "Headley is trying to help me with that. Old habits are hard to break."

"Not a problem. Headley used to think it was cute the way you always told her what she was going to do."

"Will you stop filling his head with lies," Headley admonished, coming into the room carrying a bag. "Troy is bad enough without you giving him ideas. I never liked being told what to do by him when I came back to town."

“Not even that day by the pool when we first made love,” Fancy heard Troy growl by Headley’s ear as he wrapped his arms around her waist.

“You need to stop,” Headley laughed hitting Troy on the arm. “Why don’t you go check on the food in the oven, so I can talk to Fancy?”

“I still think we need to rehire the cook. I shouldn’t have let you fire him,” Troy complained as he moved away from his wife.

“Troy, I’m not incapable of cooking us a meal. Now, please go and check on the food.”

“Fine, but this conversation isn’t over,” Troy told Headley before he looked over at her. “Nice to see you, Fancy. Don’t let Headley keep you too long. You really need to get home before it rains.”

“Is he really always like that,” Fancy asked as she watched Troy leave the hallway and head in the direction of the kitchen.

“Yeah, he is.” Headley tilted her head to the side as she stared at her husband’s back

“Oh, I think it’s kinda of cute.”

“You wouldn’t think it was so cute, if you were on the receiving end,” her friend sighed. “Here are the magazines you wanted. Thanks for calling me about them. I was about to throw them away.”

“Thanks,” Fancy said taking the bag. “My grandmother loves these gossip magazines. It gives her something to take her mind off her problems.”

“How is she doing? Is the bank still planning to foreclose on her home pretty soon? I know how worried you were about that.”

“No, thank God. I talked to someone there and luckily they let me take over the mortgage payments for her. It was going okay until the payments were raised an additional four hundred dollars. I couldn’t stay the club anymore because I wasn’t making enough money. So, it was God sent when the job at *CrossStar* became available. I just make enough money there to pay it for my grandmother.”

Unconsciously, Headley’s brow furrowed as she studied Fancy. “I knew that you were working all those extras hours at the club to help your grandmother out, but I had no clue it had gotten that bad.”

“Yeah, she was even talking about going to a nursing home. I couldn’t let her do that. My grandmother is way too independent to be in a place like that. Do you know she still volunteers at the hospital at night? She’s one spunky lady and I’m going to help keep her that way.”

“She’s the only person I have since both of my parents are dead. I remember how much I hated leaving her in Kentucky when my family moved here to Texas. For close to a year, I thought this was the worst place in the world until I became friends with you.”

“I know. I’m a pretty damn good friend,” Headley grinned. “I have a way of making people so comfortable.”

“Okay, it’s getting deep in here. I better leave,” Fancy said as she made her way towards the door, “if you get anymore of these trashy magazines keep them for me.”

“I will have some more. Troy buys them for me, so I’ll stay in bed and not move around so much. He’s more and more nervous as my due date gets closer. I swear you would think he was the one pregnant and not me.”

“Don’t knock what you have. Some women would love to have a man as wonderful as Troy.” Fancy waved good-bye to Headley and then left.

Chapter Thirteen

The popping of the thunder through the house made Fancy snuggle deeper into the covers. Lighting flashed outside in the sky as the rain pounded against the windows. The storm had been going on for close to an hour and it wasn't showing any signs of letting up any time soon.

She had hated thunderstorms since she was a little girl. They had always terrified her for some reason and she never knew why. Back then her mother would tell her to close her eyes and think of something or someone she loved and everything would be okay. It worked back then, but it wasn't doing a thing for her now. The rainstorms back in Kentucky were bad, but this storm tonight in Texas was ten times worst.

God, she would love to go and see if Maxwell would let her stay with him until it passed, but he would probably laugh at her and then tell her to get out of this room.

"I can handle this. I'm strong. I don't need Maxwell's help." A second after the words left Fancy's mouth a loud crack roared outside her window. Jumping out of the bed, she raced down the hallway and into Maxwell's room.

She closed the door softly behind her and inched her way over to the bed. Her mouth went dry at the sight of Maxwell's bare chest dusted with fine blond hairs over a washed board stomach.

The leg closet to her was bent at the knee and the other one was straight. His left arm was lying across his perfect abs while his right rested at his other side. If she wasn't so scared, Fancy would have thought twice about being in a bedroom with a half naked man since she wasn't giving it a second thought. She reached out and gave Maxwell's shoulder a good shake.

"Maxwell, wake up," she whispered, shaking his shoulder.

Maxwell moaned something in his sleep but other than that he didn't say a word or open his eyes.

"Maxwell, wake up please," Fancy shook him again only harder this time and still nothing.

"Great, he's no help to me." Removing her hand, Fancy turned to leave, but gasped instead when she landed on the bed and found Maxwell wide-awake looming over her prone body.

"Fancy, what in the hell are you doing in my bedroom this late at night?" He questioned as his eyes raked over the parts of her body that were exposed.

"The storm," she answered, trying to breathe and not love how fantastic it felt to have Maxwell above her.

“What about the storm?” he asked and a second later a loud boom of thunder rattled the house causing her body to flinch. “Are you scared of the storm?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want to stay in here with me until it’s over?”

“Can I?”

Cupping her chin in his hand, Maxwell leaned down running his tongue along side of her mouth. “You never have to ask if you can share my bed, beautiful. There’s always a spot for you.” Crawling off her, Maxwell stood at the side of the bed and then waved at the empty spot next to her.

“Go ahead and climb on in.”

Fancy flipped over and started to pull back the covers on the right side of the bed. She flinched when a hand came down and smacked her on the ass. “Ouch... why did you do that?” she asked rubbing her butt.

“Nice underwear,” Maxwell grinned. “I like the cherry on the left cheek. Very tempting, it makes a man want to take a bite out of you.”

Shit, she forgot about the high-cut boy shorts she usually wore to bed. Great, now she would never hear the end of this. “Ummm...thank you,” she whispered, slipping underneath the covers pulling them up to her chin.

Maxwell chuckled and shook his head at her before rejoining her in the bed. “Come closer. We need to share our body heat. You never know if the storm will knock out the power. I would hate for you to wake up cold.” Grabbing her by the arm, he pulled her against his warm, hairy chest.

“Uh...I’m fine,” Fancy wiggled trying to get back to her side, but Maxwell only laughed and placed his hand on her stomach.

“Stop squirming unless you want to do something in this bed besides sleep.”

She stopped moving instantly and felt Maxwell laughing behind her. “Good night, Fancy. I won’t let the storm get you,” Maxwell promised her before he stopped talking to her altogether.

Fancy didn’t know how long she lay there still hoping the rain would die down, so she could sneak back to her room. But that never happened and she eventually fell asleep with her back pressed against the front of Maxwell.

Chapter Fourteen

I must have been out of my mind to let her stay in here with me.

Maxwell lay next to Fancy with his hand wrapped around his throbbing cock. How did he ever expect to sleep next to her all night long and not get in this state? He was so hard that it was beyond painful. Shit, he bet he was only asleep for an hour before his erection woke him up.

He lovingly looked at the naked body next to his equally bare one. It had taken a little finesse, but he managed to get Fancy out of her boy shorts and snug T-shirt without waking her. She looked so perfect in his bed. Her soft, creamy brown skin was mesmerizing on his dark blue sheets. The way her midnight black hair was spread out all over his pillow made his cock even harder.

He gave his erection a couple of good hard pumps trying to relieve some of the ache. Brushing his thumb over the tip, he removed some of the moisture there and rubbed it over his other fingers.

I have to touch her just one time. One tiny touch won't hurt anything.

Taking the hand with some of his juices, he eased them between her legs and inside her body. Maxwell bit back a curse as Fancy's heat enveloped him and a low moan escaped between her lips. Fancy was so tight. He loved how she felt

around his fingers. Taking a peek at her, Maxwell eased his digits out and then thrust them back in.

“Yes,” Fancy moaned lifting her hips in her sleep. “I need more.”

Those words shot Maxwell into action removing his fingers, he licked them groaning at the sweetness he found there. “Damn, I want to sample this up close and personal.”

Tossing the sheet completely off the bed, he spread Fancy’s legs into a wide V and started licking at his woman. He was at it at least five minutes before the feel of a small hand shoving at his shoulder finally registered in his mind. He didn’t stop what he was doing, but raised his eyes and found Fancy staring down at him with lust and wonder in her captivating eyes.

