

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

N.J. WALTERS

*Tempting
Tori*

ELLORA'S CAVE
Quickies

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Tempting Tori

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TEMPTING TORI

N.J. Walters

Dedication

Thank you to all those readers who asked about the cowboy from *Unmasking Kelly*.
This one is for you.

Chapter One

Victoria Abrams placed the last item in her suitcase and closed the cover, blinking back the tears that stung her eyes. She would not cry. Not again. She'd spent too many nights crying for a man who didn't love her. Heck, J.T. Courage didn't see her as anything more than the housekeeper, just another employee of Courage Enterprises.

She, on the other hand, had noticed J.T. the very first day she'd laid eyes on him. Answering an ad she'd seen in a local newspaper, she'd made the trip across the state and been interviewed by his brothers, Brody and Marshall, who'd hired her on the spot. Tori had grown up on a ranch and was used to cooking and cleaning for large groups of men. The only difference now was that she got paid very well to do it, and it was only J.T. and his brothers she had to take care of.

J.T. had been away on business, but when he'd returned, he'd made her feel welcome. She, on the other hand, had almost swallowed her tongue when they'd been introduced. Tori was used to hard-working men with toned, strong bodies, but J.T. made her forget every other man she'd ever seen.

At six-foot-two in his socks, he had a twinkle in his pale blue eyes and a sexy smile that a woman would have to be dead not to notice. Like his brothers, he was broad-shouldered from years of working on a ranch. But looking at his brothers never made her heart pound like watching him did. J.T. looked sexy as sin in faded jeans, which clung to his muscled thighs as if they'd been painted on. The denim material lovingly cupped the bulge in the front of his pants.

Just thinking about it brought heat to her cheeks. She'd spent far too many days and nights speculating as to what exactly that area would look like without the material blocking her view. J.T. was a man in his prime. At thirty-two he was self-assured,

successful and rich. Women from all around vied for his attention. And while he dated, he never went out with a woman more than once or twice.

Zippering her suitcase closed, she stared around the room that had been her home for the past year and half. It was a large room that contained a bed, nightstand and dresser at one end and a sitting area with a sofa, coffee table, small entertainment unit and a desk in the other. She also had a private bath with a tub and large shower stall. The French doors at the far end of the sitting area opened up onto the deck that wrapped around the house.

Although all her personal belongings were gone, most of the furniture remained. The rest of the house was empty. J.T. had built a new house, stables and outbuildings two miles down the road. Brody had plans to remodel the old homestead in the next year, and they'd left the bed and some basic furniture for him. Tori was sad to leave.

"All ready?"

She turned and smiled at Brody. Tall and broad like his older brother, Brody might be the baby of the family, but he was all man. "I'm ready." Her stomach fluttered at the thought of leaving. Brody thought she was moving to the new house, but her plan was to catch a ride to town tomorrow and take the bus back home to regroup. She couldn't stay here any longer. Her love for J.T. was tearing her apart.

"You okay?" She could see the concern in Brody's eyes as he hoisted her suitcase easily.

"Yeah. I'm just sad to be leaving this place."

Brody laughed. "Hey, if you miss it too much, maybe I can steal you away from my brother when I finish this place and you can come back and work for me."

Tori tried to smile, but knew it fell flat. To keep Brody from asking questions she didn't want to answer, she turned away and headed to the bathroom. "I just need to check the bathroom one more time."

"I'll put your bags in the truck and wait for you."

She gripped the frame of the bathroom door to steady herself as she forced herself to turn and smile. "You go ahead. I'm going to catch a ride with J.T. if he's still around."

"He's still out in the barn." Brody paused, looking slightly uncomfortable. "You sure you're okay?"

She nodded. "I'm fine, Brody. Just feeling a little melancholy is all."

"If you're sure you're all right..." he trailed off as if uncertain what else to say.

"I'll see you in a bit and I'll start getting things organized."

"Shoot, Tori. Most of it's already done. You've been working like a dog this past week." With that, he turned and headed down the short hallway and out through the kitchen, his boots thudding against the hardwood floor.

Tori turned and walked into the bathroom. Leaning her hands on the edge of the sink, she studied herself in the mirror. Her waist-length, brown hair was wound tight in a bun at the back of her head. A few short strands had escaped, touching her neck. Her face was round, her skin pale, making her dark brown eyes appear even larger than usual. It was a pleasant face, but an unremarkable one.

Her body could best be described as sturdy. Her entire life she'd felt overweight, but at twenty-eight, she had come to terms with the fact that she was destined to be a size sixteen for the rest of her life. No amount of dieting seemed to change that fact for long. If she lost a few pounds, she quickly put them back on again. She'd finally stopped trying. She was strong and healthy and that was all that mattered.

But she was through torturing herself. She'd spent the past year and a half of her life waiting for J.T. to notice her as a woman. That hadn't happened, and it wasn't likely to. It was time for her to move on and stop mooning over a man who would never be hers.

A part of her wanted to just sneak away tomorrow, but Tori was no coward. She wanted to tell J.T. in private before she broke the news to Brody tonight. Marshall, the eldest brother, didn't live on the ranch anymore, only coming home on holidays and vacation when he could get away from work. It would be an inconvenience for them,

but they'd manage. She'd stocked the freezer with ready-made meals to get them through until they found another housekeeper/cook to replace her.

Tugging at the hem of her blouse, she swiped a smudge of dirt off the tip of her nose and nodded at her reflection. She was as ready as she'd ever be. Time to face J.T. for the final time. Turning on her heel, she marched out of the room, down the hallway and out the kitchen door. It closed with a *thunk* behind her, sounding very final.

She didn't look back as she stalked across the dusty ground toward the barn.

John Thomas Courage, J.T. to his friends, stood with his hands on his hips and stared out the open door at the far end of the barn. Was there anywhere else on earth as wild and beautiful as West Texas? He didn't think so. But, then again, he was biased. The land was in his blood. Generations of his family had held this land when so many others had lost theirs. The land and the ranch were in good financial shape, but so far there was no one to leave it to.

His older brother Marshall was off working for some sort of secret government agency that had recruited him straight from Army Special Forces. J.T. didn't want to know exactly what his brother did. He stayed up enough nights worrying now as it was. Thankfully, his younger brother Brody had stayed closer to home. He had his own career as a writer, but he helped out with the horses when needed.

It was J.T. who loved the ranch, who managed the finances and business of keeping the large operation running. His love was for horses and he bred and raised some of the finest quarter horses and cutting horses in the country. The Bar C had a reputation for fine horseflesh and for being able to work with troublesome animals. That's what J.T. loved the most and he'd garnered a name for himself across the country as being able to tame the wildest animal.

His granddad and his father had both discovered oil on their land, which had gone a long way toward making the family secure for generations to come. That brought his thinking back around full circle. So far neither he, nor his brothers, had married. J.T.

had wanted the new house finished before he turned his thoughts toward a woman to share it with. Now, the house was done and there were no more excuses.

It was time.

That had been brought home to him more than ever eight months ago when he'd gone to Boston on business. He'd been at loose ends one evening and ended up at a local pub named Brannigan's, where he'd run into a beautiful, mysterious woman at a Halloween party. He'd made a play for her, but she'd already had a man. Not surprising, considering how gorgeous she was. J.T. was just as glad she'd turned him down. She wasn't the real woman he'd been longing for, but had reminded him of her.

Swearing, he whirled away from the door and stalked back into the dim confines of the barn. He removed his straw cowboy hat and smacked it against his leg before tossing it on top of a lone bale of hay. He felt hot and out of sorts as he made his way from stall to stall, checking to see that everything had been removed. He tried to think of anything but the woman who haunted his dreams.

He'd spent far too many nights in his bed with the covers thrown back and his hand wrapped around his cock, bringing himself some much-needed relief as he imagined it was her hand squeezing him tight. Christ, he couldn't take much more of this. He ripped his T-shirt off and swiped it over his face before tossing it down next to his hat. It was hot, even for June, and thinking about her just made him hotter.

