

Siren Publishing

Ménage Amour

The book cover features a cowboy and a woman. The cowboy, shirtless and wearing a black cowboy hat, is in the background. The woman, with blonde hair and wearing a straw hat and a red and white checkered halter, is in the foreground, smiling and looking up. A large, thick rope is visible in the background. The title 'TASTY TREATS' is written in large, red, stylized letters with a black outline, and 'Volume 2' is written in smaller red letters below it. The authors' names are listed at the bottom in white text.

TASTY TREATS

Volume 2

Leah Brooke
Wendi Darlin
Sofia Hunt

BACK IN HER BED by *Leah Brooke*

[*Erotic M/F Cowboy Romance, light BDSM*] Even though Emily misses Jack and his dominance over her body, she's not about to let him back in her bed again. Or is she? (*NOTE: This is an M/F erotic romance.*)

BACK FOR MORE by *Wendi Darlin*

[*M/F/M Cowboy Ménage Romance, light BDSM*] One irresistible woman, two headstrong men, and passions that can't be contained. Will both her cowboys come back for more?

BACK IN THE SADDLE by *Sofia Hunt*

[*Erotic M/F Cowboy Romance, light BDSM*] What's cooking isn't necessarily in the kitchen when a former porn star turned rancher unknowingly hires his proper ex-girlfriend to cater his weekend party. (*NOTE: This is an M/F erotic romance.*)

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TASTY TREATS ANTHOLOGY

Volume 2

**Leah Brooke
Wendi Darlin
Sofia Hunt**

MENAGE AMOUR



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BACK IN HER BED

Leah Brooke

BACK IN HER BED

LEAH BROOKE

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Chapter One

Emily Peterson gripped the steering wheel tighter as she hit a rut, making her teeth snap together as her pickup bounced in a cloud of dust. Damn, it must be a new one. This dirt road was on her property, the place she'd lived her entire life, and she knew every nook and cranny in it. That hole hadn't been there four days ago.

Her house came into view, and she blinked when she saw the pickup parked out front. Her heart raced, and her insides clenched as lust hit her with the force of a tornado. She let up on the gas as her grip loosened on the wheel. Jack had come back!

No. No. No. She would get rid of him so fast his hard head would spin.

If that son of a bitch thought he could just show up again after all this time, hoping to get in her bed again, he had another think coming. Her grip tightened, and she sped up, in a hurry now to kick him out. But not before she gave him a piece of her mind. No, she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of letting him see how much she'd missed him.

She pulled in next to his black-and-chrome monster, slamming on the brakes and throwing her old truck in park. Cutting the engine, she looked all around, but she didn't see him. Cursing again, she grabbed her bag of groceries and headed inside, knowing that she'd find the

arrogant bastard sitting at her kitchen table.

Storming into the house, she strode straight to the kitchen and found him, just as she'd thought, sitting at her kitchen table drinking a glass of iced tea and scratching Lucky behind the ears. She dropped the bag of groceries on the table, and with her hands on her hips, glared at him. "Get out."

He raised a brow, setting the glass on the table before rising. "Now is that any way to welcome me home? Lucky's gotten big, hasn't he?"

Emily fought to shore up all the defenses she'd spent the last three months building. They'd already begun to crumble at the first sight of him, and she frantically patched them, hoping the patches would last until she could get him out of here. "This isn't your home." She frowned at her German shepherd. "Lucky's not supposed to let anyone in. Get out."

Lucky had the grace to lower his head before looking back up at her soulfully with those big brown eyes. She sighed and patted his head in forgiveness. She couldn't blame him. Lucky had never been able to resist Jack Manning any more than she had. She moved to the back door and swung it open to let him outside. He bounded out, then turned to give her a last soulful look. A rabbit leapt into view and caught his attention. Lucky turned and gave chase.

She heard Jack chuckle from behind her.

"Fast, isn't he?"

She mentally counted to ten before she turned.

Jack stood with his arms folded, leaning against the counter. "I told you I'd be back."

She couldn't believe he'd actually had the nerve to show up. But then again, Jack dared anything. "I told you not to bother."

Those mischievous brown eyes twinkled, the eyes she thought she'd never see again. He needed a haircut, his dark hair even longer than it had been, now long enough to brush his shoulders. It only added to his bad-boy good looks. One grin and she wanted to head for

the bedroom. Damn it. She wouldn't let him do this to her again. Emily struggled for composure, looking away as she reached for the grocery bag. She tried her best to keep her tone cool. "Why are you here?"

He came up behind her, his breath hot on her neck. The bulge she'd only had the courage to glance at pressed against her lower back. His hands closed on her waist. "You're too skinny. You haven't been taking care of yourself. It's a good thing I'm back."

That deep, silky tone of his did something to her insides that she swore she would never let happen again. When his hands tightened on her waist, she closed her eyes against the sensation as even more moisture seeped from her. She couldn't even resist as he turned her, pulling her against his chest. Mesmerized, she watched his lips come closer and closer, helpless to avoid them. The moment they touched hers, she knew she was lost.

Firm and hot, his mouth moved over hers, his tongue demanding entrance. Her lips parted involuntarily, granting him access as her arms went around his neck, pulling him even closer. She couldn't help it. It had been too long. No one made her feel the way Jack made her feel. No one ever could.

She gasped into his mouth as her beaded nipples came into contact with his hard, muscular chest. Her gasp became a moan when his hands moved to settle on her buttocks, gripping her firmly and rubbing her body against his. The friction on her nipples against his chest sent jolts of pleasure straight to her slit. Jack deepened the kiss while sliding a muscled thigh between hers and lifting her higher against him.

Oh, it felt so good to be in his arms again. His heat surrounded her, making her tremble with both need and emotion. The need she could have fought. But she loved him so damned much. That was a little harder to defend against.

She couldn't help but tighten around the thigh between hers, rubbing her slit against it. Her hands tangled in his hair, and she

moaned into his mouth as he pulled her even more firmly against him. She let herself go, unable to deny him anything.

Just like she'd been unable to deny him three months ago. And he'd ripped her heart out.

No!

Ripping her mouth from his, she pushed against his chest, her breathing ragged. "No. I'm not doing this. Never again."

Wrenching herself from his arms, she moved several feet away, thankful that he'd released her. She shook all over, gulping in air. She closed her eyes and took deep breaths to try to slow her breathing. If he hadn't let her go, she knew she would have given in to whatever he wanted. Damn it. She'd sworn that if she ever saw Jack again, she would take great delight in showing him that he meant nothing to her.