“Maxwell, what are you doing?” She moaned as he slowed his fast licks down to slower ones. He gave her a couple of more before he stopped loving her long enough to answer her.

“I’m giving my woman pleasure. You taste so good and I had to get all that I could.” Bending back down, he gave Fancy one final long through lick before he moved his way back up her body.

“Do you want to have some fun?”

“What kind of fun?” Fancy inquired looking into his eyes with a hint of curiosity.

Bracing his weight on his arms on either side of Fancy's head, he smiled down into her face. "I think we need to do something to get you over your fears of storms."

"Can I ask what do you have in mind, Mr. Reed?"

"I think we should make love. You need to replace one storm with another one."

Laughing, Fancy ran her fingers through his hair. "Are you saying making love with you will get me over my fear of thunderstorms?"

"It might or might not. You'll never know unless you try," Maxwell grinned brushing his erection against her.

"Maxwell, Oh God...you feel so good," she panted squirming around on his blue sheets.

"If you think that feels good just think how much better it will be once I'm inside of you."

"Are you sure you're ready to take this next step?" Fancy asked him.

He had been suppressing his feelings for Fancy for so long that he couldn't believe this was real. "I want you. I have been waiting for a while to make you mine. I shouldn't have pushed you away all of those times. Let me make it up to you." Maxwell kissed Fancy pulling her bottom lip into his mouth. He couldn't get

enough of her. Maxwell thought he was going to die if he didn't get a chance to have her.

"God, yes," Fancy moaned running her nails across his back, "make love to me."

FINALLY!!! His mind screamed.

Moving his head, Maxwell drew one of Fancy's nipples into his mouth as he pushed his erection into her glistening center. His cock grew another inch as her body pulled him even deeper. God, he was dying to slam into her, but Fancy was so much smaller than his six feet, five inches. He didn't want to hurt her with his cock. He tried pushing in more, but realized that he had met some resistance. He pushed again a little softer this time. Fancy body tightened up and she tried to move away from him.

"Ummm...that hurts," she whispered, softly.

Maxwell grabbed a hold of Fancy's hips so she couldn't move while he processed the thoughts going on in his head. She couldn't be a virgin. She was too damn sexy to never have sex before.

"Beautiful, why are you still a virgin?" He was thrilled that he was going to be her first and without a doubt her last.

"I never met a man I wanted to be with. Are you saying you want to stop? I can find someone else."

Maxwell's blood pounded in his ears at the thought of another man being with Fancy like this. *She was his!* "No, I'm going to make you my woman. Don't you dare think about being with another man like this!"

Spreading her legs as wide as they would go, Maxwell maneuvered his body so he was on his knees between her thighs. He loved how he looked buried halfway into her body, they were meant to be and he was *never* going to let her go.

"Baby, this might hurt because you're so tight, but I swear I'll make it up to you."

Fancy looked at him with such trust in her eyes that she grabbed the last piece of his heart that he had been withholding. Taking a deep breath, Maxwell pushed his erection the rest of the way into her body. Resting his body back on hers, he caught Fancy's cry his mouth as he let her get used to having him inside of her.

"I'm so sorry," he breathed against her swollen lips. "I'm going to make it better."

Maxwell rocked his body into Fancy's making the headboard bang against the wall. She groaned and screamed as he wrapped her leg around his waist. "Scream for me. Let me know how much you're enjoying this. Do you love this?" he asked.

“Yes...Maxwell...God...Yes!” Fancy cried out as her orgasm rocketed through her body.

Maxwell tried to hold on, but hearing Fancy’s sweet voice screaming his name caused a powerful orgasm to erupt from his body and shoot into Fancy’s welcoming heat.

Chapter Fifteen

Fancy relaxed in the bed next to Maxwell wondering if she had made the biggest mistake of her life. How could she keep her pretense up now? Maxwell had touched the deepest part of her soul. God, what was going to happen between them now? Would it go back to what it was before or would things get better?

“Are you sorry that we made love?” Maxwell asked brushing a piece of hair away from her cheek and pulling her to his chest.

“No.” She could honestly say she was thrilled Maxwell was her first.

She felt his chest muscles relax beneath her cheek. “However, I’m concerned that I just slept with my boss. I never wanted to have a fling with you.”

“Is that what you think this was?”

Fancy wondered why she thought she would be able to read Maxwell’s thoughts after they had sex. His thoughts were hidden more to her now than before.

“Yes,” she told Maxwell frankly. “You never said it wasn’t anything else.”

Maxwell pulled her up his hard body until they were eye to eye. “This was more than an employee and boss having sex- it meant more to me than that. What

occurred between us was out of our control. We tried fighting it, but it didn't do any good."

"How did having sex help us any? We're still in the same spot as we were before," she asked. Fancy ran her hand through his chest hair causing his cock to twitch.

"First, we made love...not had sex," Maxwell corrected placing a kiss on her forehead. "Virgins don't have sex their first time if they're with the right man...they make love. In addition, I have to disagree with you. I think us making love has opened the lines of communication between us. Before I wouldn't have felt at peace like this, I have you to thank for this."

"So, you're saying I can ask about your career on the rodeo circuit and you will fill me in on everything? I heard the whispers how it's a sore spot for you."

"What do you want to know?"

"Well...like how many groupies were waiting for you after your shows? Why you decided to retire and come back home. What you thought about me the first time you noticed me. I just thought I would add that last question for the hell of it."

"I never had a woman ask me about it before. They only hit on me because it made me a hot item in their eyes," he frowned as he looked at her.

“I’m not those other women. I don’t care about what you did or didn’t do with them. I want to know about Maxwell and no one else.”

Maxwell held her hand to his chest. “I’m pretty sure that the details will bore you to death. Isn’t there something else you would rather talk about?”

“No, I want to hear about your like bull-riding unless you have something to hide.”



He wasn’t ready to talk about the years he spent on the road. It was a part of his life that he wanted to put behind him. If he told Fancy about his past then he would have to bring up Phyllis and the reason she was no longer in his life. He didn’t think either one of them would be ready for all of that.

“I’m taking your silence as my answer.” Fancy shoved his hand off her and moved towards the edge of the bed.

“You aren’t going anywhere, Fancy,” Maxwell growled tugging her back to him. He secured her to him so she wouldn’t try to escape again.

“I fell in love with the idea of becoming a bull rider when I was a teenager. Something about it just called to me and I went for it. I didn’t care that it was considered ‘the most dangerous eight seconds in sports.’”

“I first started riding in high school and/or a junior association. I competed at several riding events as I climbed the ladder to the PBR and all of those competitions helped supplement my income too.”

“Were you parents upset by your career choice,” Fancy interrupted.

“They never said that much about it, but I got the feeling they weren’t too thrilled.”

“Did you enjoy being at one arena more than another one?”

“The arenas I competed in varied so much that I never had a chance to grow fond of any one of them. Some arenas I was at only hosted bull-riding and other rodeo events.”

“Weren’t you ever scared getting on an animal that big? I know it could do some damage.”

Maxwell couldn’t help but smile at the concern in Fancy’s voice. He was touched she cared about him because his bull-riding days were long over. He never thought about making a comeback.

“When I was a rider there is a certain kind of equipment that I had to invest in for my competitions.”

“Like what?” Fancy asked.

“Chaps are usually the most famous and recognizable piece of clothing. They give a little something extra to the rider and sport. Some riders wear vests and some don’t. It helps reduce pain and injury if something should happen.”

Maxwell noticed that Fancy had stopped talking. He wondered what she was thinking about. “Care to share what’s going through your mind.”

“I never knew so much went into the sport. Tell me more. What other protective items are you supposed to have covering this sexy body?”

“Gloves to prevent ropes burns, cowboy boots with dull spurs to help keep us balanced, and cowboy hats are always the primary head gear, but before I left more guys were wearing helmets for additional safety.”

Fancy folded her arms on his chest and rested her chin on them. “It sounds like you had to do so much before you ever got a chance to even get on the bull. Do you know how hot you sound talking about all of this? It’s so thrilling.”