She had lush hips that would cradle him as he thrust into her hot, welcoming pussy. Her thighs would wrap around his hips, pulling him closer as he pounded into her. She was tall for a woman, which meant he wouldn't have to hold back as he loved her the way he wanted to—hard and fast, slow and long, and every way in-between.

Sweat beaded on his forehead, trickling down his temple as he thought about her breasts. She had breasts that would bring a man to his knees. Firm and full, he'd spent a lot of hours speculating on the exact color of her nipples. Would they be pouty pink, rosy beige, or more of a red? He'd bet half the ranch that they were rosy beige. He had to find out. He was going to find out. And soon.

He spied something on the floor in the corner and started toward it, but stopped when he heard footsteps. He'd heard the last truck pull away a few minutes ago and thought everyone had already left. J.T. looked toward the entrance and waited.

A familiar silhouette was outlined against the door, backlit by the bright sunshine. "I thought you went with Brody." His voice was harsher than he'd intended, but damn, he didn't need this. Not now.

"I wanted to talk to you first." Tori's soft voice slid over him like a caress making his skin tighten over his bones and his cock stir. He'd already been semi-erect and now his erection was straining against the front of his jeans. He hoped the dimness of the barn would hide it until he could get himself back under control.

"So talk." He crossed his arms over his chest and waited.

Tori almost lost her nerve. He was naked from the waist up, his torso looked as if it had been sculpted in stone. His biceps bulged when he crossed his arms over his chest. She was never more aware of him as a man then she was in that moment. She licked her lips, imagining what it would be like to touch his warm flesh, kiss it, lick it. Her breasts swelled and her nipples puckered. She could feel her panties getting damper by the second.

His eyes narrowed as he watched her. She swallowed and tried to gain control of her runaway hormones. It was always like this for her whenever she was around him.

J.T., on the other hand, looked totally unapproachable and uninterested in what she had to say. He'd always seemed a bit aloof, but this was worse than usual. It just reinforced that she was making the right decision. It was time for her to move on with her life instead of waiting for a man who would never want her.

"I'm leaving."

He sighed and uncrossed his arms, raking his fingers through his hair. A single lock fell back against his forehead. He hadn't shaved this morning and his jaw was covered with stubble slightly darker than his light brown hair. Most men would look disheveled

or slightly disreputable, but on J.T. it just looked sexy. "I thought you'd already left. Is Brody still here?"

She shook her head. "No, Brody is gone."

"Why didn't you go with him?"

Tori stepped into the barn and approached him. J.T. seemed angry about something. He was pretty even-tempered, but when he got riled all the men gave him a wide berth. "I wanted to talk to you first."

He stepped into a stall and picked up a piece of an old leather bridle and laid it over the edge of the gate. "We can talk at home later."

Her heart pounded and she could feel a trickle of sweat roll down her back. "I'm leaving," she repeated.

J.T. stilled, his pale blue eyes freezing her in place. "What exactly do you mean?"

She swallowed the lump in her throat and squared her shoulders. "I'm going to catch the bus tomorrow in town. I'm going home."

"Your home is here," he snapped.

Tori gave him a sad smile. "You know that's not true. This is your home. I'm just the housekeeper. I want more from life than that."

"I thought you liked it here."

She could hear the anger in his voice, but more than that, she could hear the underlying hurt. Tori felt as if a knife were twisting in her heart. "I do like it here." That was an understatement. She loved it here.

"Then you'll stay." It wasn't a question, but a statement. She felt her lips turn up in a genuine smile. That was just like J.T. to figure everything was settled because he said it was so. He was stubborn and mule-headed at times, but she loved him in spite of it, or maybe even because of it. It was his stubbornness that had enabled him to take the successful ranch his parents had left him and his brothers and make it even more profitable.

“No.” She rubbed her hands up and down her arms, suddenly chilled in spite of the heat. “I can’t stay.”

J.T. strode toward her, not stopping until the toes of his boots touched the tops of her sneakers. He was a good six inches taller than she, but was so much broader that he made her feel small. Her stomach fluttered, but it wasn’t with fear. Having J.T. so close to her was having an effect on her senses.

His chest was almost touching hers. Her nipples tightening even further, the nubs practically straining to feel the hard muscles. He took a deep breath. His chest expanded, barely brushing her breasts.

Tori gasped as the heat between them ignited, sending rivulets of lightning flaring throughout her body. She felt that tiny touch everywhere. Her toes curled in her sneakers, her sex clenched and she felt positively lightheaded. She took a deep breath and knew immediately it was a mistake. His scent—clean male sweat, sandalwood soap, leather and hay—filled her nostrils. But below it all was the smell of J.T., the one man who had the ability to set her on fire with barely a look or a touch.

His large hands grasped her shoulders and she tilted her head back to look at him. Pale blue eyes, like lasers, pierced her very soul. He looked as tortured as she felt. Tori shook her head, not understanding.

He took the slight movement of her head as another “no” and shook her slightly. “You’re not leaving.”

She planted her hands on his chest to steady herself. The muscles jumped beneath her fingers and she could feel the heavy pounding of his heart against her palm. “I have to.” There was no way she could make him understand that to be this close to him hurt her in ways he couldn’t even imagine.

A muscle ticked in his jaw as he clenched it tight. His nostrils flared as his hands slid from her shoulders, down the long line of her back to land on her behind. She jumped as he cupped both cheeks of her butt and yanked her close. They were melded

together now, her breasts squashed against his chest, her thighs pressed against his thighs, and her mound snug against his cock, which was hard and thick and long.

She'd never been this close to him before and it was making her head spin. Her breath quickened and her legs threatened to give out as her muscles turned to jelly. She clutched at his shoulders for support, feeling the slick muscles flex beneath her fingers.

He was as turned on as she was. He couldn't fake that kind of erection, but she couldn't wrap her head around what it meant. This moment was surreal, like something from a dream. Lord only knows how many fantasies she'd spun around J.T. in the past year or so.

"You're mine, Tori. And I'm not letting you go." His voice was harsh, but his hands on her were gentle as they squeezed her ass.

She wasn't sure what to say. Wasn't entirely certain she wasn't dreaming. She licked her lips and J.T. groaned. Then his mouth was on hers and she forgot everything. All her reasons for leaving, all her fears, fell away until all she was left with was the feel of his hands on her body and his lips touching hers.

Chapter Two

J.T. tasted Tori for the first time. It was better than anything he could have ever imagined. She tasted like honey and woman and promises of long, hot nights between the sheets. She tasted like his future. She thought she was leaving, but he wasn't letting her go anywhere.

She parted her lips easily and he slid his tongue into her mouth, groaning when her tongue touched his. Her actions were tentative at first, but quickly gained in confidence. He stroked her tongue and she returned the favor. Her fingers dug into his shoulders, gripping him hard and tight. His hands roamed over her lush behind, squeezing and caressing. Soft whimpers escaped her as he tugged her closer, angling his erection against her belly.

He tore his lips from hers, but didn't release his hold on her. Her cheeks were flushed, and her chocolate brown eyes were luminous and large. She blinked twice, her long, dark lashes fanning against her cheekbones. Her eyes were so expressive and the color reminded him of bittersweet chocolate. He'd always had a sweet tooth.

Her lips parted as she sucked air into her lungs, making her chest rise and fall with every breath. J.T. could feel her taut nipples through the barriers of her clothing as they scraped over his bare chest. He bit back a groan as he ran one hand up the long column of her spine. She arched into him, bringing her mouth close to his again.

Her lips were moist and very kissable. The bottom one was slightly larger than the top one, making him want to nibble on it. Unable to resist the temptation, he caught her lower lip between his teeth and tugged gently. Releasing it, he soothed it with his tongue. Tori gasped, her body melting into his.