Within seconds, she'd been in his arms.

She opened her eyes to see him watching her, amused. Turning her back on his mocking grin, she started to unpack her groceries, trying desperately to appear unruffled. She noted, with no small degree of satisfaction, that his own breathing sounded a little harsh. "What do you want?"

Her hands shook so badly, she worried that she would drop the bottle of wine, so she took it out first and placed it carefully on the table. Very conscious of Jack moving in close behind her, she was suddenly all thumbs as she pulled items from the bag. Her eyes fluttered closed when his arms came around her, pulling her back against him.

"I missed you, darlin', so damned much."

Emily bit back a groan as Jack nuzzled her neck. Pulling herself together, and using every ounce of self-control she possessed, she pulled free of his arms. She meticulously folded the now-empty paper bag, trying not to let him see how badly her hands shook. "You're the one who left."

Cursing herself for saying it out loud, she started to move away. She didn't get to take more than a step before he gripped her arm and

swung her to face him. She put her hands out to keep from slamming against him. The play of muscle under her hands made her want to rip his shirt off and feast on the gorgeous chest she knew it hid. Resisting temptation, she looked up. The anger on his face startled her. She tried to pull out of his grip, but he merely tightened his hold and pulled her back against him.

“I told you I would be back.” He gestured toward the table. “What the hell is all this? Who are you expecting?”

Emily struggled against his hold to no avail. “What I do is none of your business. Let go of me.”

His grip tightened, and he leaned over her. “Darlin’, everything about you is my business. Now, who the hell is coming over?”

“Damn it, Jack, I just bought some groceries.” She frowned up at him. “How did you know I’m expecting company?”

Still gripping her arm, he pulled her closer to the table as he examined her purchases. “Wine? Frozen Italian dinner with garlic cheese bread?” He tossed the dinner and bread back onto the table, narrowing his eyes at her accusingly. “It looks like you’re planning a nice intimate dinner.

Looking at the other items, his face hardened even more. “Bubble bath? Chocolate syrup? Have you been getting kinky with somebody else, darlin’?” His grip tightened, and he jerked her against him.

His erection pressed against her stomach, and she groaned as her body betrayed her. She remembered all too clearly the pleasure that long, thick cock could bring. Fighting the memories of loving in the dark, in the hay, in the shower—She fought the memories that threatened to consume her. She wouldn’t think about it. Jack’s tight features sent a shiver through her, and she shifted restlessly as a rush of fresh moisture dampened her panties even more.

“If I find out you’ve let another man in your bed, I’m gonna paddle your ass good.”

She jumped as a sharp slap landed on her bottom. “Damn you, Jack!”

Jack gripped her chin and lifted it. “You’re mine, and you’d better never forget it. You’ll remember when I have you over my lap and your tight ass is bright red. You liked that before, didn’t you, darlin’? I’ve spent the last three months remembering how hot you are in bed. I’ve jerked off many times thinking about that tight ass over my lap. Don’t tell me you haven’t thought about how much you like your ass paddled while I’ve been away.”

Incredulous, Emily felt a fresh rush of moisture soak her panties. The heat from her bottom began to spread and awakened her arousal to a level it hadn’t been for the last three months. He was the only man who could make her feel this way.

Why did she have to fall for someone like him?

She’d never in her life met someone like Jack, a cowboy with a dark side that sent her to heights she’d never even imagined. Dominant and controlling, he brought those qualities to the bedroom and taught her things about herself she’d never known, things she wished like hell she could forget. As soon as they got between the sheets, he owned her, body, heart, and soul.

She couldn’t resist him, but her heart demanded that she try her best. She’d never survive it if she weakened and let him back in her bed, only to watch him leave again. “I’m not like that anymore.”

“New toothbrush, huh?” *Does he think he’s spending the night?*

Emily grabbed the toothbrush she’d just bought out of his hand, aware that she could only because he allowed it. “It’s none of your business.”

Jack picked up the last item she’d purchased, raising a brow at her outburst. “You’re going to learn that everything you do is my business. Frozen waffles? I guess you’re planning to have company for breakfast. Well, darlin’, you will. I’ll still be here in the morning after spending tonight in your bed. I love waffles.”

Emily grabbed the waffles out of his hand and started to put the groceries away. “You are not getting back in my bed. I have no idea why you decided to come back here, but I wish you would leave.”

Startled, she jumped when his hot hands gripped her waist and turned her, lifting her onto the counter. He'd done it so fast, she hadn't had time to react. He took advantage of her surprise, spreading her thighs and pushing his way between them before she could stop him.

He leaned in close and pulled her against him. When his denim-covered cock pressed against her slit, Emily swallowed the moan that began in her throat. When his hands came up to cup her breasts, the moan could no longer be held back.

"You're wrong about that. *I* will be the one sharing your bed tonight. I'm not leaving. And don't try to tell me you don't want me to. I know you, Em, maybe better than you know yourself."

"Jack, I—oh!"

He ripped her blouse open, sending buttons flying everywhere. A flick of his finger opened the front clasp of her bra. He placed his hot, heavily callused hands over her breasts, running his thumbs back and forth over her pebbled nipples. "Those little nipples are hard already, and I'd be willing to bet you're soaking wet. You're mine, Emily. You know damned well I can have you anytime I want you."

"Damn you, Jack," she whimpered. She couldn't keep from crying out at the erotic pleasure of his rough hands on her sensitive breasts or the indescribable feel of his thumbs rasping over her aching nipples. Her hands tightened on his wide shoulders, holding on to him as her senses spun out of control.

"All mine, Em. Damn, I've missed you."

"You left," she moaned. *Oh God*. When he touched her, she couldn't even think anymore, and she struggled to remember what she wanted to say. "I told you...ohh...told you if...if you left, not to...oh God. I'm not yours anymore."

Leaning into his caress, Emily lifted her face, desperate to have his lips on hers. When his mouth covered hers, she didn't even care that he chuckled. Arching, she pushed her breasts more firmly into his hands, moaning with pleasure when he gave her what she needed.

He always seemed to know her body even better than she did. She knew he could take her to heights she'd never even dreamed existed.

He scared the hell out of her.

But that didn't keep her from craving him. She dropped her hands to his chest, fisting his soft shirt in her hands to pull him closer, loving the feel of hard muscle beneath them. His groan brought her to her senses, and she pushed against his chest again, wrenching her mouth from his. "No, damn you, Jack."