He trailed his hand up and down Fancy’s spine thrilled he was able to touch her the way he wanted. She had relaxed all of the tension in his body. He was almost tempted to tell Fancy about Phyllis, but he wasn’t. Now wasn’t the time. He wasn’t sure when the time would be but it wasn’t tonight.

Half the people he knew thought the thrill came from how bull riders matched their riding ability and courage against the animal almost twenty times their weight. Fans having that fascination about his former career choice made him

a very wealthy man. He made closely to \$80,000 dollars in his first three years and when he left his salary was near the \$275,000 mark.

“Do you miss it at all? I mean having all those fans screaming your name and women trying to sneak into your hotel room?”

“The first six months I had some doubt about whether I should have stayed for another year or two, but it went away,” he admitted. “Bull riding was such a huge section of my life for so long. It was very difficult to get into a new routine. I never imagined doing anything else.”

“What perks came from bull riding since you were a celebrity?”

“I never consider myself a celebrity,” Maxwell corrected. “I don’t have that look.”

“I can’t believe that. You’re a gorgeous man. I know I would have paid to see you anywhere,” Fancy confessed.

“Thank you for the compliment, but I’m sure none of the places that booked me to sign autographs, give speeches at luncheons, or attend charities cared about my looks. They wanted the crowd, and my name could draw more.”

“Well, they were just plain crazy,” Fancy complained as her hand found his nipple and started playing with it. The touch of her fingers sent the blood racing to his cock.

“Hmmm...baby you need to stop that,” Maxwell groaned.

“Why...I’m having a lot of fun.”

Shit, he bet she was at his expense. He had to find a way to get in on the fun too.

“Fancy, I left something out when I was telling you about bull riding days. It’s the most important part of the sport.”

“There’s something more important than the rider and the bull?”

“Yes, the judges because they give out the scores,” he said. “I think I should teach you how to be a bull rider.”

“How are you going to do that?” Fancy asked as her hand stopped touching his nipple. I’m not about to get on a bull.”

“You don’t have to beautiful. All you need is something hard between your legs to ride.” Picking Fancy up, Maxwell eased her down over his erection until her thighs were on either side of his legs. “I can provide all the hardness you need.”

“Oh my God,” Fancy screamed. “You’re so thick. It didn’t feel like this before.”

“A hundred is a perfect score,” Maxwell moaned as Fancy eased her body up and then back down. “Since I like you I’ll give you ten points to begin with, but you have to earn the other ninety on your own. You won’t be an overnight success, but I do see potential in you.” He grabbed her hips to steady her movements.

“I’m so glad because I want to get a perfect score.”

“Don’t worry with my hands on training you will,” Maxwell promised, then got lost in making love to Fancy.

Chapter Sixteen

“So, when are you going to ask Fancy to marry you?”

Maxwell barely caught the beer as it slipped from his hand before it almost crashed to the floor. “Marry...Fancy? What in the hell are you talking about? I’m not marrying her or any other woman. Phyllis turned me against the whole commitment thing. Isn’t one failed marriage enough for me?”

“I know you aren’t comparing Fancy to that she-devil ex-wife of yours. If I hadn’t visited you on one of your rodeo circuits I would have never known about her. God, she was a bitch. I was so glad when you came back home divorced her.”

“I couldn’t stay married to her. She wasn’t around after my last injury, plus after she heard the news about me my fate was sealed. She looked at me like I was half a man or something. If she did that, just think how Fancy would take the news. Hell, my ex-wife was older than her and wasn’t able to handle it. Fancy is too young to get saddled with my problem.”

“Don’t try that bullshit with me,” Troy snapped. “Fancy isn’t that young. She’s the same age as Headley.”

“Yeah and that age gap is fine for you, but not me. I can’t marry someone so much younger than me.”

“Fine,” I guess that Cole is going to end up with the lovely Fancy as his wife. They are good friends and I’m sure Cole wouldn’t mind taking it the next step.”

“Cole, better keep his ass away from my woman,” Maxwell growled. “I’ll knock the hell out of him if he doesn’t.”

“You can’t have it both ways,” Troy interceded waving his beer at him. “You have the most perfect woman for you living under your roof. Yet, you keep finding reasons not to be with her. You need to go after her or someone else will.”

Maxwell let Troy’s comment roam around in his head. Could he come clean about his ex-wife and the reason she walked out of his life? Fancy was so young and full of energy. Why would she want to be tied down with an older man like him? It wouldn’t be fair to her.

“Do you think Fancy doesn’t love you? I don’t get that from her. I saw how she looked at you at the club. You could probably be married to her by now. Or, is the problem you don’t care about her?”

“I care about her,” Maxwell admitted reluctantly. “I shouldn’t feel this way, but I do. However, I’ll never have what you do with Headley.”

“Damn right you won’t because you aren’t me and I don’t look at Fancy like that. Headley is the woman I have waited for all my life. I would be lost without her and our baby. I’m just counting the days until I can hold him in my arms.”

Maxwell tossed back the last of his beer and sat the bottle down on the table. “How can you expect me to tie Fancy down to an older man and then tell her I’ll never be able to give her children? I can’t do it.

“Maxwell, being sterile isn’t the end of the world. Fancy loves you for you not what you can give her.”

“Phyllis left me after the doctor informed me that the bull riding injury made it impossible for me to father a child.”

Leaning forward in the chair, Troy glared at him. “This is the last time I’m going to tell you this. Fancy isn’t that bitch Phyllis. She’s young, dependable, sweet and for some odd reason in love with your sorry ass. Propose to the woman.”

“I could make her a very happy woman,” Maxwell said, more to himself than Troy. “She wouldn’t want for anything at all. I have enough money to keep us well-provided for, and maybe after a couple years of marriage we could adopt a child.”

“I like the way your mind is thinking. Now, go and do it before you talk yourself out of it.”

“You’re right. Fancy is mine and I’m going to make it official,” Maxwell said getting up from the chair. “She’s isn’t going to know what hit her. I’ll pop the question tonight over dinner. Since Fancy is out with Headley I’ll head home and get everything ready.”

“I’m glad you’ve finally come to your senses,” Troy exclaimed as he got up and walked Maxwell to the door. “Headley is going to be thrilled. She has been trying to fix the two of you up for months now.”

Maxwell opened the front door and glanced at his best friend. “Thanks for all the help. I might not be doing this if you hadn’t made me see how wrong I was.”

“No problem...just be sure to tell Fancy that you love her.”

“It will be the first thing I do,” Maxwell said before he went out the door.

Chapter Seventeen

“How in the hell did you get in my bedroom?” Maxwell yelled at the girl spread across his bed in her bra and panties. He had come upstairs to take a quick shower and get ready for Fancy before she got back home. He didn’t have time to deal with this shit.

“You really shouldn’t leave that extra key under that flower pot on your front porch. There’s no telling who might just come on in your house, ‘Maxie’,” Natasha said sitting up in the middle of the bed. “Why don’t you come over here and give me a kiss? I have missed you so much.”

“Don’t ever call me Maxie,” Maxwell snapped as he stormed across the room. “It’s time for you to go.” He tried to grab Natasha by the arm, but she moved out of the way.

“No, I’m not ready to leave I just got here. I want to stay for a while. We can play around. Don’t you like my underwear? I bought them especially for you.”

“I’m not interested. Now, get off my bed and out of my house.” Maxwell made another grab for her, but tripped over Natasha’s high heel on the floor and fell on the bed. Natasha pushed him on his back and was straddling his chest before he could stop her.

“I knew you wanted me,” she whispered as she leaned down to kiss him.

Maxwell grabbed Natasha’s shoulder to stop her when he heard a gasp from the doorway. He tossed Natasha off him and found Fancy standing in the door. Her eyes swung over to Natasha then back to him.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know you had someone in here with you,” she choked out and then spun around hurrying away from the door.

“FANCY!” He jumped off the bed and raced after her into the hallway. He made it in time to see Fancy running into her bedroom and slamming the door close. “Fuck!” Maxwell screamed shoving his fingers through his hair. This wasn’t the way today was supposed to turn out. Damn Natasha. He was going to set her straight.

Spinning back around, he stormed into the room. He snatched all the clothes off the floor and flung them at the girl on his bed. “Get dressed and get your butt out of my house. If you try something like this again I will take my business away from your father and deal with another supplier. I don’t have time for this shit. Do you understand me, Miss Rogers?”