His hand cupped her nape as he rested his forehead against hers, desperately trying to regain control of himself before he came in his pants. He had no problem controlling

himself around any woman. Except Tori. There was something about her, an earthiness, an honesty, that set his hormones to jumping.

His fingers toyed with the strands of her hair that had come loose from her bun. Tori always kept her hair either pinned up or in a long braid. J.T. had fantasized many times about that heavy mass of hair spilling over her shoulders, tangled in his fingers as he fucked her. He wanted to feel the thick locks running over his flesh as she touched and licked every inch of his dick.

J.T. dragged in a deep breath and tried to think of something else. Anything but the woman in his arms. He was as hard as steel and nothing would make him feel better except burying his cock deep inside Tori. And that line of thinking wasn't helping matters.

He forced himself to release her and take a step away. She licked her lips again and he fisted his hands by his sides to keep from yanking her back into his arms again. He could see the confusion in her eyes as she stood there staring at him as if she wasn't quite sure who he was. At the moment, he wasn't quite sure either.

He was a civilized man, for the most part, but right now, the emotions running through his veins were basic and primitive. His body was urging him to strip her, fuck her and mark her as his. His fingers twitched, but he held his ground.

"I don't understand." She reached out her hand and placed it on his chest. J.T. hissed as if her hand were a hot brand and he'd been marked for life.

He grabbed her hand in his and held it tight. If she touched him again, he wouldn't be responsible for what might happen. He was on the edge and it wouldn't take much to shove him over.

"I want you." He'd meant to say something totally different, but that was what came out of his mouth. Simple and basic.

She blinked and tilted her head to one side. "I don't understand," she repeated. Each word slow and measured.

He brought her hand to his mouth and kissed each knuckle. Her eyes grew even larger, her pupils dilating. "What's to understand? I want you, Tori."

She swallowed hard and nodded. "Okay."

"Okay?" Now it was his turn to be shocked. Had she meant what he thought she did?

She nodded again, this time with more enthusiasm. "I want you too."

J.T. wondered for a second if he'd lain down and fallen asleep somewhere or maybe this was an illusion brought on by sunstroke. He'd dreamed so many times of Tori saying those exact same words to him.

He'd kept his distance when she'd first come to the ranch, watching her interact with his brothers and the men who worked for them. She smiled and charmed everyone she met, but she'd never shown any interest beyond being friends with any of them in all the time she'd been here.

At first, he'd wondered if she had a boyfriend back home, but that hadn't been the case. J.T. couldn't figure out if it was because all the men she'd known were blind or just stupid. Not that he cared. It meant that she was free and available to him.

But she worked for him, and the last thing he'd ever do was put her in a position of having to choose between her job and him. The situation had been slowly driving him crazy for the past year.

That was all changed now. She was going to leave. All bets were off and he'd do whatever it took to get her to stay. She wanted him. That was a start. Something he could work with.

The corners of his mouth tilted up as he reached for her. She wanted him and she was going to get him. Every hard, hot inch of him. And he was going to touch every sweet inch of her in return.

Reaching out, he caught the tail of her blouse, tugging her closer. The garment was the color of violets and made her pale skin look even creamier. His fingers felt large and

clumsy and he slipped the first button from the hole. Slowly, he worked his way up until the last button was undone.

Her breath caught in her throat, but she didn't object. A bee buzzed in the distance and the world outside the barn hummed as the sun beat down, baking the already dry earth. There was no breeze to relieve the oppressive blanket of heat. It was as if the entire world were holding its breath.

Pushing back the plackets of her blouse, J.T. caught his first glimpse of her breasts. Covered in plain white cotton, the tops of the mounds were visible above the cups. He hummed under his breath as he drew his finger down her cleavage, which was more than impressive.

He felt her jerk slightly, but he couldn't tear his gaze away from her breasts. Her chest was rising and falling rapidly, making them sway in a hypnotizing rhythm. He was about to find out the answer to a question that had kept him awake many a night.

Tracing his finger over the edge of the fabric, he felt her shiver as he dipped beneath it. Her nipple was puckered and tight. J.T. swallowed, his mouth dry, as he pushed the bra cup aside. It was dim in the barn, but there was more than enough light for him to see. He smiled as a large areola came into view. It was rosy beige in color. Just as he suspected.

He tweaked her nipple and then drew his finger away. His hands slid up to her shoulders as he pushed her blouse down her arms. "Let's get this off you."

Tori tried to suck air into her lungs, afraid that if she didn't, she'd pass out. It was so surreal. She'd come in here to tell him she was leaving. Exactly how she'd ended up with her blouse open and his hand in her bra was something of a mystery. She could still taste him on her lips where he'd kissed her.

This was everything she'd dreamed about for the past eighteen months, and more. When he'd said he wanted her, she didn't question it. Maybe it was because she was leaving and he wouldn't have to deal with her mooning over him on a daily basis once they'd slept together. It wasn't exactly making love, at least not on his part. He was a

man and he was aroused. It was sex, pure and simple. For her it was different. She was in love with J.T. and that wasn't going to change even when she left. At least this way she'd always have a memory of him.

Maybe it was stupid. No, scratch that. It was incredibly stupid. If she were smart, she'd turn around and walk out of the barn. But she was a woman in love, and that made all the difference. She was still leaving. There was no way she could sleep with him and then go back to acting like friends. This was it for her. Her one and only chance to find out what it would be like between them.

She wasn't going to waste a single second of it.

Pushing her misgivings aside, she ignored all the warnings her brain screamed at her and listened with her heart and body. If she was going to do this, she wasn't going to have regrets or second thoughts. This was a time out of time, and it belonged to her and J.T.

His voice was low and rough when he spoke. "Let's get this off you." Tori almost balked at the thought of him seeing her naked. Which was stupid. How could they make love if she wasn't naked? She was self-conscious about her body, and all those years of doubt were hard to ignore.

When she hesitated, J.T. sighed and began to tug her blouse back over her shoulders. "No." She reached up and stopped him. Taking over, she pushed her blouse off, letting it fall to the ground behind her.

His hands cupped her shoulders. "Are you sure?"

She could read the sincerity in his face and knew he'd back off in a heartbeat if she said no. She wanted this man. Wanted to know what it would be like to have him thrust into her body, both of them sweaty and hot. She'd had sex before, but that long-term relationship hadn't been very exciting in or out of the bedroom. Tori might not have been experienced, but she knew that sex with J.T. would be something special.

He was still waiting for an answer to his question. Rather than speak aloud, she reached behind her back and unhooked her bra.

His lips turned up into a sexy smile that had her blood pumping even faster. Her core pulsed in a rhythm as ancient as time, demanding that her lover fill her and take away the ache.

"Let me," he murmured, hooking his fingers beneath the strap and dragging it down her arms and off. There was no breeze, yet the air felt slightly cooler when her bra was removed. Her nipples puckered even tighter as J.T. circled them with his thumbs. "You are so damn perfect."

Tori automatically straightened at his praise, inadvertently shoving her breasts closer to him. He made a humming noise in the back of his throat that sounded like approval as he dipped his head closer.

His tongue rasped over one nipple and then the other. She went up on her toes and gripped the back of his head, wanting more. He laughed, the sound shooting through her body, making her fingers and toes and everywhere in between start to tingle. His lips captured one of her nipples, tugging gently.

Tori felt as if her body were on fire. She'd never felt this way before. Leaving one hand gripping his hair, she lowered the other one to his waist, pulling him closer. She rubbed her pelvis against his, moaning as her mound scraped over his erection.

J.T. jerked away. "Stop," he gasped.

"I can't," she groaned, trying to tug him back.

He gave a half chuckle, half moan. "It'll be over before it starts if you keep that up."

"I don't care." She managed to get close enough to rub against the bulge in the front of his jeans. Her nipples scraped against his wiry chest hair and she cried out.