She pushed his hands away from her breasts and used her tattered shirt to cover them, fumbling to tie the two ends together. "I'm not going to let you do this to me again. When you left, I told you never to come back." Emily hated the tears that streamed down her face and hated that it warmed her when he smiled at her and wiped them away. "Oh, Jack. Why did you come back? What do you want from me?"

Jack took her face between his hands, wiping the tears that continued to fall. "When I left, I told you I'd be back. We had a fight. Big deal. I told you when I left that I would be back at the end of the circuit. How the hell could you have thought I left for good?"

Emily shrugged, trying to appear nonchalant, but feeling anything but. "I figured you'd realized that we both made a mistake. And if you think you're going to breeze in and out of my life whenever you get the urge, you'd better think again."

He lifted her left hand, touching the ring that he'd placed there three months ago. "Oh, I have the urge. You're mine, darlin'. 'Til death do us part, remember?"

Chapter Two

Jack barely restrained himself from throwing his stubborn wife over his shoulder and storming down the hall and into the bedroom. He'd busted his ass for the last three months on the rodeo circuit to make enough money to make this ranch into something more. He knew the struggle she went through on a daily basis just to keep the ranch running.

He'd been on the circuit when they'd met, and had fallen for her so hard and fast they'd married only days later. Knowing that he could win the money to hire hands and replace the horses she'd been slowly selling off, he'd been anxious to get back to it.

Every ache and pain he'd endured had been ignored. He'd known that every single one of them brought him that much closer to his goal. Every dollar he'd made brought him closer to getting back to the woman who'd stolen his heart, even though he knew he didn't deserve her.

Rubbing the back of his neck, he watched his wife practically run from the room. He followed her, leaning against the doorway to her living room.

She came back toward him and slapped him in the chest with an envelope. "Here. Sign these. I've been trying to find out where to mail them."

He opened the envelope as she put the groceries away, her movements jerky, with none of the casual grace she normally possessed. He stared down at the papers in stunned disbelief. "Divorce papers? Are you fucking kidding me? Oh no, darlin'. You're not getting rid of me that easy. You're my wife, and you're

staying my wife, Mrs. Manning.”

“Don’t call me that!”

He swallowed the huge lump that had formed in his throat as he watched her. “I’ve thought of you and missed you like hell for the last three months. I went to bed every night aching for you. And all this time, you’ve been planning to *divorce* me?”

“Please! I saw the women that followed you around. Don’t tell me you went to bed every night alone.”

Jack’s hand itched to paddle her irresistible ass. “If you’ve got something to say, say it. Are you accusing me of cheating on you?”

When she only shrugged, his hand itched even more. “This from a woman who is right now planning an evening with her lover?”

Her cheeks turned that gorgeous pink that made him hard as a rock every time.

“I’m going to take a shower and get dressed. Sign the papers, and leave them on the table. Good-bye.”

* * * *

It took every ounce of self-control to walk away from Jack, knowing she’d never see him again. She went into the bedroom, closing and locking the door behind her, even though she didn’t expect him to follow. He’d sit out there, and, once he cooled down, he would be happy to sign the papers and get on with his carefree life.

She’d had three long months to think about what she wanted, something she should have done before marrying Jack. He’d completely bowled her over. A plain woman in a small town in Texas, she’d had no experience with a man like him. His stunning good looks and loads of charm had swept her away. He had the forceful, take-charge attitude that she hadn’t seen on a man since her daddy died. She’d become so used to running roughshod over other men, and Jack had thrown her for a loop.

A woman running a ranch alone didn’t have time for nonsense.

Any man who had tried to make a move on her in the two years since her daddy died had been firmly put in his place, and that had been the end of it.

But that hadn't worked with Jack. Jack Manning didn't take no for an answer and had overcome all her objections with alarming ease. She'd met him when her truck broke down and he'd stopped to help. Before she knew how it happened, she agreed to go watch him compete. She still wasn't quite sure how it had happened, but he'd ended up spending the night in her bed.

When he'd asked her to marry him, she'd been so overcome, so madly in love, she'd agreed. Their lovemaking had been incredible. He'd taken charge in the bedroom in a way that made her senses soar. He took over her body, seeming to know it better than she did. He'd done things to her that still made her blush.

She'd been unprepared for and embarrassed by just how completely she lost herself in their lovemaking. Her past experiences couldn't hold a candle to what Jack did to her. As much as she tried to control her uninhibited response to him, she couldn't. As his demands became increasingly intimate, she'd been at first shocked, then a willing participant as he'd pulled her deeper and deeper into his dark desires. No matter what he did to her, she reveled in it.

He had to be used to experienced women who knew what they were doing in the bedroom, women who were both beautiful and confident. She ran a ranch and worked hard all day. She didn't have the smooth hands other women did. Hers were callused and strong. She never wore makeup. She lived in jeans and boots and slept in big T-shirts, not sexy lingerie. When he'd told her that he had to leave, she knew he'd realized his mistake. She'd almost expected it.

She knew she couldn't compete with the pieces of fluff with big hair who followed the circuit. And she had no desire to try.

But she knew how competitive he was. He suspected that she had a date with another man. That's why he'd touched her, kissed her that way. He would have probably made love to her if she'd let him, one

last time before leaving.

She could ride with the best of them. She could shoot, carry bags of feed by herself, rope, and fix fence. She had a tongue that had sliced through more than one cowboy who made a play for her.

But she knew Jack Manning was way out of her league.

Heading for the bathroom, she paused in front of her dresser, staring down at the gold band on her hand. She had no idea why she'd never taken it off, but she hadn't. She did now. Her hand shook as she removed the ring and placed it on the smooth wooden surface.

By the time she stepped into the shower, the tears fell freely. Damn him, why did he have to come back? And why today? She needed all of her wits for tonight.

She took her time in the shower, delaying the inevitable. Knowing that when she walked back out to the kitchen, she would find Jack gone, and signed divorce papers, she wanted to delay it for as long as possible. She instinctively knew she'd never love another man as much as she loved him. She'd never want a man the way she did him. Damn him.

Washing her hair, she remembered how Jack had done it for her before, his rough hands gentle on her scalp. When he'd rinsed it, those hands had been like magic as he followed the trail of bubbles down her body.