The whole town knew that Natasha’s father needed the money Maxwell was paying him after he fell for a pyramid scheme and lost most of his money. Her father couldn’t afford to lose his business for any reason.

Natasha quickly got dressed. “I understand. I won’t bother you again, Mr. Reed,” she stammered as she brushed past him and raced out his bedroom door.

Maxwell stood there until he heard the front door slam and a car roar to life a few minutes later. Going back over to the bed, he sat down on it and wondered what in the hell he was going to do. He couldn’t propose to Fancy now. She would take his ring and toss it back into his face.

Tonight would have been the perfect time to ask her to marry him since it was her birthday, but he just fucked it up by not getting rid of Natasha sooner. “I’m not going to let this come between us. We are going to get this misunderstanding out in the open and then go out to dinner. I won’t let this ruin my plans.”

Getting up from the bed, he left his room and went to talk to Fancy. She would listen to him if he had to tie her to a damn chair. He wouldn’t allow her to toss their relationship three steps back when they had moved ten steps forward. He didn’t bother knocking on Fancy’s door instead he just went on in.

“What are you doing?” Maxwell asked noticing several outfits spread across Fancy’s bed.

She stopped looking at clothes in her closet and tossed him a hard look. “I’m finding something to wear tonight when I go out with Cole. He’s treating me to dinner for my birthday.”

“Cancel the date...” he demanded in a low voice. “You aren’t going anywhere with Cole for your birthday. You are going to spending it with me.”

“I’m not Natasha. I don’t jump when you tell me to jump besides you already have your hands full. I’m going on my date, so deal with it.” Fancy resumed searching through her clothing

“Fancy, don’t test me. You won’t like the outcome. Cancel your date. I’m not telling you again.”

“You may be the Boss Man when it comes to my job, but you have no say in what I do with my personal time,” Fancy tossed back at him. “Now get out of my room.”

“Remember that I warned you Fancy and you didn’t listen to me,” Maxwell exclaimed and then stormed out of the room slamming the door behind him.

Fancy stared at the door while nibbling at her bottom lip. Maybe she should have listened to what Maxwell had to say, but finding Natasha in his room like that had shocked her. She didn’t think he was sleeping with Natasha, but she wasn’t going to let him rule her. She had to show him when she said *no*, she meant it.



“I thought Maxwell was going to drag you back upstairs when you came down wearing that black dress. I was scared for a minute there,” Cole laughed looking at her across the table. “What’s his problem anyway?”

Fancy shrugged her shoulder causing the spaghetti strap to slide down her arm. “He’s mad because I didn’t cancel my date with you.”

“You could have canceled and went out with him inside. I think he was hurt when you walked out without even telling him goodbye. Maxwell is a good guy when he isn’t trying to rule everyone and everything.”

“I shouldn’t have to change my plans because he wanted me to. You know we always celebrate my birthday together. Why should it change this year?”

“Hmmm...maybe it should since you’re sleeping with Maxwell.”

“How did you know that?” She sputtered, shocked.

“I didn’t you just confirmed it for me.”

“Cole Brady, I hate you.” Picking up her napkin, Fancy threw it at Cole, but he caught it before it hit him in the face. He laid it on the table next to his plate. “Come on, I knew you wouldn’t last too long with Maxwell. He could charm the panties off an entire cheerleading squad.”

“So, he’s slept with a lot of women?” Fancy had a flash of how Natasha looked on the same bed she had just shared with Maxwell a couple days before.

“No, I don’t think so. Maxwell is pretty picky. Since he has been back here I haven’t seen him interested in anyone but you.”

“You’re wrong. Maxwell isn’t interested in me,” she answered pulling the strap of her dress back up. “I’m smart enough to know that.”

“You aren’t as smart as you think,” A familiar drawl cut in.

Swinging her eyes to the left, Fancy’s mouth fell open at the sight of Maxwell standing there next to her. He was wearing a black suit, dark green shirt opened at the neck. She thought his wonderfully thick blond looked amazing brushed off his forehead.

“Let’s go Fancy. We need to talk,” Maxwell said, staring down at her.

“No, I’m not leaving with you. I came with Cole and he’ll be the one who’ll take me back home.”

“I allowed Cole to leave with you wearing that take-me-where-I-stand dress. I’m not going to be dumb enough to let him bring you back home. Now come on, let’s go.” He held out his hand and waited for her to take it.

“I said no,” Fancy said with defiance.

“Uh...maybe you should go.” Cole whispered as he looked around the restaurant. “The two of you are drawing attention.”

“Fancy, if you don’t take my hand, I’ll toss you over my shoulder and carry you out of here. I won’t be embarrassed but you will. Do you want that to happen?”

“You wouldn’t dare do that to me on my birthday,” she gasped.

“Did you forget that Troy did Headley that way the first night she started working for Tommy at the club,” Cole tossed out. “I wouldn’t put it past Maxwell to do the same thing to you.”

“Listen to Cole. He knows what he’s talking about,” Maxwell’s voice practically poured over her body with confidence.

“Fine,” she hissed. Pushing her chair back, Fancy put her hand inside of Maxwell’s and let him pull her away from the table. “I’m sorry Cole.” Fancy barely got the words out of her mouth before Maxwell was walking her towards the front entrance.

“Don’t worry about it,” Cole yelled after her. “Those two are going to have one hell of a marriage.”



“Are you causing trouble between those two, Mr. Brady?” A sweet voice asked behind him, “Shame on you.”

Twirling around in his seat, Cole’s eyes locked with Lauren’s. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m having dinner. I would invite you to join me, but I’m on a date. I just stopped over here to tease you while my date is taking care of the bill.”

“Who are you on a date with?” Cole hated the thought of Lauren being out with another man.

“I really don’t think that is any of your business, Mr. Brady. You have a good night.” Lauren winked at him before she turned and walked back over to her empty table.

Oh, it’s going to be my business sooner than she thinks, Cole thought to himself as he stole another peek at Lauren.

Chapter Eighteen

“Did you actually think I wouldn’t show up to get you?” Maxwell asked her parking his truck in front of the pond a few yards from *CrossStar*. “Hell, you should be pleased that I let you leave the house dressed like that with Cole in the first place. I told you not to test me, but you wouldn’t listen.”

Unfastening her seat belt, Fancy spun around on the leather seat and glared at Maxwell. “First off there is nothing wrong with my dress. It’s a cute little black dress that I have been saving to wear for a special occasion. Second, you embarrassed the hell out of me by coming to the restaurant and demanding I leave with you. I was having a nice time with Cole.”

“That’s the problem. Your dress is too small,” Maxwell complained, facing her. “Your breasts are spilling out the top. It barely comes to the top of your knees. You don’t wear a dress like that for a friend. You wear that to make a man want to strip it off of you and leave it on his bedroom floor. Is that what you were planning to do tonight? Were you going to sleep with Cole?”

“I can’t believe you said that you me. Especially after I have slept with you, and then I come home and find Natasha half-naked on your bed. I should ask how

long have you been sleeping with her? Was I just a substitute because you couldn't get her to come over that night?"

"You don't believe that do you?" Maxwell asked as he reached out to touch her, but she slapped his hand away.

"Yes, I believe it. God, you haven't even tried to kiss me or anything else since we had sex during that damn storm. Shit, it happened weeks and I mean weeks ago. I'm beginning to think after you had me that one-time was enough."

"I love you, but I'm not going to wait around while you sleep with other people. I have too much pride for that."

Maxwell's heart tightened in his chest at Fancy's words. She had spoken them in anger so he wasn't sure if she even noticed the slip, but he did. Fancy loved him and he wasn't going to lose her to another man. She was his!

"Wonderful, now you aren't even saying anything to me. Are you even paying attention to me now?" Fancy complained.

He listened as Fancy continued to ask him questions and thought about how much he was going to love being married to her. She kept this spicy side hidden most of the time, but he loved when it came out. A passion like hers could only get better over the years and he was planning to spend several with her.

Sliding closer, he slipped his fingers through her hair. He loved that she had worn it down tonight. He loved hearing his woman talk, but he had a better way for her to use her delicious mouth.

“Be quiet, Fancy,” Maxwell whispered before he kissed her.