"Tori," he grunted as he managed to peel her away. "I want you naked. I want to touch every inch of your delectable body, taste it."

"God, yes." Whatever he wanted, as long as he touched her. She felt totally out of control and for once in her life she didn't care.

"But you can't touch me."

She stopped reaching for him and glared instead. "That's impossible."

He gave her that sexy grin again as he reached for the bridle he'd laid over the gate. The leather was old and supple as he held it stretched between his two hands. "Not impossible."

He couldn't mean what she thought he meant. Could he? Fear and arousal warred within her. "What do you mean?"

"Give me your hands." He stood with the leather strap in his hands, his head tilted to one side as he watched her. His hair was mussed where she'd had her fingers in it and his blue eyes seemed brighter than ever. Perspiration made his chest slick and, as she watched, a bead of sweat rolled down his chest and disappeared into the waistband of his jeans. The denim clung to his muscled thighs as he braced his booted feet apart. He was a male in his prime and everything about him called out to everything feminine within her.

This was J.T. This was the man she loved. But beyond that, she trusted him. He would never hurt her, at least not physically. And she knew he wouldn't want to hurt her emotionally either. He didn't know she was in love with him. That wasn't his fault or his problem. She'd deal with her broken heart when she left here. Right now, the man she wanted was waiting for her and her body was screaming for release. She felt as if she were on the edge of a cliff. If she jumped, she'd be flinging herself into the unknown. If she pulled back, she'd regret it 'til the day she died.

Tori slowly lifted her hands and held them out in front of her.

J.T.'s expression didn't change, but she could sense the deep masculine satisfaction emanating from him as he looped the leather around her hands, binding them together. "Step back," he murmured, crowding her until she shuffled backward.

Her back hit a post and he raised her arms over her head, looping her tied wrists over a hook. She had to go up on her toes slightly for the loop to go over the hook, but was able to stand flat on her feet when it was done. It stretched her body, making it all but impossible to release herself without his help.

A frisson of fear rushed through her, followed quickly by a wave of desire so powerful she would have fallen to her knees if the post hadn't held her up. In the darkest hours of the night, lying in her bed with her fingers trailing over her body to find relief, she'd dreamed of this. J.T. could do whatever he wanted and she couldn't stop him. It was a powerful fantasy and one that made her panties even wetter with each passing second.

Deep in her heart, she knew that one word from her would bring everything to a halt. That knowledge and trust was what enabled her to go through with this. She desperately wanted to know what J.T. was going to do.

He watched her, his eyes hooded as he stared at her naked flesh. Her nipples were elongated and incredibly tight. He rested his hand between her breasts and she bit back a demand that he touch her.

"So beautiful." His voice was low and mesmerizing. It was the same tone she'd heard him use to calm fractious horses when he was working with them. His hand was dark, tanned from years of working outside. It looked so hard resting next to her soft skin. He shifted his hand, cupping one heavy mound in it as he rubbed his thumb over the tip.

She cried out, her hips pumping at the air.

"So damn responsive." He continued to tease first one breast and then the other.

"J.T.," she cried.

"Tell me what you want?" he murmured, leaning in to nip at the curve of her neck. His tongue traced a hot trail all the way to her ear where he nipped at the lobe. "Do you want me to strip off your jeans and touch your pussy?"

"Yes," she hissed.

He teased the inner whorls of her ear with his tongue. "I'll bet you're already hot and wet for me. Aren't you, Tori?"

She nodded, unable to speak.

Large hands traced down her rib cage, coming to rest on her waist. The button of her jeans was flicked open and the zipper rasped as he lowered it. Tori panted, finding it hard to breathe. His hand was so close to where she needed it to be. She closed her eyes, imagining his long, hard fingers plunging in and out of her core. Her inner muscles spasmed and her hips jerked.

"Damn, but you're close." He shoved her jeans over her hips, taking her plain cotton panties with them.

For a moment, she wished she had sexier underwear. She wished that her belly didn't curve outward quite so much. Not that J.T. seemed to notice them.

"Watch," he demanded.

Her eyes snapped open and she looked down as he knelt in front of her and tugged off her sneakers and socks before pulling the rest of her clothing away. Naked, she was stretched before him, her hands high above her head. She tugged on the bonds, wanting to touch him, but that only pulled them tighter.

He sat in the dust, his head bowed, his shoulders heaving as he took several deep breaths.

It took her several tries to get his name past her lips. "J.T.?"

He raised his head, his eyes dark with need. "I'm going to make you come until you scream." He wrapped his hands around her ankles, his palms warm as they began to slide up her legs. "I'm going to take you back up again and again until you're begging me to fuck you." His fingers teased her inner thighs, feathering close to her sex, but not quite touching it. "Then I'm going to mount you like a stallion does a mare and fuck you so hard and long you'll never remember what it was like not to have me buried in your hot cunt."

Tori didn't move. She couldn't even swallow. Images of what J.T. wanted to do to her swam in her head. No man had ever talked to her this way. It was graphic and earthy and she loved it. "Yes," she groaned, arching her hips toward him. "All of it."

Chapter Three

J.T. gritted his teeth against the ache in his balls. His cock was pressing so hard against the zipper of his jeans, he feared he'd have the teeth marks on it for a month. He took a deep breath and his nostrils were filled with the scent of wet, willing woman. Damn, but Tori was so aroused the insides of her thighs were damp.

Knowing she was watching him, he carefully tugged down the zipper of his jeans and pushed aside his underwear. His cock jumped free and J.T. sighed with relief. She made a slight sound and he looked up at her. Tori's eyes were on his erection. As he continued to stare, she licked her lips. J.T. almost lost it. Just the thought of those lips wrapped around his hard length, sucking and licking, was almost enough to make him come.

Ignoring the unrelenting throbbing and the slow seep of liquid from the tip of his cock, he turned his attention back to Tori. Scooting forward, he used his shoulders to push her legs wider apart. The neat covering of dark, brown curls on her mound was as damp as the folds beneath.

He traced one finger up one side and down the other. Her deep, throaty moan of pleasure seemed to fill the empty barn, echoing off the walls to surround him. His finger was coated in her essence and he brought it to his lips and licked it. Her eyes widened as he sucked his finger. "You taste like honey."

He dipped his finger back into her core, this time rimming the opening to her hot channel. When it was coated once again, he came up on his knees and held his finger to her mouth. "Taste yourself."

She licked her lips and then her tongue darted out to lap at his finger. The sight of that dainty pink tongue had his skin tightening all over his body. She took the tip of his

finger into his mouth and sucked. Hard. His scalp tingled and he could feel tiny rivulets of sweat roll down his back.

"Enough." He pulled his finger from her mouth. "I'm going to enjoy having you suck my cock."

"Mmm...I can't wait," she all but purred.

Tori was proving to be quite the surprise. She was quiet, almost conservative in the way she dressed, but she was a sensual siren beneath that staid appearance. She embraced her sexuality with an earthy honesty that had his balls near to bursting. J.T. used his thumbs to part her slick folds. "I can't either. But first I'm going to eat you until you come."

He dipped his head between her spread thighs and rasped his tongue from front to back, taking care not to touch her clitoris. The small bud was distended, peeking out from its protective hood. Tempting him.

Holding her open with one hand, he slid two fingers into her sheath. She was hot and damp, but tight. He closed his eyes and swallowed hard. She'd fit him tighter than a wet leather glove.

Her sweet cries and moans were music to his ears as he licked, sucked and nipped at her swollen flesh. It got easier to glide his fingers in and out of her channel as her muscles relaxed and accepted him. He added a third finger, stretching her further.

At the same time, he wrapped his lips over her clitoris and sucked.

Her body jerked, bowing and stretching until she was taut from head to toe. A low keening sound came from deep in her throat as her legs began to quiver. He shoved his fingers deep, curling them slightly as he withdrew to hit her sweet spot. Tori screamed as she came. Her inner muscles clamped down on his fingers, squeezing them hard.