Running the soap over her body, she closed her eyes, remembering how Jack had washed her before, creating a thick lather and running slippery hands over every inch of her. His hands had played her body like a musician would play a beloved instrument, creating need that only he could fulfill.

She wanted to stay in here forever, to escape to the memories she'd ruthlessly pushed aside for weeks.

Damn, she couldn't delay it any longer. Martin would be here soon.

After drying off, she tackled the job of drying her long, thick hair. Every time she did, she wondered why she didn't cut it.

Then she remembered how Jack had loved to play with it, teasing her breasts with it and wrapping it around his hands. She shuddered when she remembered how he'd taken her from behind, fisting her hair in his hands to hold her in place for his thrusts.

Cursing herself for letting those erotic memories creep in, she donned her robe and started for the bedroom. She needed to throw on some jeans and get dinner started. She would only think of Martin tonight. She would block all thoughts of Jack out of her mind.

Walking back into her bedroom, she came to an abrupt halt, a gasp escaping before she could prevent it. Every erogenous zone on her body came to full attention.

Jack sat propped against her headboard, totally naked, his thick erection hard and angry-looking as he slowly stroked it. She barely glanced at the rest of him, only long enough to see that he looked even more muscular than he'd been three months ago.

Transfixed at the sight of his big hand stroking his more-than-impressive cock, she stood frozen in place. She swallowed painfully, remembering just how devastatingly that thick shaft had stretched her, giving her orgasm after orgasm. She'd even begged.

"H-how did you get in here?"

"Screwdriver."

She gulped, unable to take her eyes from the feast in front of her.

"I think I've been too lenient with you, *Wife*. When you changed your phone number, I let it go. I found out that you hadn't moved, so I figured you just didn't want to talk to me. I knew where you were."

His voice sounded almost casual but carried a low, angry undertone that got to her like shouting from anyone else never would. Emily forced herself to look away from the mesmerizing sight in front of her to meet Jack's angry glare. "You tried to call me?"

Jack frowned at her. "Of course I tried to call you. You're my wife. Why did you change the number?"

Emily shrugged and tried to keep the hurt from her voice. "Your girlfriends kept calling here, looking for you. Sometimes they would

call at one and two in the morning. So I changed the number.”

His face tightened. “You have my cell number. Why didn’t you ever call me?”

Emily shrugged again. “I did once. A woman answered.”

“And you didn’t call back to fight with me and ask me who the hell the woman was who answered my phone?”

For the first time, she noticed that he held her wedding ring in his left hand, between thumb and forefinger, holding it up and rolling it back and forth, watching the light from the window glint off of it. “You left. I figured she was the next in line.”

He leapt from the bed and caught her before she could react. Grabbing her left hand, he pushed the gold band back onto her finger. “When I put this here, it was for forever. Leave it where the fuck I put it!”

She desperately grabbed on to every bit of temper she could muster. “Damn it, Jack! You and I are a big mistake. We have nothing in common. Look at me. You have all these gorgeous women chasing after you, and I run a ranch. I don’t have time to primp and do my nails. And I want something else for a husband. I want a man who’s going to be home at night, and you run around on the rodeo circuit. You run around wild, and I want a home and a family. We had a fling and mistook it for something more. Just sign the papers, and we can go our separate ways.” When she tried to jerk from his grasp, he held firm. “Let go of me. I have to fix dinner.”

“It appears we have a couple of things we need to discuss,” he drawled.

She didn’t trust the look on his hard face one bit. When they’d been together before, he’d never looked at her that way. She didn’t know him well enough to be able to decipher the look completely, but she was smart enough to be wary. “We have nothing to talk about. Just sign the papers and go.”

“You really don’t think I’m going to let you get away with trying to get rid of me, do you?” He spun her around, his eyes holding hers

in the mirror over her dresser.

When his hands came around her, she found herself unable to look away as he opened her robe, baring her breasts and cupping them.

Wearing only her robe and a pair of cotton panties, she felt much too exposed. “Jack, I—”

“Do you remember how good we were, Em? Do you remember how I made you scream?”

“It’s not enough. Oh!”

His thumbs rasped over her nipples, sending an incredible jolt of lust through her. Her knees turned to rubber, and she grabbed his forearms for support.

“Do you really think I’m going to stand aside and let somebody else have you?” His dark eyes glittered dangerously. “If I find out my hot little wife has given her pussy to another man, I’m going to be really upset.”

“I—oh, I haven’t. Oh God, Jack.”

His fingers closed on her nipples, tugging erotically. “Do you remember how much you liked when I put you over my lap before? Do you remember how hot you got when I started stretching your little virgin hole? Do you know how often I’ve thought about coming back home here and finally having the chance to take your ass?”

Emily moaned as her bottom clenched involuntarily. She remembered well just how forbidden and erotic it had felt when Jack had pressed a lubed finger into her bottom, promising darkly to take her there when he felt she was ready.

His hands left her breasts to move down her body. Feeling a tug and hearing a rip, her eyes popped open to see he’d torn her panties from her and she stood virtually naked in front of the mirror.

“I see this pussy’s shaved just the way I like it. Or did you do this for the company you’re expecting tonight?”

Emily gasped as his hand covered her mound. With her pussy bare, the feeling was way too intense, a sensation she’d almost forgotten in the last three months. How could she tell him that she’d

kept herself shaved this way because he'd liked it? That she hadn't cut her hair because he'd always loved to play with it? The realization of just how much she loved him took her breath away.

He couldn't find out. She couldn't let him know that she'd spent the last three months pining for him. "It's none of your business. When you left, you gave up all rights to know what I do. You're too late." As hard as she'd tried to keep her tone level, it nevertheless came out breathless.

"Really?" He slid a thick finger through her folds and into her in one slick move. I didn't give up anything. You belong to me."

Emily's head dropped back onto his shoulder. She moaned almost continuously now, unable to prevent it, as his finger filled her. She couldn't keep from clenching on it and gripped his arms as spasms of pure lust wracked her body.

His arm tightened around her waist, pulling her more firmly against him. His cock pressed against her bottom, filling her mind with all sorts of lascivious thoughts. His thumb rested on her clit, unmoving.

He leaned down and nipped her shoulder. "I think I got here just in the nick of time. I think it's about time I claim what's mine again."

Jack moved so fast, Emily had no chance to escape. He whipped off her robe and dragged her to the bed. Sitting on the edge, he pulled her struggling body over his lap. Gripping both of her hands in one of his, he held them at her lower back.