All the fight left Fancy as she moaned and fell against his chest. Using his tongue he traced the outside of her mouth until Fancy opened her lips for him. He didn’t need a second invitation as he slipped his tongue inside. He moved his mouth over hers, devouring its softness.

The kiss sent the pit of his stomach into a whirlwind and his cock hardened and pressed against the front of his slacks. Fancy was driving him crazy. He never had a sexual appetite like this with other women when he was younger. Sure, he loved having sex, but never wanted it this bad and never this much with anyone, but Fancy.

He had to have her *now*. He wasn’t going to be able to make it back to the ranch. He hadn’t been inside of Fancy for a couple of days and was hurting. “Baby, I need you,” Maxwell breathed against her swollen lips. “I can’t wait a second longer.”

“I want you, Maxwell. I want you so bad!” Fancy moaned, moving her lower body against the leather seats.

Maxwell shoved his hand underneath Fancy's dress to he remove her underwear, but instead of fabric his hand came into contact with her moist heat. "You aren't wearing any fucking panties!"

"I couldn't with this dress." Fancy answered as her hands feverishly worked at undoing his belt and pulling the zipper of his slacks down.

He was about to say more until Fancy's pulled his cock out his boxers and ran the pad of her thumb across the tip. "Shit...!" Maxwell's moaned lifting his hips up, Fancy's soft touch was going to make him explode in her hand and he couldn't have that.

"You need to stop or I won't be able to make it." He brushed her hand away from him. Picking her up, he entered her with one fast thrust and growled in the back of his throat as she took him all the way in.

The zipper on the back of her dress came down in a matter of seconds and Maxwell shoved the material around her waist before he sucked one of her nipples into his mouth.

"Maxwell...Ummm...This is..." Fancy moaned as she bounced up and down on his erection. "This is the best birthday that I have ever had."

Letting go of her nipple with a loud wet pop, Maxwell licked at the skin right about her navel smiling against her damp skin. "It's about to get so much

better, baby.” He grabbed a hold of her waist and gave one final thrust sending them both over the edge.



Maxwell took slow, steady breathes while trying to regain his senses while remembering his surroundings. He didn't have a clue how long it had been since he fell asleep with Fancy pressed to his chest. Their bodies were naked and still moist from their lovemaking.

He gently brushed the hair out of Fancy's eyes and stared down into her sleeping face. He hadn't planned on making love to her inside of his truck for her birthday, but he couldn't resist being with her again. His hands lightly traced a path over her skin and enjoyed how her breasts felt pressed against his hairy chest. It felt right...perfect... like it was always meant to be like this between them.

As much as he would love to stay out here in the open with her like this he couldn't. He had to get Fancy inside and into his bed because he had something important to tell her. After he was able to take his time, explore and rouse her body to the peak of passion again, he was going to finally tell her that he loved her.

Chapter Nineteen

“Are you telling me that you chickened out of telling Fancy you loved her again? What in the hell is wrong with you? Telling her for her birthday would have been the perfect time.”

“Troy, do you really think Fancy would want to hear me confess my love for her after I dragged her away from a date with Cole and made love to her inside my truck? I think that is the most unromantic way to tell her my feelings. I’m going to do it. I just have to find the right moment,” Maxwell stated, with a hint of concern in his voice.

Earlier, he wasn’t worried about not telling Fancy his feelings now he was after talking to Troy. Was he wrong by not sharing how he felt on her birthday? No, he did the right thing by waiting.

“Hey, you didn’t drag Fancy away from me. I let her leave with you. I could have stopped you if I wanted,” Cole chimed in from across the room. “I was being the mature one unlike you, besides Fancy’s birthday was last week. So, I’m going to take Troy’s side on this. You just aren’t man enough for her.”

“Shut up, Cole,” Maxwell yelled. “I’m not in the mood for your humor today.”

“I’m serious about this. If you aren’t man enough for Fancy maybe you need to let her be with a man that is,” Cole tossed back at Maxwell.

Maxwell was out his chair and had Cole flung against the wall before Troy could stop him. “You stay the hell away from Fancy,” he barked inches from Cole’s face. “She doesn’t love you. I’m the man she’s in love with.”

Cole struggled against Maxwell’s hold trying to make him loosen his grip, but all of those years as a bull rider had given him a death grip. “I’m not the one hurting her. You are constantly with the hot and cold signals that you give to her. One minute she thinks you’re in love with her and then the next day you’re with Natasha.”

“Stay out of my business with Fancy. I would never hurt her.”

“Let Cole go Maxwell,” Troy interrupted pulling at Maxwell’s forearm. “I think he knows to distance himself from Fancy now. I’m sure he’ll find another way to spend his spare time.”

“Fancy is mine and the sooner Cole understands that the better off he will be. I’m done playing these games with him when it comes to her,” Maxwell said letting go of Cole’s shirt. “I’m in love with her.” He took a step back and ran his fingers through his hair, while Cole was crouching trying to regain his breath.

“Hey, I understand that,” Troy said moving him away from Cole. “Why don’t we head into the den and have a beer? I think after everything that has happened Cole should leave. I’m pretty sure he wants to get home, late as it is.”

Maxwell wanted to argue but he didn’t. Maybe he did need a cold beer to calm him down. Never in his life had he wanted to fight a man over a woman. *What in the hell was Fancy doing to his peace of mind?* He better hurry-up and put a ring on her finger before he ended up killing Cole out of misplaced jealousy.

“Fine, a beer doesn’t sound too bad at the moment,” he retorted as Troy led him out of the home office away from Cole. The man he thought was trying to steal Fancy away from him, but wouldn’t succeed if he had anything to say about it.



Fancy stared at the piece of plastic in her hand wondering if maybe there was something wrong with it, but that couldn’t be possible this was the third time the stick had changed colors. She was pregnant!

God, it must have happen the night of the thunder storm. The storm came through close to eight weeks ago. How did she not think of telling Maxwell to use some kind of protection? Was she really into it that much that the thought honestly didn’t cross her mind?

Lord, what did she think was going to happen if she kept having unprotected sex with Maxwell? Not once did she tell him to put on a condom. She

wanted to be upset, but she was thrilled at the thought of becoming a mother. Placing her hand over her still flat stomach, she thought about how it would be to have a little boy that looked like her and Maxwell. He would probably be surprised, but no doubt happy. He hadn't told her that he loved her; however she knew that he did.

"There's no reason to prolong this. I'll tell Maxwell as soon as he gets home. I can't wait until I see the look on his face. I know that he's going to be as thrilled as I am."

The sound of the front door closing drew her out of her bedroom. Walking to the railing, she looked down at Maxwell and couldn't keep the smile off her face. She was so in love with him and this baby proved their love for each other.

"Fancy, are you home?" Maxwell yelled.

"I'm up here," she hollered back down at Maxwell.

Looking up, he grinned at her. "Hey beautiful, when you get done up there come down to the den I have something I want to tell you."

"I have something to tell you too."

"What is it?"

"It's a surprise. I'll be with you in a few minutes," she said.

"Don't keep me waiting."

"I won't."

Fancy stood up there and got her nerves under control as she thought of ways in her head to tell Maxwell the good news. After telling Maxwell, she was going to call Headley and was sure her best friend was going to be thrilled for her. Smiling to herself, Fancy hurried down the stairs and went to find Maxwell.



Maxwell's beautiful eyes narrowed at her the second the words left her mouth. Maybe he was in shock like she was when she saw the positive results from the test. Should she tell him again?

"What did you just say?" Maxwell asked her.

"I said that you're going to be a father I'm pregnant. If I added it up right it happened when we made love the first time. Isn't the wonderful news? I'm so happy." Fancy grinned waiting for Maxwell to rush around the desk and hug her, but that never happened. He had a totally different reaction. One she wasn't prepared for at all.

"There is no way that baby you're carrying is mine," Maxwell yelled jumping up from behind his desk. "Is this some kind of sick joke that you and Cole have thought up. I'm not about to raise another man's baby. You're out of you mind if you thought I would fall for this *shit*. I'm not the father and we both know it."

Fancy couldn't believe Maxwell was acting like this. She had begged him to let her go first and he finally gave in, but he wasn't taking the news like she

thought he would. Why would he think the baby wasn't his? He was the only person she had slept with.