J.T. kept working her with his fingers and mouth, gradually lessening the intensity. When she sighed, he pulled his fingers from her slit, sat back on his heels and admired the perfect picture she made.

Tori shivered as another bolt of pleasure shot through her body. Now she knew what an orgasm was supposed to feel like. Obviously, her one and only sexual relationship before this one had been lacking. She'd brought herself pleasure in the privacy of her own bedroom, but it hadn't been anything like this. This was like being pulled into the middle of a firestorm with no way out. Not that she wanted to escape.

She opened her eyes and found J.T. watching her with those impossibly blue eyes. His cock was long and wide, the bulbous purple head was slick with moisture. As if it had a life of its own, it jerked toward her.

She licked her lips, still tasting her essence on her lips where J.T. had held his finger to her mouth. It was strangely arousing. His nostrils flared and his eyes narrowed as he watched.

"That was..." she broke off and swallowed. "That was amazing."

"That was only the beginning," he growled. He dipped his fingers into her core and coated them before sliding them back to rim the puckered entrance to her behind.

Tori tried to pull away, but there was nowhere for her to go. Her back hit the post and J.T. was in front of her. "Shh..." he murmured. "You've never had a man touch your sweet ass before, have you?"

"No," she managed to get out. Nor had she ever imagined it.

"I like the thought of being the first." He carefully began to work the tip of one finger past the tight ring of muscles. With his other hand, he stroked her slick folds, brushing her clitoris before dipping into her channel.

A bolt of lightning flashed through her. She felt as if she were standing at the center of a summer thunderstorm. The air was charged. She could feel the electricity zinging around them, between them. Although she'd just had the orgasm of her life, she could feel her body surging to life once again.

With a few strokes of his fingers, J.T. had her aroused once again.

Leaning forward, he licked her sensitive clitoris, making her moan as all the nerve endings stood on end and applauded. The finger in her ass worked a bit deeper, stretching her. It was slightly uncomfortable and arousing at the same time.

"J.T." She said his name, not quite knowing what else to say.

"I'm going to bring you up again." He began to finger-fuck her slowly as he carefully pushed the finger in her behind deeper. "You're hot and wet, but you're not ready yet. When you want me to fuck you, you'll let me know."

Her thoughts splintered and were lost as he suckled her clitoris. "I'm ready," she panted.

He released the swollen bud and flicked it with the tip of his tongue. "No, you're not." His fingers slid almost out of her sheath before pushing deep. "When you're ready, you'll beg for it."

Tori didn't know whether to laugh or cry or moan. J.T. had that stubborn look on his face, which told her that he wasn't going to stop until he got what he wanted. Liquid flowed from between her thighs as he continued to work his magic. When he pulled his finger from her ass, she almost protested. She'd gotten to like it. When he pushed it back in, going even deeper, she cried out. Not in pain, but in absolute pleasure.

"You are so hot." He started to work a second finger into her butt. "You can take it, sweetheart. I know you can."

Again, he was using that mesmerizing voice on her. And it was working. She wanted to take it. Wanted his fingers in her channel, in her ass. Wanted to be filled by him. Wanted him to fuck her.

"Fuck me." The words were barely a whisper, but she knew he'd heard them when he stilled, his fingers coming to a halt within her. Her sheath rippled and clutched at him.

"What did you say?" He grazed his thumb over her swollen clit, making her moan.

"Fuck me." Frustration raced through her. She wanted to touch him, to taste him. She wanted his hard cock slamming into her core until they both came.

When he hesitated, she kicked out at him with her foot. "Fuck me. Now."

J.T. surged to his feet and unhooked her hands. Spinning her around, he faced her away from him, toward the gate on the end of the stall. "Bend over and hold on. I told you what I wanted."

His earlier words shot through her. Her heart began to hammer wildly. He wanted to mount her like a stallion does a mare. She leaned forward and gripped the edge of the gate, digging her fingers into the wood. Her hands were still tied, but she held on tight.

She felt his booted foot tap the inside of her ankle. "Spread them wider."

She widened her stance, feeling very exposed. Her breasts hung down in front of her and moisture clung to her inner thighs. She was hot, sticky and horny as hell.

The first smack made her jump. It didn't hurt so much as it surprised her. She started to turn around, but he put his hand in the center of her back, holding her in place. "I want that ass nice and red and as hot as your sweet pussy." He gave her another light swat. "It'll bring blood pumping to your behind, to all those sensitive nerve endings. Make you feel even better." He did it twice more. By the last time, her butt was moving up to meet his hand. It didn't hurt, and was strangely stimulating.

J.T. moved in behind her then and she felt the head of his cock probing at her opening. When he slipped just inside her, he paused. She could feel her inner walls fluttering as the muscles tightened and then relaxed to accept him.

"That's it, sweetheart," he crooned. "You can take me." He pushed forward, sinking deeper. "I've wanted this for so long."

She could hear his ragged breathing and it matched her own. The words he spoke were almost lost in the blur of sensation enveloping her. Almost. The fact that he'd wanted her for so long was a revelation. She needed to think about that, but not now. Rational thought was impossible with J.T. filling her.

He wrapped his long arms around her until his hands were cupping her breasts. She loved the way his large hands surrounded the plump mounds, his thumbs playing with the tips.

“Almost there,” he grunted, as he pushed forward. “You’re so tight.”

Tori felt stretched to the breaking point, but it felt good. His chest covered her back and she could feel the brush of his jean-clad legs against hers. She felt surrounded by him. It felt so right and so good.

His lips nibbled at her nape, making her squirm. “I want to take your hair down and wrap it around me, but not this time. This time, I want to see every inch of your delectable body, every curve and hollow, with nothing hidden from view.”

This time. She felt positively giddy with the possibilities. His words implied that he wanted to do this again. She wasn’t sure how soon she’d be up to it, but she was game. Maybe she’d put off leaving for a day or two. Or maybe not. The more they made love the harder it would be for her when she finally left.

J.T. pulled back until just the tip of his shaft was inside her. Thrusting forward, he buried himself to the hilt. Then he did it again.

It didn’t take Tori long to pick up the rhythm. She held on to the gate as he plunged harder and faster. He kept one hand on her breast and slid the other down between her spread thighs. As he took her, he teased her clitoris and played with her nipples.

Heat built with each heavy thrust. She could feel his balls smacking against her as he pounded into her. Her inner muscles tightened and then her entire being released. She came on his next stroke, the electric sensation radiating to the rest of her body. Tipping her head back, she cried out his name.

He plunged again and again, and then he yelled, jerking himself free at the last second. She felt the spray of liquid against her back, felt the hard press of his cock as he ground himself against her skin. His hands tightened on her, holding her captive as he came.

His breath was hot and heavy against her nape. She staggered slightly and he caught her. "Whoa, sweetheart. I've got you."

He reached behind him and snagged his T-shirt from the bale of hay behind them and rubbed it over her back. "I didn't have a condom, and I didn't want to take a chance," he murmured as he cleaned up the evidence of his orgasm.

"That's okay." She hadn't even thought about a condom. Not exactly responsible of her. "I'm on the Pill," she offered. It was more to regulate her periods and not because she was sexually active.

"I'm clean. I've never done it without a condom before."

"Never?" That made her stomach flutter and her heart quiver.

"Never." He tossed the shirt aside and kissed her temple. "I don't take chances like that."

But he had today. That had to mean something. Didn't it? Maybe it just meant he was extra horny. He'd pulled out, so he hadn't really taken a chance today, had he? She shouldn't be reading anything into this. It would only lead to disappointment.

J.T. reached around and began to untie the leather that bound her wrists. When they were free, he rubbed them carefully before bringing each one to his lips and kissing them. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Tori leaned against the wall for support as she watched him. J.T. had hitched up his jeans and closed them. His hair was mussed and his chest was covered in a sheen of perspiration. He looked hot and sexy.