More afraid than she'd ever been, and more aroused, she kicked her feet, trying to break free. She should have known better. "What are you doing?"

"What do you think I'm doing? I'm teaching my wife what happens when she goes too far. I'm teaching my wife that she'll be punished if she ever thinks about divorcing me or entertaining other men. Or taking off her wedding ring! I'm going to spank your ass until you learn that I won't put up with you trying to get rid of me. That's what I'm doing. Don't tell me you don't remember how hard

you came when I did this to you before.”

As long as Jack held the reins, finding herself in such a vulnerable position excited the hell out of her. As he adjusted her over his lap to his liking, Emily knew she’d seriously underestimated her husband this time. In the past, he’d been dominant and demanding in bed, but not like this. When they’d been together before, he’d slapped her bottom, but it had been a playfully erotic spanking. He’d never been in a mood like this!

“Let me go! You can’t spank me.”

His hot hand stroked her bottom, and she struggled not to raise into his caress. When it pushed between her thighs, separating them, she bit her lip to hide her groan. He pressed his finger inside her, and she couldn’t help but tighten on it as a moan slipped free.

Oh God. Why did it turn her on so much? She’d always responded so eagerly to his dark demands, and it looked like, even now, she couldn’t resist him.

“Nice and wet. Let’s see how much wetter you’ll be when your ass is nice and hot.”

Embarrassed at her response to being so helpless, Emily tried to reason with him. “Jack, let me up. We’ll talk about this. Really, you can’t spank me.”

“Wanna bet?”

Chapter Three

Emily cried out as his big hand came down hard on her bottom. She bit back a groan as the slap awoke nerve endings, and struggled to hide it. “How dare you! You can’t just come back into my life and do this to me.”

He rewarded her with another sharp slap. “I dare a lot when it concerns my wife, especially when she’s trying to get rid of me.” Another slap landed. “Did you really think I would put my tail between my legs and leave?”

Lying over her husband’s lap, her hands trapped behind her back, Emily couldn’t stop him. The slaps stung, but they didn’t hurt. Even now she knew he wouldn’t really hurt her. She also knew her husband was not only angry, but aroused by what he did to her. She could feel his cock press against her and knew that this spanking affected him as much as it did her.

Mortified at her body’s response, she kept struggling, but couldn’t move so much as an inch. Every slap aroused her even more, and she could feel the moisture coating her thighs. “Damn you.” She’d fought to keep her voice firm, but instead it came out breathless. The legs beneath her felt firm, and she could feel the muscles in them bunch and shift as he controlled her movements. She tried hard to ignore the cock pressing at her side, but couldn’t. She had absolutely no defense against any erotic plans Jack had for her.

Another slap landed. “You can curse at me all you want, but you’ll never think about shoving divorce papers at me again.”

She bit her lips again to hold back the moan that threatened when he caressed her heated bottom. When his hand slid once again

between her damp thighs, she couldn't close them and knew he would soon discover her body's response to her spanking.

"Why are you doing this to me? You weren't like this before." Her voice came out weak and needy, nothing at all like she'd meant for it to sound.

Another sharp slap landed, followed by another of those devastating caresses. "We only had a few days together, darlin'. And you weren't trying to get rid of me. We'll have all the time in the world now." He slid his hand between her legs again. "You'll have all the time in the world to learn your husband. And I'll have all the time in the world to play with your hot little body and make you come over and over."

Emily moaned, doing her best to rock her hips on the thick finger that pressed its way inside her. Even though it had been months since Jack had made love to her, her body remembered him well.

"You're nice and wet for me, aren't you, darlin'? Does loverboy make you feel like this?" When he let go of her hands, she gripped his leg, trying to get some leverage. She still couldn't move.

She found out why he'd released her hands when he slapped her bottom again. He now had a free hand to use on her bottom while the other stayed between her legs.

When she didn't answer, he delivered another slap. "Does he? Were you going to show him this tight ass tonight? Were you going to let him fuck you? Do you really think I'm going to leave and let you give what's mine to somebody else?"

One thing she knew about Jack is that he had a competitive streak a mile wide. The thought of her actually having sex with another man brought it raging to the surface. "It's none of your business. How many women did you fuck in the last three months?"

Emily squealed as Jack withdrew from her and flipped her effortlessly onto the bed, quickly covering her body with his. Lifting her hands above her head, he gripped both of her wrists in one strong hand, using the other to grip her chin and lift her face to his.

“None. I’m married and don’t fucking cheat. I spent every fucking night thinking about you and jerking off, remembering how good it felt to be inside you. Now I’m going to feel it again. I’m going to take what belongs to me. Before you see loverboy, you’re going to remember just what I can make you feel.”

He moved off of her to reach for the duffel bag he’d placed in the corner. Seeing her chance to escape, she jumped from the bed and took off. She ran down the hall stark naked and raced into the living room, scurrying behind the sofa.

Jack followed at a more leisurely pace, which scared her even more than if he had chased her. “You’re naked, darlin’. Where do you think you’re gonna go?”

Her thighs were soaked with her juices, but she just couldn’t allow him to take over this way. He took her over so completely, she lost her mind while in his arms, and it didn’t sit well with her. She’d gotten too used to being the one in charge to easily let go of the reins.

Jack stopped in the middle of the room, and for the first time, she noticed he carried a tube in his hand. The implications of him carrying it with him nearly brought her to her knees. “I want to ask you something, darlin’. And I want the truth from you.”

Emily’s hands tightened on the back of the sofa, and she fought the urge to arch toward him. His gaze on her breasts felt like a caress and caused even more moisture to leak from her.

“What?”

“Why are you running?”

Emily blinked, trying to focus on his words when his cock begged for her attention. “Because you’re trying to intimidate me. Because I don’t know what else you’re going to do to me. Because you’re trying to control me with sex.”

Jack smiled and raised a brow. “But you love sex when I’m in charge. You know I make you come over and over. And the thought of not knowing what I’m going to do to you excites you. So, why are you running?”

“Because I’m scared!”

Jack looked down at the tube, turning it in his hands, before meeting her eyes once again and nodding. “Yeah, but do you know what you’re scared of?”

Emily tried to keep her eyes on his, but her gaze kept wandering to his cock, which seemed to grow even thicker and longer. “I’m, um, scared of you.”