"Maxwell, this baby is yours not Cole's. Why would you think I would ever sleep with him? I told you before that we don't have that kind of relationship."

"You and Cole should have thought your plan out better. Did you need money and Cole told you to lie to me about the baby. He doesn't need money, so you must be the one who put all of this together. Well, I'm sorry about your luck honey. Your gold-digging plan backfired and blew up in your face. I can't be the father of your child."

"Why not?" Fancy demanded getting up from her seat. She was getting tired of Maxwell calling her a liar.

"I had a bad bull riding accident and it left me sterile. I can't father a child, so I can't be the father of that..."

"Don't you dare say it, Maxwell," Fancy threatened. She didn't know what was going on, but Maxwell wasn't sterile. He was the father of this baby. "The doctor you had told you wrong. I'm not lying to you."

"I can't stand here and look at you anymore. You're making me sick. I want you out of my face, house and life. When I get back you better be gone." Snatching his keys off the table, Maxwell stormed out of the room leaving her alone.

Chapter Twenty

I'm pregnant.

Maxwell kept hearing those words over and over again in his head as he drove from the Tycoon Club to his house. He tried ordering drinks to wipe them from his memory, but he couldn't even finish the first one Tommy had placed in front of him.

Hearing those words come from Fancy's mouth had cut him to the bone. Why did she have to do that to him? He was about to ask her to marry him when she begged him to let her go first and then she dropped that baby bomb on him.

God, he would give anything to be the father of the baby inside of her, but he wasn't. As much as he wanted to be a father it wasn't in the cards for him and now neither was Fancy. After the way he talked to her there was no way she was still at *CrossStar*.

She had probably packed up and went back to that run-down hotel she was staying in. He had told Tommy if she came back there wanting her old job back to give it to her. She would need something to support her and the baby because Cole wasn't about to step up and take responsibility for his child.

Pulling into his driveway, Maxwell turned off his truck dropping his head on the steering wheel. He didn't want to go inside the empty house. It wouldn't be the same in there now, but he had to. He got out of the vehicle and was moving towards the front door, but stopped when someone behind him called his name.

"Maxwell Reed, you're a very hard man to find."

Spinning around, Maxwell frowned at the woman he prayed he would never see again in a million years. "Phyllis, what in the hell are you doing here?"

"Invite me in and I'll tell you."



"I invited you inside, so are you going to tell me why you've been looking for me?" Maxwell asked his ex-wife as he took a seat across from her in the living room. They didn't end of the best of terms, so he couldn't think of any reason Phyllis would be searching for him.

"I'm dying. I only have about six months to live."

"I'm sorry," he uttered shocked. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, the doctors have done everything they could do and now I'm trying to get my life right before I die. When I went over my life I realized how many people I have hurt with my lies and deceit, but I think what I did to you was the worst out of all of them. "

“I’m confused,” Maxwell said, in a low controlled voice. “Tell me what you did to me.”

“While you were on the circuit I had an abortion. I didn’t want the hassle of raising a baby if you weren’t going to be there with me.”

Phyllis’ confession hit him dead in the chest. She killed his child. His only chance at being a father! The hate he felt for her raced through his veins. “You killed my child,” he yelled. “Get your ass out of my damn house before I do something I won’t apologize for. I’m not going to tell you again!”

“I can’t. I’m not finished,” Phyllis said calmly.

“What else can you possibly tell me that’s worse than you had abortion without me knowing?”

“I blackmailed your doctor to fix the reports about you being sterile. We had been dating on and off while you weren’t home. He wanted to break things off, so that’s what he did for me to get out of the relationship.”

“I couldn’t let you find out about the abortion and when you had the accident I thought it would be the perfect way to cover up what I did. It gave me a way to leave you without you ever knowing the truth.”

“Are you saying that I’m able to father a child?” Maxwell demanded in a harsh, raw voice as he stood up. He had never wanted to hit a woman in his life

until now. Phyllis had kept him prisoner for so many years with this without him even knowing it.

“I just know I had your doctor lie to you,” Phyllis explained jumping to her feet.

“You better get out of my fucking house before I toss you out on your ass.”

“I’m sorry, Maxwell.” Phyllis gave him one last look then rushed out the house.



All Maxwell could think about was how he had thrown Fancy and his baby out of his life. She told him that she wasn’t lying to him and he didn’t believe her. He called her so many horrible names, and now, she wasn’t here for him to ask her to forgive him for being an unbending bastard.

“I have to get my woman and baby back. I’m not going to leave them out there without me in their lives,” he promised himself.

Chapter Twenty-One

Six weeks later

Kentucky

“Fancy, you have a visitor!” Her grandmother yelled at her from the living room. “Stop hiding out in that bedroom and come out here.”

Running her fingers through her short hair, Fancy looked at herself one last time in the mirror and pulled her shirt down over her stomach. It was time for her to start buying maternity clothes, but at the moment all the extra money she had was going to help her grandmother keep this house. So, she wasn’t worried about it.

“I’m coming,” she yelled back, as she left her bedroom. “I wasn’t expecting Travis for another thirty minutes. It isn’t like him to be early.”

“Sweetie, your visitor isn’t Travis,” her grandmother told her as she walked past her back towards the kitchen.”

“Who in the world is at the door then?” Fancy asked then stopped in her tracks when she saw who was sitting there. “How did you find me?”

“Hello, Fancy,” Maxwell said getting up from the couch and walking toward her. “You look beautiful.”

She took a step backward holding up her hand. “Stop...there is no need for you to come any closer. Answer my question.”

“After a lot of pleading and begging Headley finally told me about your grandmother,” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me about her? I would have helped you out.”

“It was none of your business. She is my family not yours. Now, I know that isn’t the real reason you’re here. Tell me and then leave.” Fancy prayed that Maxwell didn’t notice how excited she was to see him.

“You cut your hair short. It looks good on you, but you’re so stunning that you can carry off any look.” Maxwell smiled at her, but it slipped when she didn’t return it. “Fancy, I came to apologize for the way I treated you. I shouldn’t have said those things to you.”

“Fine. Apology accepted. Now you can leave and go back to Texas and whatever you have been doing.” Fancy didn’t give Maxwell time to say anything else before she grabbed her stuff off the sofa and headed out the door.

“Fancy, wait a minute,” Maxwell called after her following her outside on the porch. “I’m not done. I still have something to tell you.”

“Keep it to yourself. I’m over you. My life is here now and whatever you want to tell me is a part of the past. Leave it there.”

“Go out to dinner with me. We can discuss things. I want to know how you and the baby are doing. I have been thinking about the two of you.” Maxwell tried to touch her, but she brushed his hand away.

“No. I have to go. My ride is here.” Fancy told him pointing to a gray Sedan that pulled up with a young African American boy behind the wheel. She hurried down the steps and got inside the car before he could stop her.

Maxwell watched as the car drove away with haunted and tortured eyes. It hurt him that Fancy practically made a mad dash for the car, so she wouldn’t have to stay there and talk to him. He knew that she would be upset, but not like this. She didn’t even want him to touch her.

He barely heard the door opening behind him. “Don’t let Fancy’s attitude scare you off. She’s so much like her father that it’s scary.”

“She doesn’t want me here. I might have killed any love she had for me.”

“Young man, my granddaughter is still in love with you. Come in here in and tell me about yourself, because Fancy hasn’t told me much about my great grandchild’s father. Oh, I’m Flora Shayne by the way.”

Maxwell followed Fancy’s grandmother back into the house wondering who in the hell that guy was Fancy had left with and when she would be back.

Chapter Twenty-Two

“What are you still doing here?” Fancy asked closing the front door behind her while tossing her purse onto the sofa. She had told her cousin Travis, to keep her out as long as he could, hoping that Maxwell would be gone when she got back here. It looked like her plan hadn’t worked.

“Where is my grandmother?”

“Your grandmother told me to stay before she went out with some of her friends. She wanted us to talk. So, where in the hell have you been half the night and who where you with?” Maxwell demanded in a voice tight with anger.

“You have no right to ask me that anymore. Remember you fired me and told me to get out of your face, life and house.”

Standing up, Maxwell ran his hand through his thick blond hair messing it up which made him look even sexier. “God, Fancy I didn’t think you would take me seriously. Do you know how I felt when I came back home and found you gone?”