She, on the other hand, was totally naked and felt like a wrung-out dishrag. She was hot and sticky, the smell of leather, barn and sex clinging to her hair and skin. "I need a shower."

J.T. stood and gathered her clothing and sneakers into a bundle. Tori staggered to her feet, using the post and gate behind her to steady herself. J.T. pushed the bundle into her hands. She managed to grab them just as he scooped her into his arms.

No man had ever lifted her in his arms. Not since she was a baby, anyway. At five-foot-eight, and a size sixteen, she wasn't exactly a small woman. But J.T. made her feel feminine as he held her with ease.

"A shower is a great idea," he agreed as he carried her across the deserted yard toward the house.

Chapter Four

J.T. could feel his cock stirring to life again even though he'd just had one hell of an orgasm. He laid the blame on the woman he held tight in his arms. Tori stirred him to life quicker than any woman he'd ever known. He hadn't been the patient, gentle lover that he'd wanted to be. Tori brought out his most basic instincts, the need to claim her, to mark her as his.

The sun beat down on his bare shoulders as he headed toward the old house. The dust stirred beneath his boots and a crow cawed off in the distance. There was no one else around, but the two of them. Which was just the way he wanted it.

Tori had been something of a surprise. Behind the quiet exterior beat the heart of a temptress. She'd willingly embraced everything he'd wanted to do and he had a feeling there was a hell of a lot more she wanted to try. He was game. If she was going to stretch her sexual wings with anyone, it was damn well going to be him.

His grip tightened automatically. Tori was his now and he'd do whatever it took to keep her. It was obvious that she was sexually attracted to him. And he knew her. Knew she wouldn't have given herself to him so freely if she didn't have some feelings for him.

His boots clomped on the three wooden stairs leading to the porch. "Looks like we might get some rain later," she mused as he managed to juggle both her and the door handle.

He glanced off into the distance and could see some dark clouds rolling in. "I hope so. We could use a break from this heat."

J.T. pushed his way into the kitchen and used his heel to kick the door shut. He didn't bother going upstairs. All the furniture had been stripped out of the rooms and taken to the new house. The only bed in the place was in Tori's old room. They'd left it

furnished so that Brody would have a place to sleep while he renovated the old homestead.

The room was barren, but for the bed, nightstand, dresser and an old sofa and desk. There was a hollowness to the space due to the lack of pictures on the wall and personal items on the dresser.

For a fleeting moment, J.T. wished there were flowers and silk sheets. Tori deserved that. But, he sure as heck wasn't giving up his chance to be with her again. They'd simply have to make do.

There was a bed and a shower. Anything else was extra. At least there were sheets on the bed.

He bypassed the bed and went straight for the bathroom. If he knew anything about women, it was that Tori would feel self-conscious until she'd cleaned up a bit. Not that he cared. He liked the idea of her covered in his scent, mixed with her own arousal.

"You okay?" As he lowered her feet to the floor, he realized she hadn't said anything since they'd entered the house.

Her cheeks were pink as she crossed her arms over her chest. He could have told her that the action was useless. She might be hiding her nipples, but he could still see the rest of her lush breasts. "I'm fine." She looked around the room, at the floor, anywhere but at him.

"Hey." He reached out and cupped her chin in his hand. "No need to be shy. Not with me."

She straightened her shoulders and stared him straight in the eye even though her cheeks got even redder. "I'm not used to parading around naked in front of men."

"I sure as hell hope not." He didn't want to think about any other man getting to see her this way. Jealousy was not an emotion that he was used to, but he was feeling it now. His jaw tightened and anger flooded his veins at the thought of another man

touching Tori the way he had. She was a generous lover and he wanted it all for himself. "And I'm not any man."

"I know." Her soft reply deflated his anger.

He turned away and turned on the shower, testing it to make sure it wasn't too cold before motioning her under the spray.

Tori sidled past him and stepped beneath the water. Grabbing the cake of soap on the ledge, she began to wash. J.T. leaned against the counter and watched as water hit her face and rolled down her chest and belly. He shifted as his cock made its presence known.

Keeping one eye on her, he pulled off his boots and set them aside. He yanked off his socks and made quick work of his jeans and underwear, not wanting to waste another second. He stepped into the shower behind her, noting the way her shoulders bunched and then relaxed.

Reaching around her, he took the soap from her fingers. "Let me."

He started at her neck, running the bar down the curve of her throat. Shifting closer, he pressed his erection against the small of her back as he nuzzled the back of her neck. She made a small sound of approval in the back of her throat that had his balls tightening.

He dragged the soap over her collarbone and shoulders. He soaped her arms and hands thoroughly before moving on to her belly. Her chest was rising and falling rapidly now.

J.T. lathered up his hands and laid the soap aside. His fingers slid up her belly to cup her breasts. The tips were already puckered tight, but he flicked his thumbs over them for good measure. Tori dropped her head back against his chest, all shyness gone for now. She moaned as she reached behind her, looping her arms around his neck and tugging him down for a kiss.

This time there was no hesitation. He took her mouth in a torrid kiss, using lips, teeth and tongue to arouse her. He nipped at her bottom lip, before plunging inside to

claim the warm, moist cavern. Their tongues met, dueling and retreating until they were both breathless.

Tori broke the kiss and slapped a hand against the shower wall for support. He growled, reaching for her again, but she stepped away. "No." She turned to face him and the spray hit her back. "I want my turn."

J.T. held his hands out by his sides. "I'm all yours, sweetheart."

Tori's heart was beating a mile a minute and not all the dampness between her thighs was due to the water. J.T. could arouse her in the blink of an eye. The cool water had revived her, making her more determined than ever to get her chance to fulfill some of her fantasies. This might be her only opportunity and she planned to make the most of it.

Naked, he was even more imposing than he was fully dressed, which was saying something. Taking her time, she looked her fill. He had large feet, but they were nice. Not that she'd ever tell him that. He'd think she was nuts. The hair on his legs was a shade darker than the hair on his head. His waist was lean, his abdomen muscled. He had broad shoulders, which carried the weight of his responsibilities with ease. His hair was damp and his eyes were slightly darker than usual.

Licking her lips, she let her gaze flow back down his chest, stopping when she got to his erection. It was impressive to say the least. His scrotum looked heavy as it hung beneath his cock. His shaft was thick and long and the tip was beaded with a pearly drop of pre-come that she just had to taste.

Stepping forward, Tori put her hands on his chest and pushed, turning them both so his back was against the spray of water. He went easily, never taking his eyes off her. His stomach muscles tightened as she trailed her fingers over his abdomen. "Tori," he growled.

Ignoring him, she went to her knees in front of him. Gripping his erection with both hands she squeezed. J.T. swore and slapped his hands out on either side of the shower

stall to brace himself. He widened his stance, planting his feet apart for balance. Tori grinned. It was good to know she affected him as much as he affected her.

His hands tangled in her hair, reminding her that she still had it up in a bun. Before she could reach around to pull out the pins, he was already doing it. Pin after pin plinked as it hit the tile floor. J.T. didn't stop until the last one was gone and her hair tumbled down her back all the way to her behind.

"Beautiful," he breathed as he combed his fingers through the mass.

He made her feel that way, she realized. With J.T. she didn't worry about her weight. After all, he'd known her for well over a year. He knew what she was and didn't seem put off by it at all. In fact, he seemed to like her curves.

Turning back to her task at hand, she slid one hand down to cup his balls, rolling them carefully in her palm. He hissed, his hips jerking forward. Leaning closer, she licked at the slit, tasting him for the first time. She let the bead of liquid sit on her tongue for a moment before swallowing. Musky and salty and all male. She liked it.