Jack chuckled. “Really? And what are you scared of? That I’ll hurt you?” Jack tossed the tube back and forth between his hands as he waited for her to answer.

Unable to keep from watching the tube and sneaking glances at his cock, Emily’s buttocks clenched repeatedly as she thought about what he could do with both. “You spanked me.”

Jack laughed. “That didn’t hurt you. That turned you on even more. Don’t try to lie, Em. I had my hand between your legs and my finger in your pussy. You’re dripping wet. And you know damned well I’d never hurt you. Try again.”

Emily struggled to get mad, but she was so aroused, she couldn’t quite manage it. “You can’t just waltz back in my life and try to take me over.”

“But you like when I take you over, especially in bed. I have to be in charge in the bedroom, Em. It’s the way I’m made. And you’re so tough on the outside, always doing everything for yourself, always having the full responsibility of the ranch on your soft little shoulders. But on the inside, you’re soft, sweet and so passionate. You love to give up control in the bedroom. It turns you on to have a man who can handle all that passion.”

“No, I—”

“Liar.”

“Jack, I just can’t let you take me over. I can’t be what you want.”

Jack’s lips twitched. “You already are. And you love it when I control you in bed. Admit it, Em. You love letting me do whatever I want to you. You trust me with your body, if nothing else. I’m not

going to hurt you, Em.”

Emily’s eyes zeroed in on his hand, where it almost casually stroked his cock. “You left.”

“And I came back, just like I told you I would. With the money I told you I’d get.”

She licked her lips, her eyes mesmerized by the purplish head of his shaft. How in the hell did he ever think he would get *that* inside her bottom?

“Lick those lips, darlin’. That’s the first place my cock is going.”

Emily forced her attention back to his face, deciding the best thing to do would be to ignore his comment. “Damn it, Jack. I told you we didn’t need that money.”

“And I told you that it was important to me that I got it.”

“Why?”

Jack smiled humorlessly. “Isn’t that something you should have asked me three months ago? I tried to explain, but you wouldn’t listen. It was all about what *you* wanted, what *you* needed, wasn’t it?”

Emily felt a rush of shame. She hadn’t wanted to hear it when he’d tried to talk to her before. Maybe if she had, things would have been different. “You’re right. I should have listened. Tell me now.”

“No.”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me. Your lack of trust hurts, Em, and it pisses me off. I trusted you enough to leave you to get the money, and I come back to you having a date with another man. No, you’re just going to have to trust me blindly now. When I feel that you do, maybe I’ll tell you why it was so important for me to do what I had to do.”

“Blind trust?”

The stroking of his cock continued, distracting her as he probably meant it to. “You had the chance for explanations. You had the chance to find out why I had to leave, who answered my cell phone, but you just had to believe the worst. So, I guess we’re back to my original question. Why did you run?”

“Damn it, Jack.”

Jack moved closer, stalking her as he continued to stroke his thickness. “You ran because you want me to chase you. You need me to take you, Em. You love to be overpowered when it comes to sex. It makes you feel good to have a man who you know can handle you. You won’t give up control anywhere else, but in bed, you love it.”

“No, I, uh—”

“Bad girls who lie get punished.”

Emily’s nipples pebbled even harder, aching with the need to be touched, and fresh moisture coated her thighs.

“I see you like that. You like me to overpower you. You like when I make you do things you’re too shy to do on your own. You like when I spank that tight ass. You want me to chase you. You want to be taken over because you want to be out of control, but can’t give up control on your own. You want me to take it from you. You *need* me to take it from you.”

The entire time Jack spoke, he moved toward her. He went around one side of the sofa, and she started around the other, carefully keeping the sofa between them.

Listening to his words, she got hotter and hotter. Everything he said was true. Damn it. “Jack, I can’t give you what you want.”

Jack’s grin turned her knees to rubber. “I know that, honey. That’s what makes it even hotter. You want to give it up, but can’t. I have to take it, and we both go wild when I do. You’re a firebrand, not some meek little girl. It makes the sex that much hotter when I finally make you lose control. You fight like hell not to come. Didn’t you think I noticed that? If you take one more step, I’m putting you over my knee again.”

Emily froze. Every word he spoke aroused her even more.

“That’s better. You’ve got a hard shell, Em, but underneath is a woman who’s vulnerable and full of passion, who’s scared to let go. Do you know what a challenge it is for a man like me to get past the hard shell to the passionate woman underneath? You live in a man’s

world, and you've gotten too used to that. I remind you that you're a woman, and it scares the hell out of you."

Emily fought her rising panic. He knew her far too well, and it did scare the hell out of her. She went on the offense. "Is that all I am to you, a challenge?"

Jack threw back his head and laughed. "A fighter to the end. You're more to me than that, and you know it. And if you didn't love me, you wouldn't be fighting so hard."

"I'm not going to just lay down and spread my legs for you, Jack."

"I would be sincerely disappointed if you did." He took a step toward the front of the sofa, forcing her to take a step toward the back. "Do you know how often I've thought of fucking that hot little mouth of yours? We didn't get to that before. I spent the time we had together getting you used to the feeling of letting go, but my imagination has gone wild in the last three months, darlin'. Wait 'til you find out all the things I have in store for you."

Emily struggled to breathe normally as his words sank in. He'd started that slow stroking of his cock again, distracting her and arousing her even more. He could arouse her more with his words and that deep, steely tone than any other man could with his hands and mouth. How the hell did he do it?

"Do you remember when we made love in the stable? Do you remember how I put a saddle over that bale of hay and bent you over it? Do you remember the feel of leather against your belly? Do you remember what it felt like when I worked my cock into that hot pussy and fucked you there in the stable?"

Memories of that warm afternoon swept over her. She could remember clearly what the leather saddle had felt like against her skin, remembered, too, the forbidden sensation of having sex outside. She'd tried so hard to keep quiet, afraid that someone would hear, but in the end, she'd forgotten everything except the feel of Jack's cock in her pussy, and she'd screamed. She closed her eyes as the memories washed over her.

“Yes.”

Her eyes popped open at the feel of Jack’s heat pressed against her back as his hands came around her to cover her breasts. He’d distracted her enough to come around the sofa, and she knew she wouldn’t be able to escape.

“I’ve thought of that day many times in the last three months. Thought of how I’m going to get you back into the stable again. I’m going to put a rope over that beam in the ceiling, and I’m going to tie your hands with it. You’ll be standing in the middle of the stable with your hands tied over your head, helpless to stop me from doing whatever I want to do to you. You won’t be able to escape. You know how good I am with knots.”