“Relieved?” she tossed back not really caring what his emotions where at the moment. “I know how much you hated me working for you. How you only hired

me as a favor to Headley and Troy. I didn't need your damn favors. I could have stayed at the Tycoon club."

"No, you couldn't have," Maxwell corrected coming towards her. "You're too intelligent to have been a waitress for the rest of your life."

Fancy took a step back placing more room between them. She couldn't believe that her grandmother had left her here alone with Maxwell. Well, it wasn't going to work. No matter what he said she wasn't going back to Texas with him. They would never have that unique bond Headley and Troy shared. The emotional turmoil wasn't worth trying to duplicate it.

"Well Maxwell, thanks for the compliment. I'll keep that in mind after you're gone."

Maxwell quickly closed the distance between them, getting into her personal space. Making her aware her attraction to him was still hot and heavy. She just had to make sure he wasn't aware of it.

"I'm not leaving without you. I'm lost with you gone Fancy. A day hasn't gone by that you haven't crossed my mind. Even Troy and Cole noticed the change in me. Baby, I love you."

Her heart quickly sped up; however, the moment didn't last long. Maxwell was good with words, but tonight his silver tongue wasn't going to work on her.

“Maxwell, you need to leave. I don’t want you here when my grandmother comes home.”

“No. I’m not leaving.”

“What!?” Fancy exclaimed staring up at Maxwell. Why was he staying here? Did he think his presence would wear her down? They had nothing else to say to each other.

“I love you and miss you. I have been in love with you for a long time, and I’m not giving up on what we have.”

“We have nothing,” Fancy said. She was so proud that her voice held up. Maxwell wasn’t going to win this battle.

Grabbing her chin with his left hand, Maxwell made her continue to look at him. “My love for you is never going to change. I know you’re hurting and want to lash out at me. I understand that. But I couldn’t take it if you were indifferent,” he told her. “Right now, a part of you is mad at me and I totally understand that. I’m more than willing to wait until it passes.”

Taking her hand, Fancy removed Maxwell’s hand from her face. She ignored how good it felt to touch him again. “I’m serious Maxwell. I’m staying here in Kentucky. My grandmother needs my help. I can’t leave her.”

“Your grandmother seems like a very healthy lady and very capable of taking care of herself. I’ll pay off the rest of her mortgage to the bank and that will take

care of your problems. So, what is the real reason you don't want to go back to *CrossStar* with me?" Maxwell studied her like he wasn't going to leave until he got an answer.

Sighing, Fancy perched on the end of the sofa and avoided looking into Maxwell's gorgeous green eyes. "I just think it would be best if we parted ways with each other. I see nothing for me back in Texas."

"Are you upset with what happened at the ranch or what I said to you?" Maxwell inquired, softly.

She shrugged and then finally looked at Maxwell. "I guess both things factored into my decision to stay here."

Fancy didn't move when Maxwell placed his hands on her shoulders. The warmth from his hands eased into her clothes and memories from the past overwhelmed her. He always had a way of making her body melt whenever he was around.

"Fancy, can you look at me? Please sweetheart?" His deep voice coaxed softly.

Slowly, she raised her eyes staring into Maxwell's dark green gaze. "I'm sorry for what I said. I should have never accused you of sleeping with Cole. I know you love me and wouldn't have betrayed me like that. I was jealous and it got the better of me."

“It doesn’t matter now. We aren’t together. Honestly, I never should have thought of us as a couple.” She got Maxwell to let go of her by shrugging her shoulders, and she tried to move away, but he placed his large hand on her stomach before she could.

“How’s the baby? I can’t believe that I’m going to be a father.” Maxwell held his hand against her like he was never going to move it.

“The baby is fine, but I don’t know why you’re asking. You aren’t the father.” Taking his hand off her body, Fancy headed for the front door opening it wide. “Can you please leave? I’m tired and I want to go to bed.” She waited patiently while Maxwell made his way to her.

“Sweetheart, I know without a doubt that the baby is mine. I’m not dumb enough to fall into that trap again. I’m the only man you’ve ever slept with. I was a fool to have even thought you would cheat on me. I’m going to find a way to make you fall in love with me again.”

“You know without a doubt you’re the father?” Fancy exclaimed. “Well back at the ranch you called me a lying gold-digger, and said I was planning to pass another man’s baby off as yours since you were sterile and unable to father a child. What happened in the span of six weeks to make you do this turn around?”

“I had a visit from my ex-wife. She had a lot to confess to me,” Maxwell answered.

“Like what,” Fancy asked crossing her arms over her breasts.

Sighing, Maxwell looked at her like he didn’t want to come clean with her. “Phyllis was sleeping around with my doctor. She had an abortion and didn’t want me to find out. So, she blackmailed my doctor into telling me I was sterile when I wasn’t. All of this was made up so she could keep the truth from me.”

“Why did you come clean now?” she questioned dropping her arms.

“She’s dying and wanted to clear her conscience.” Maxwell replied.

“Fancy, baby I do love you. I apologize for tossing you out of my house and life. I’m miserable without you. Please come back home with me. *CrossStar* isn’t the same without you. Hell, I’m not the same without you.”

Fancy felt her wall slipping at Maxwell’s soft spoken words, but she quickly shoved it back into place. She was going to be strong and get through this. She had another person to think about besides herself now.

It was Maxwell’s fault for comparing her to the women in his past including his ex-wife. She had told him the truth and he didn’t believe her. She couldn’t let him win her over like this. Not, after what he had almost called her baby.

“Maxwell, just leave. I’m done talking about this.” She hoped her voice sounded as strong as she wanted it to.

Pausing in front of her Maxwell ran his fingers through her shorter hair. He gently pulled her closer to his chest and rested his chin on the top of her head. “I’m

going to leave because I can see you're getting tired. However, I'm not letting this go. What we have is good and I'm not about to lose it."

"See that's where you are wrong. What we had *was* good. Our relationship is in the past and that is where it will stay. Go back to Texas and move on, because that is what I'm going to do. Goodbye, Maxwell." Fancy moved back breaking his hold on her.

Maxwell looked like he was going to say something else before he simply shook his head and strolled out the door. As he turned around to look at her, Fancy closed the door in his face and locked it.

Chapter Twenty-Three

How in the hell did I allow this to happen to me? Maxwell thought as he fell into a seat on Fancy's grandmother's porch. He never once thought on the way here that Fancy wouldn't take him back, especially after he told her about Phyllis. He had it all worked out in his head and nothing was going according to plan.

"Maybe I really did push her too far this time. What if she doesn't love me anymore?" Just the thought of Fancy hating him made an unbearable pain shoot through his body. "No, I won't let her do this to us. We belong together and I won't let her just toss me to the side. I'm going to win her back."

Maxwell didn't know how long he stayed outside thinking of a way to get Fancy back into his life. It must have been awhile because Flora gave him a strange look as she came up her pathway.

"Young man, what are you doing outside on my porch at twelve o'clock at night?" she asked standing next to him. "Shouldn't you be on the inside talking to my granddaughter?"

"She kicked me out hours ago, but I didn't have the heart to leave. I love her but she doesn't believe me. Fancy told me that she and the baby don't need me."

“Oh, she inherited that stubborn streak from her father, God rest his soul. Once Edward got something in his head it was hard to change his mind,” Flora laughed, shaking her head. “Come on in here.” Taking her key out of her purse, she opened the door and waved him in behind her.

Walking into the house, Maxwell closed the door behind him and locked it. He didn’t think Fancy would be too happy to find out he never left. She was in a mood and was dead set against having him in her life now.

“I don’t think I should be here. I don’t want to upset Fancy more than she already is,” he sighed, massaging the back of his neck with his hand. “How about I check into a hotel and come back tomorrow.”

“Nonsense, you’re going to stay right here,” Flora exclaimed. “Fancy’s room is right down the hallway. It’s the first door on the left.”

“You want me to sleep in the same bed as your granddaughter,” he frowned. If Fancy woke up and found him there she would kick him out of her bed in a heartbeat.

“Honey, my grandbaby is already pregnant. So, I don’t think you sleeping in the same bed as her now, is going to hurt anything. Besides, she’s in love with you. She’s just upset right now. Go on in there and go to sleep. I need to check the house and hit the bed myself.” Flora gave him a look before heading into the other room.