Tori had never given oral sex before. Hadn't thought she would enjoy it. But J.T. broke all the rules. Not only did she think she'd enjoy it. She wanted to do it. Had to do it.

Lowering her head, she lapped at the plum-shaped head before sucking it into her mouth. J.T. groaned and his fingers tightened in her hair, pulling her closer. Tori let him slide deeper into his mouth, running her tongue over every inch of flesh she could reach. She pulled back, releasing him with a wet popping sound, which was almost drowned out by the steady swish of the water beating down on them.

On a whim, she pulled a lock of her hair over her shoulder and wrapped it around his erection. Pulling gently, she watched it unravel, clinging to his hard length for a moment before releasing him. J.T. cursed under his breath.

The veins that ran up and down his shaft were swollen and pulsing. She ran her tongue from root to tip, tracing one. Then she did another. All the while, she continued to finger his scrotum, squeezing gently.

J.T. tugged on her scalp, moving her head until the tip of his cock bumped against her lips. She opened her mouth to laugh and he pushed inside. The sound of her laughter vibrated around his shaft.

She took as much of him as she could and began to move her mouth up and down over him. Gripping him at the base, she began to slide her hand up and down in counter-rhythm to her mouth. J.T.'s hips began to rock. He gripped her hair, holding her tighter as he plunged in and out of her mouth.

Her actions weren't only arousing him, they were having the same effect on her. Her breasts were swollen with need, the tips puckered impossibly tight. Her sex was slick and her inner muscles fluttered wildly as she continued to stroke and pleasure J.T.

"If you want me to pull out, I have to do it now." His voice was hoarse with need.

Did she want to stop? No. She wanted to make him come this way. Wanted to experience it. She didn't answer him, but didn't stop.

"Tori!" He cried her name, his hips pumping.

It was hard for her not to gag as he pushed farther into her mouth. She moved her hand higher on his shaft, controlling the depth of his thrusts. She felt his balls tighten. He stiffened and then yelled. A hot stream hit the back of her throat and she managed to swallow. She didn't let up though, keep pumping her hand and moving her mouth over him until she knew he was finished.

He pulled gently on her head. "Stop. Honey, you have to stop."

Tori sat back on her heels and swallowed one final time. She could taste him on her lips and it sent shivers down her spine. J.T.'s chest moved in and out as he struggled to regain his breath. He whirled away, grabbed the soap and quickly washed himself. She told herself to get up and move, but she was honestly enjoying the back view too much to disturb herself. The man had a prime butt.

The water was cut off in mid-thought and he was facing her once again. Reaching down, he pulled her to her feet and stood her on the bathmat just outside the stall. Tori grabbed a towel from the stack on the open shelf and held it in front of her.

"I don't think so." J.T. tugged it away and briskly ran it over her arms, belly and legs before turning her around and drying her back. It was made more difficult by the damp hair stuck to her back, but he managed.

When he was done with her, he dried himself off quickly, tossed the damp towel aside and scooped her into his arms once again. Leaving the bathroom behind, he carried her to the bed and tossed her lightly onto the mattress. He strolled to the window and opened it. There was more of a breeze now and it felt good as it brushed against her skin.

He came back to the bed and stretched out beside her. His eyes were serious as he lifted a lock of her hair and pushed it over her shoulder. "Why are you leaving?"

Tori bit her lower lip, wondering what she could tell him. The truth was out. She wasn't about to tell the man she was leaving because she loved him. "It's time." That wasn't a lie even if it wasn't the entire truth.

He brushed his finger over her forehead, rubbing at the frown lines between her brows. She hadn't even realized she was frowning until he did it. She tried to school her features into a more neutral expression.

"I want you to stay." His finger went down the slope of her nose, across her cheek and down the curve of her chin. It was hard to think when he was touching her so gently.

"I can't."

"Why?" Once again he was using that soft, mesmerizing voice. She was afraid that if he kept it up, she'd blurt out everything that was in her heart.

She closed her eyes and prayed for strength. "J.T.," she began, but he placed his finger over her lips.

"Stay with me."

Those were words she'd longed to hear from the day she set foot on the ranch. But things were different now. She couldn't stay and just be his lover. She respected herself

more than that. She wanted all or nothing. If she stayed, once he'd had his fill and their affair had run its course, it would be awkward for her. He wouldn't mean to hurt her, but it would be too devastating.

Tears pricked the back of her lids and she willed them away. But her emotions were too close to the surface and one slid from beneath her lid and down her cheek.

J.T. stilled. "Tori? What is it, sweetheart? Talk to me."

It was all too much for her. She opened her eyes, saw the concern in his face and the tears started to flow. She dashed them aside and let it all spill out. "I can't stay, because I love you."

At first he appeared startled, but then a huge smile split his face.

She smacked his chest. How dare he smile when she was so miserable? She pulled back her hand to hit him again and he grabbed it, bringing her fist to his mouth and kissing it. "Why is that so bad?"

"Because you don't love me back." There. The words hovered between them. Her humiliation was complete. How had things deteriorated so quickly? One minute they were having fun in the shower and the next everything had fallen apart.

Not willing to stay and embarrass herself another minute, she jumped off the bed and ran for the bundle of clothing on the floor. She had to get dressed and get out of here before she broke down and really started to cry. It wouldn't be pretty. She'd never be able to look him in the face again as it was. "I'll be gone by tomorrow." She sniffed, cursing the fact that her nose was already starting to run.

She heard him roll off the bed and grabbed her jeans. She wouldn't bother with underwear. All she wanted to do was get away. She shook them out and lifted one leg, but they were yanked away before she could get her foot into the hole. Tori started to fall. Strong arms caught her and she found herself pulled against J.T.'s hard body. He was aroused. Again.

She started to fight him. She couldn't make love with him again. Not now.

He wrapped his arms around her and tugged her backward. "Let me go."

"Not until you listen to me." He ruthlessly pulled her down on the bed, rolling on top of her and covering her with his much larger body. Even as he held her captive, he was very careful not to put all his weight on her.

Holding both her hands in one of his, he raised them over her head. The position was very reminiscent of the one in the barn and brought a fresh flood of tears to her eyes. She blinked, forcing herself to stop crying. Tears wouldn't change anything.

"Don't cry," he whispered as he kissed her wet cheeks. "You're killing me, sweetheart."

She was killing him. Didn't he have any idea of what he was doing to her?

"Look at me."

She kept her eyes closed. "Let me up," she countered.

"After you look at me." He kissed the edge of her jaw. "I can wait all day. And eventually someone will come looking for us when we don't show up at the new place. As much as I love my brother, I don't want Brody getting an eyeful of you naked."

Her eyes popped open. She hadn't even thought of that. Bad enough that she'd humiliated herself in front of J.T. How much worse would it be if Brody or anyone else found out? Not that she should care. She was leaving anyway.

"That's better." He fingered a lock of her hair before grazing his hand down her neck. "The reason I smiled was because your words made me happy."

She frowned, not understanding.

Tiny lines radiated from the corners of his eyes, a testament to years of squinting under a hot sun as he worked the land. Those blue eyes had laughed and teased over the years. She'd seen them angry and annoyed and contemplative. But she'd never seen them as serious as they were at this moment.

"I love you, Tori."

She blinked, not quite believing what she was hearing.

"Have since the first. I couldn't believe you didn't have a man back home." He shook his head. "Are they all crazy where you come from?"

"Ah...no." He loved her?

"When I found out you were free, I was elated. But you worked for us. And you're the best damn housekeeper we've ever had. You never gave any sign that you thought of me as anything more than an employer and a friend. I didn't want to come on to you and risk losing you."

"You love me?" The rest of it she'd make sense of later. For now, only one thing mattered.

He sighed and nodded. "More than anything in this world. I love the way you make everyone you come in contact with feel special. The way you turned this old house into a home. I feel at peace just sitting at the kitchen table watching you putter around the kitchen. You fill up the empty spaces inside me."