Jack’s hands moved to cup her breasts, lightly pinching her nipples. His cock pressed against her lower back as he pulled her back against his chest. “Put your arms around my neck, Em.”

Unthinkingly, she obeyed, caught up in the sensations of her nipples being teased and his heat surrounding her. “Jack, I—”

“Shh, let me finish. Once you’re tied up and helpless, I’m going to blindfold you. Then I’m going to use my knife to cut off every single piece of your clothing.”

“Oh God, Jack.”

“Do you know what it’s going to feel like to be naked and tied up and blindfolded? Then I’m going to put on my leather gloves.” When she groaned, he pinched her nipples again and continued. “Do you think I haven’t seen the way your eyes go all dark and dreamy when I put them on?”

“Oh, Jack. I can’t think.”

“Don’t think,” he murmured next to her ear. “Keep your eyes closed, and imagine what it’ll feel like when I’m wearing the leather gloves and running my hands all over your body. What do you think it’ll feel like on your nipples?”

Emily gasped when he tugged at her nipples, imagining what it would feel like to have his gloved hand touching her that way.

“On your inner thighs.”

Taking her hands from around his neck, he placed them on the back of the sofa. “Leave them there.”

She had no choice as he pulled her hips back, forcing her to use her hands to balance herself. His hands moved down her body, leaving a trail of heat in their wake. She trembled as he parted her legs and began to lightly run his hands up and down her inner thighs.

“You’re soaking wet, darlin’. Are you thinking about what I’m going to do to you now, or imagining the feel of leather stroking you like this?”

“Oh Jack, I don’t know. Both. I can’t take any more.”

He pulled her hips back even farther, spreading her legs even wider. If she let go of the back of the sofa, she knew she would fall. Her knees buckled when he ran a hand over her bottom, and she was grateful that he wrapped a hand around her waist to steady her.

“While you’re tied up, you’re going to get a nice hot spanking by my leather-gloved hand.”

The hand covering her abdomen moved closer to her folds as a slap on her ass accompanied his statement. The heat spread, and she swore she could actually feel the leather as his hand caressed where he’d slapped, heating her even more. To her utter amazement, a series of mini orgasms raced through her, one right after the other.

She cried out, whimpering as they did nothing to assuage her almost painful need. Her entire body trembled as need clawed at her. She needed relief. She couldn’t stand it another second. Her clit throbbed with the need to be stroked. She heard Jack murmuring to her but had no idea what he said. She needed to come. She needed it more than she needed her next breath.

Shifting her weight to one hand, she let go with the other and reached frantically for her clit, doing something she’d always been too shy to do in front of Jack before. Desperate for relief, she had no inhibitions left. She growled when he grabbed her hand before she could reach it.

“Oh, no you don’t,” his deep voice murmured next to her ear. “You’re right where I want you. You’re so desperate to come, you’ll do anything I want you to do.”

“Jack, please! I can’t stand it.” She fought to free her hand, but he wouldn’t let go. If only she could reach her clit. She knew that as soon as she touched it, she would go over.

Another slap landed, heating her even more, making her tingle again and drive her higher, but not enough to make her come. He kept her poised on the razor-sharp edge, but kept her from going over. She struggled violently against his hold.

“Jack, damn you. Let go. I want to come. Please, Jack. Let go.”

The hard arm around her waist kept her from moving, her hand gripped in his. His other hand was free to caress her bottom, occasionally delivering a light slap.

“You’ve been a bad girl, haven’t you, Em? Trying to divorce me. Not believing me when I said I’d be back. Making a dinner date with another man. You’re gonna have to make it up to me before I let you come.”

Emily’s entire body shook with the need to come. She’d gone way past caring about anything except release. “I’ll do whatever you want. Just let me come.”

“That’s a good girl. Now that I’ve got you where I want you, I’m going to fuck that sweet mouth of yours.”

Emily trembled so badly, she knew she would have fallen if Jack hadn’t supported her as he pulled her back against him.

He positioned her closer to the back of the sofa and moved around in front of her. “Get on your knees, Emily. No. Keep those legs spread.”

Emily did as he demanded, unable to take her eyes from the sight of his cock, now directly in front of her. It was the first time she’d seen it up close like this, and she couldn’t believe she’d actually taken it into her body. As she watched, a creamy drop appeared at the tip, and she licked her lips, dying to taste it.

“That’s right, darlin’. Get those lips nice and wet. Keep those legs spread. I don’t want anything touching that clit.” He took her hands and placed them on the back of the sofa on either side of his hips. “If you move your hands, I’ll make you wait even longer to come.”

Gripping the back of the sofa, Emily couldn’t help but rock her hips, unable to stop clenching her pussy. Her clit throbbed so badly, she couldn’t stand it. She couldn’t take her eyes off his cock, where he slowly stroked it again.

“After I come in your mouth, I’m going to suck your little clit into my mouth and make you come so hard, darlin’. Then we’re going to start over.”

“Anything, just let me come.”

He let go of his cock to place one hand on either side of her head, his fists tangling in her hair. “Open wide, darlin’, so I can fuck your hot little mouth.”

Emily opened her mouth eagerly, anxious for the first taste of his cock and more than willing to please him. She had to open her mouth wide to take the large head inside, feeling Jack’s hands tighten on her hair as she did. She thrilled at the shudder that went through him and vowed to make him as crazy as he’d made her.

* * * *

Jack groaned, hanging on to his control by a thread at the sight of his wife kneeling at his feet and sucking his cock. He’d had blowjobs by women well experienced in it, and none of them had ever come close to making him lose control as fast as his hot little wife did.

Her inexperience showed in the tentative way she ran her tongue around his cock, dipping it into the tip as though trying to get more of the fluid she’d already licked clean. To have his hot-blooded wife, with the temper of a rattler, in such a submissive pose had him fighting for control. When she hummed, as though in appreciation of his taste, he nearly lost it.

He knew how much she hated giving up control, but after the scare he'd had when she'd slapped him with divorce papers, he'd decided to push her. He wanted to remind her just how fantastic they were together. She'd been hot before, but never like this. He would just keep pushing. He wanted it all.

The thought of that had him groaning again. He'd never last, and knew she wouldn't either. He'd wanted them both to come so he could start all over again, make her forget everything but him before her dinner date got here.