Standing in the middle of the floor, he let the pros and cons of sharing a bed with Fancy roll over in his head. It had been so long since he held her in his arms. He missed the warmth of her body and the scent of her hair. It was something he had dreamt about doing for weeks and he wasn't going to miss out on the chance now. He would just deal with what tomorrow hurled his way.



Fancy snuggled closer to the warmth beneath her cheek and allowed the sensation to take over her body. She couldn't recall the last time she felt this *good*. Strong hands were massaging her back while soft kisses were planted across her forehead. Maxwell used to wake her up this way every morning and she had grown to miss it.

Why did he have to always jump to the wrong conclusions all the time? She was so in love with him. How in the hell could he think she was sleeping with another man...and Cole for that matter. God, was his head screwed on wrong.

"Maxwell, I miss you so much."

"Baby, I miss you too," a warm voice whispered above her head.

Screaming, Fancy jumped up and stared down at Maxwell lying in her bed smiling at her like he was supposed to be there. "What in the hell are you doing in my room? How did you get here? Does my grandmother know you're here?" The

questions rushed from her mouth so fast she would be surprised if Maxwell understood one word.

“I was asleep until you started moving around and it woke me up. I came in here last night after you were asleep. Yes, your grandmother knows I’m here. She was the one who told me to spend the night.” Sitting up, he fixed the pillows behind his back and continued to stare at her. “God, you always look so damn beautiful in the morning. I think even more now since you’re pregnant.”

“Look, I don’t have time for this. You weren’t interested in me before and now all of a sudden you are. I need to get dressed and then I’m going to have a talk with my grandmother.” Tossing the covers off her body, Fancy moved to get out of the bed. However, Maxwell wrapped his hand around her upper arm and stopped her from moving.

“Please stay and talk to me. This should be happiest day for both of us. What can I say to make you come home with me? Tell me and I’ll do it.” Leaning forward, Maxwell kissed the back of her neck slowly working his way down her shoulders.

“Fancy, I love you. It’s killing me that we aren’t together.” He eased his hand around her body and placed it gently on her stomach. “This baby is a gift that both of us should be able to watch grow and come into the world. I want to be a father. Please don’t take that away from me.”

Fancy wanted to believe so badly that what Maxwell was saying to her was true, but she couldn't. She wasn't that starry-eyed young woman in love with everything that was Maxwell Reed. She had grown up those last couple days at the ranch.

She had to think about her future now along with her baby's. Maxwell was just feeling guilty for his cruel words. He really wasn't in love with her. It was best to get that out in the open now so they could figure out a way to raise this baby together.

"Maxwell, we need to talk," Fancy sighed easing his hand away from her body. Turning around in the bed, she looked at him and tried not to fall more in love than she already was.

"Sweetheart, that's all I want to do is talk and get this mess cleared up between us. I want to take you back home and start planning a wedding. I want my son or daughter to have my last name when they are born."

"Look, I don't have time for this now. Please get dressed and wait for me in the kitchen. We can talk in there." Going over to her closet, Fancy grabbed a shirt and a pair of jeans. She gave Maxwell a quick look before she hurried into her bathroom locking the door behind her.

"I'm not going to let Fancy keep running from me," Maxwell said to himself as he got out the bed and put his clothes on. "I'll say or do anything to make her

come back to Texas with me. I love her too much to leave her in Kentucky. She belongs with me and I'm going to make it happen.”

Chapter Twenty Four

Maxwell couldn't believe Fancy wasn't listening to him. He was losing ground with her. She was so much more stubborn now that she was pregnant and it scared him. He had to find a way to make her listen to him and the quicker the better. The thought was out of his mouth before he could stop it.

"If you don't come back with me then I'll sue you for custody of the baby. I have the power and the money to take him away from you." Maxwell hated to threaten Fancy with that possibility.

He would never really take the baby from her, but he was desperate to find a way to get her to come back with him. He was running out of ideas and that was the last thing he could come up with.

Protectively, Fancy placed her hand on the small bump underneath her shirt and leaned away from him in her seat. It cut him to the core that she believed he would actually do something so heartless.

"You wouldn't drag me into court for my baby," she exclaimed. "You can't be that much of a bastard. I would never hurt my child."

The heartbroken sound of her voice almost made him give in, but he didn't. "I can provide my child with a better life in Texas. You're living here in this small house with your grandmother."

"Yes, she is a wonderful woman. However, she isn't young enough to be caring for an infant while you're at work. Plus I can hire a nanny to look after my child, so he wouldn't be put into daycare if you are thinking of that as a second solution."

"Yes, you have money to do all of those things. However, I can give this baby all the love in the world. I think love is so much more important than material things," Fancy tossed back at him.

"Well...how about we go to court and see what happens. Are you sure that you would win?" Maxwell flung back. "I'll give you twenty-four hours to decide." Getting up from the table, he was on his way out the door when Fancy's voice stopped him.

"I'll go back with you," she said, softly.

Guilt clutched Maxwell's heart at the defeated sound in Fancy's voice. He didn't want it to be like this between them. He wanted her to love him the way she used to. If he couldn't have that then he wasn't going to take the crumbs of something he ruined.

Fancy didn't need to be stressed out while she was pregnant with his son. She needed love around her and despite the fact he adored her with everything he had in him. She didn't believe it and until she did, he couldn't force what he was dying to have on her.

"No, you stay here. I don't want you to come with me under any kind of duress. Just let me know how your next doctor's appointment comes out." Maxwell hurried out of the house before he changed his mind.

Fancy sat at the table astonished that Maxwell actually gave up his fight. He was going to let her stay here and instead of demanding that she go back with him. That wasn't like him.

Was he really serious about this? Could he really be in love with her? Had her fantasy actually become a reality and she was too blind to see it?

"Fancy Regina Shayne, child why are you still sitting there and not going after that man?" Her grandmother scolded coming into the room behind her.

"Grandma, you don't know what is going on with Maxwell. We don't have the best track record when it comes to our relationship."

"What couples does? The best couples are the ones who disagree and then make up with just as much passion. I'm a lot of older than you and I know when a man loves a woman. Maxwell is head over heels in love with you. I know I didn't raise a dumb child, did I?"

“No, ma’am, you didn’t,” Fancy grinned getting up from the table, she ran out the door to stop Maxwell from leaving. He was halfway to his rental car when she called to him.

“Maxwell, can you come back here for a minute?”

Spinning around, Maxwell came back to her, stopping mere inches from her body. He looked down at her with such love and hope in his green eyes that she almost cried.

“Yes...Fancy, can I help you with something?”

“I’m looking to fill an empty place in my life and I was hoping you might be the man who could help me.”

“What are you looking for?” A hint of a smile was tugging at the corner of his mouth.

Holding her finger she started naming off everything thing she wanted. “I need a man who will be there for me. He has to give me the space to be me, but give me help anytime I ask for it.”

“Lastly, he has to love me and our baby like we are the two most important people in his life. Because we already love him too death and want him in our life. Do you think you’re qualified to fill that role?”

Cupping her face in his hands, Maxwell stared deep into her eyes. “Fancy, I fell in love with you the first night you started working at the Tycoon Club and

took my drink order. I'm still going to be in love with you when our grandchildren are running around our house years from now, so yes, I think I'm more than qualified for that job opening."

"Wonderful...then the job is yours. You can start immediately. How about a kiss to close the deal?"

"I like the sound of that." As Maxwell lowered his head to kiss her, her grandmother yelled at them from the porch.

"Fancy, don't you dare be making out with Maxwell in the middle of that sidewalk. What will my neighbors think? I still have to live on this block after you go back to Texas with him. Get in here and let me know when the wedding is going to be."

"Welcome to my family, Fancy grinned and then gave Maxwell a quick kiss on the mouth anyway.

"There is no other place I would rather be," Maxwell whispered as he looked into Fancy's eyes.

The End

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Author Bio:

Marie Rochelle is a bestselling author and award winning author of interracial romances featuring black women and white men. Marie first started writing IR books about three years ago and it has been nonstop for her ever since. Her first best selling IR romance was entitled **Taken by Storm**. This bestseller will be released by Phaze later on in the year. Her hero in the book Storm Hyde won the 2006 Choice hero from REC.

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