Tori tugged on her hands and he released them. Slowly, she lowered them until she could touch his beloved face. It was rugged and handsome and hers. "I love you too."

"So you'll stay."

"As what? Housekeeper? Lover?" She wanted it all. Wanted a commitment from him.

"All that and more." He planted a quick, hard kiss on her lips and her hormones sprang to life again, reminding her of the intimate position they were in. "Marry me, Tori. Be mine. Forever."

"Forever," she echoed. She liked the sound of that.

"Is that a yes?"

As if there was any doubt! Still, she nodded. "Yes, I'll marry you."

He held her close and rolled, making her shriek. When he stopped, he was flat on his back and she was lying on top of him. His sexy grin was back. The one that made her heart go pitter-patter. "Now, we celebrate."

Chapter Five

J.T. had never felt this good in his life. Not when he gentled the wildest of horses, not when he'd made his first million, above and beyond the family money. This was different. Tori completed him in ways he'd never thought about before. She'd become part of his everyday life until he couldn't imagine it without her.

Often during the day, when he was working with a particular horse or out in the barn, he'd find himself wanting to share something with her. He'd spent many nights after the supper dishes were cleared away talking to her about some problem or another with the ranch or the family business. She listened and, when she spoke, she always had something insightful to say. He hated to be away from the ranch on business trips and always felt as if he'd come home when Tori met him at the door with a smile.

He could kick himself in the butt for wasting so much time. For waiting so long, he'd almost lost her. He gripped her hips as she propped herself up on her hands and looked down on him. He had her now and he was keeping her.

Her hair fell in a curtain around her body, brushing his chest and arms. The smile she gave him was full of promise as she wiggled her hips. He bit back a groan as his cock jerked in response. No doubt about it, Miss Tori made him hotter than a teenager.

"Sit up," he urged. She braced her knees on either side of his body and sat up. The motion pressed her hot folds more firmly against his erection. This time there was no holding back his moan of pleasure. "You're killing me, sweetheart."

She laughed and undulated her hips, running her sex over his shaft. "I wouldn't want to do that."

He loved this side of her—so open, so free, so giving. "Just remember," he growled. "I always get even."

"Ohhh," she teased. "I'm so afraid."

"You should be." He gripped her hips in his hands and held her steady as he angled the tip of his erection against her moist opening. In one firm thrust, he buried himself deep.

Tori sucked in a breath, arching back as he surged into her. "So full. So good."

J.T. was enthralled by the sensual picture she made straddling him. Her hair fell around her, her breasts peeking out from between thick strands. The ends of her hair tickled his chest.

Her breasts swayed as she began to rock against him, raising herself up and lowering herself back down his hard length. Her hips flared wide, giving him something to anchor himself to as he arched up to meet her on the downward stroke. He adored the curve of her belly, so soft and welcoming. Her legs were curled beneath her, but he knew they were long and shapely.

He let his hands slide up her waist until he was cupping her breasts. Her hair tangled in his fingers. "Ride me. Ride me hard."

Tori felt wild and free. J.T. loved her. Life didn't get much better than this. His muscles bunched beneath her as she undulated her hips slowly. She could sense his growing need and his impatience. It was like riding an untamed stallion, but she had no intentions of being thrown.

Bracing her hands on his chest, she began to ease upward until only the tip of his cock was still inside her. Then she plunged back down. Hard. Her inner muscles were slightly sore and swollen from all the unaccustomed activity, but Tori wasn't stopping. It was worth the slight pain and sting. He stretched her with every thrust, creating a sensual ache that only he could heal. She had to have him.

His tanned skin looked even darker against the stark white sheets. A muscle in his jaw ticked as he thrust his pelvis upward on her downward stroke. A bead of sweat rolled down her temple in spite of the cooling breeze. Tori heard a rumble of thunder in the distance and knew the storm was close. The air was charged.

"Harder," he urged as he tweaked her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers. The sensation was electric.

"John," she moaned. She'd never called him by his first name before, but it felt more intimate. Special.

He pulled her down against him and rolled across the bed until she was beneath him again. Hooking his arms beneath her legs, he planted his hands on the mattress and began to thrust. Tori reached above her, bracing her hands against the headboard to keep her head from hitting it. He was so deep. Filling her to overflowing.

Her orgasm hit her without warning. One second it was building, the next it erupted. Crying out, she let it wash over her. The room lit up as lightning flashed. A boom of thunder quickly followed.

J.T. stiffened, his entire body going rigid. She felt the hot flood of his essence as it spurted into her. He collapsed, his head resting on the pillow beside hers. A sense of rightness rushed over her. She'd be happy spending the next fifty years like this. Oh, it wouldn't be easy. J.T. was stubborn and autocratic at times, but she could handle him.

He turned his head so that he was facing her. "I meant to go slower this time."

"Next time," she assured him.

In answer, he began to thrust again. This time much slower.

J.T. lay on top of the bed with the sheets bunched beneath him. Tori cuddled up next to him, her body curved into his. The sound of the rain was soothing as he ran his fingers up and down the curve of her arm. A cool breeze flowed in through the open window and she shivered. "Cold?"

"A little." Her voice was slurred and he wondered if she would fall asleep.

He tugged the sheet out from under them and covered her with it. She sighed and snuggled closer, resting her hand on his chest. "Better?"

"Hmmm." He smiled. The last time had been much slower, but no less powerful. He'd exhausted both of them.

All exhaustion fled at the sound of the kitchen door being shoved open. "J.T.?"

Damn, he'd hoped to avoid this. Boot heels rang against the floor, getting closer. Tori jerked up in bed, the sheet falling to her waist.

"You better hold on to that covering," he growled. The last thing he wanted was to have to kill his brother for looking at his woman.

She grabbed the sheet and clutched it to her chin. With her rosy cheeks and her disheveled appearance, she looked like a woman who'd spent the afternoon in bed with her lover. Satisfaction filled him even as the urge to protect her rose up within him, but there was no stopping what was about to happen.

The door handle jiggled as it turned. As if in slow motion it pushed inward. Brody stood in the center of the doorway, staring into the room. It was the first time in his life J.T. ever remembered his brother being speechless.

"Don't you knock?" He pulled a corner of the sheet over himself, careful not to dislodge it from Tori.

Brody shook his head. "When the storm hit and you two didn't show up, I got worried." His eyes widened as he ran his eyes slowly over Tori. Even though the sheet covered her, it was obvious she was naked beneath it. "Seems like I didn't have anything to worry about at all."

"We're getting married." His voice was hard, letting his brother know that he wouldn't brook any disrespect of Tori.

"Bout time." Brody leaned against the doorjamb, crossed his arms over his chest and grinned. "Any fool could see the two of you were meant for one another."

Tori laughed and tucked the sheet tighter under her arms. "I guess that means we were both fools."

“Not any longer.” J.T. brushed his lips against hers. As always, she welcomed him and he deepened the kiss, needing to claim her yet again. He heard the door closing softly and made a note to thank his brother later. Much later.

About the Author

N.J. Walters worked at a bookstore for several years and one day had the idea that she would like to quit her job, sell everything she owned, leave her hometown and write romance novels in a place where no one knew her. And she did. Two years later, she went back to the same bookstore and settled in for another seven years.

Although she was still fairly young, that was when the mid-life crisis set in. Happily married to the love of her life, with his encouragement (more like, "For God's sake, quit the job and just write!") she gave notice at her job on a Friday morning. On Sunday afternoon, she received a tentative acceptance for her first erotic romance novel, *Annabelle Lee*, and life would never be the same.

N.J. has always been a voracious reader of romance novels, and now she spends her days writing novels of her own. Vampires, dragons, time-travelers, seductive handymen and next-door neighbors with smoldering good looks all vie for her attention. And she doesn't mind a bit. It's a tough life, but someone's got to live it.

N.J. welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

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