His hands tightened on her hair when she began to suck harder. He knew if he didn't take control, he would come far too soon. "Stop sucking. Just hold your mouth open. I'm going to fuck your sweet little mouth nice and slow."

When she did as he'd asked and looked up at him, he clenched his jaw, fighting not to come right then. Her blue eyes had become darker than he'd ever seen them before. Looking down her body, he noticed her legs had been brought closer together.

"Spread those thighs, Em. Right now."

Her moan, when she rushed to obey him, vibrated on his cock, forcing him to smother his own moan. Holding on to her, he began to stroke his cock into her mouth, every muscle in his body tightening with the effort to hold back.

"Do you have any idea how fucking incredible it feels to fuck your mouth? Your hot little tongue is driving me crazy. Suck me, Em. Use that tongue. Make me come in your mouth, darlin', and swallow every drop."

When she tightened her mouth on him and began to suck him again, he had to grit his teeth. Fuck. What she lacked in experience she sure as hell made up for in enthusiasm. Jesus, she could turn him inside out. God help him if she ever figured out just how much power she had over him.

He threw back his head as his groin tightened impossibly. Suddenly the overwhelming rush of an incredible orgasm washed

over him, and a harsh groan escaped as his cock pulsed his release into his wife's waiting mouth.

"Fucking incredible, darlin'. Christ, you're amazing." He struggled just to stand as his legs turned to wet noodles. But he knew his wife had to be frantic by now and needed him to be forceful. "Lick me clean, and then I'm going to eat that hot pussy."

* * * *

Emily's pussy wept and clenched, and her clit had become so sensitive it ached. She could swear it throbbed in time to her heartbeat. The sounds Jack made when he'd come in her mouth had sounded so erotic and went to her head like whiskey. To know that she had done that to him gave her a feeling of power she'd never before experienced during sex. It made her brave. It made her needy. It made her aggressive, almost mindless, with the need to come.

When he lifted her to her feet, she fought him, so desperate for release, she would defy him to take care of it herself. Her hand moved between her legs before he could stop her, but at the first touch of her finger on her clit, he pulled it away.

He gripped both her wrists in one of his big hands and held them over her head, his look incredulous. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

"I need to come, you son of a bitch! Let go of me."

He threw back his head and laughed as she kicked at him. "What a little wildcat you are." He reached out to tug a nipple.

Emily gasped and would have collapsed if he hadn't been holding her up. The tug on her nipple had her frantically trying to rub her thighs together, but a leg between her knees stopped her.

"You bastard. You told me you'd make me come."

Jack continued to tug at her nipples, making the need even worse. "You would have already been screaming by now if you hadn't started fighting me."

Emily gasped when he lifted her over the back of the sofa, pushing her onto her back as he joined her.

“Touch your nipples.”

Emily quickly covered her breasts with her hands, and he pulled her legs wide.

“No. Not that way. Pinch them. Harder. If you stop, I’ll stop licking your pussy.”

The first swipe of his hot tongue through her slit made her cry out. By the third, she was gripping the sofa, her hands fisted on the back and the cushion beneath her. She’d squeezed her eyes closed and waited breathlessly for the fourth. It didn’t come. When she reached down, her hand got slapped. Her eyes popped open to look down to see Jack between her legs, a brow raised as he waited.

“Pinch those nipples. Now.”

Emily growled and pinched her nipples again, the erotic tug shooting straight to her slit at the same time Jack sucked her clit into his mouth. Emily screamed as the most immense pleasure she’d ever experienced overtook her. Her clit burned as the bundle of nerves felt as if it had doubled in size.

Her pussy clenched, hard spasms tightening her abdomen almost painfully. Her body bowed, every muscle rigid with the shock of such an extreme onslaught to her system. It went on and on until she jerked away from Jack’s mouth, the sensation on her clit too painful to bear. Trying to gulp in enough air to feed her starving lungs, she shook uncontrollably.

Jack slid up her body, his hard arms surrounding her and pulling her close. She lifted her arms to his back but didn’t have the energy to tighten them. She couldn’t focus on what he said, but his tone soothed her as he ran his lips over her face and neck, dropping kisses here and there as he spoke softly to her.

His hands moved over her arms, caressing her gently. His lips moved over her hair as he cradled her against him. Occasionally, a shudder went through her, and his touch firmed as he continued

crooning to her.

When she felt him lift her high in his arms, she didn't have the energy to open her eyes. She cuddled against him as he carried her, trusting him implicitly. She listened to the sound of his heart beating against her ear, getting more and more distant as she drifted away.

Chapter Four

Emily stretched and yawned, rolling onto her back, blinking into the semi-darkness. She glanced at the clock at her bedside and groaned. Blinking at the clock, she frowned. It was already after five o'clock.

Shoving the covers aside, she froze when she realized she was naked. Memories of the previous day raced through her mind. Jack had come back.

Whipping around, she looked at the other side of the bed, only to find it empty. It had obviously been slept in, the indent still in the pillow. She couldn't help but smooth her hand over the sheet, her frown deepening when she found it cold. Jack had apparently been up for a while.

She got up and made a quick trip to the bathroom. Back in the bedroom she started getting dressed, still frowning. The last thing she remembered had been having sex, having mind-blowing sex, with Jack in the living room. He'd carried her to bed and...nothing.

Damn, she'd invited Martin for dinner.

What the hell? Had she slept since yesterday afternoon? She hadn't taken care of the horses!

Emily ran out of the bedroom and down the hall, still buttoning her shirt. She turned the corner to the kitchen, and ran straight into Jack.

He grabbed on to her arms to steady her and pulled her against his chest, dropping a kiss on her forehead. "Whoa, darlin'. Where're you going in such a hurry?"

She allowed herself to lean against him for a few seconds,

savoring the solid heat of him, before pulling away. “What happened? The last thing I remember was you carrying me to bed. Didn’t Martin come for dinner?”

Jack moved to the counter to pour her a cup of coffee and refill his own. “Yeah, your friend showed up.”

“Damn it, Jack. Why didn’t you wake me up?”

He placed her cup on the table. “Sit down, and drink your coffee, Em. Shit, you’ve gotta be hungry. Want some of those waffles?” At her nod, he moved to the freezer and pulled out the box.

She plopped into the chair and reached for her cup, wrapping her hands around it as she watched him pop the waffles into the toaster.

“I didn’t find any maple syrup.”

“I put chocolate syrup on them.”

Jack laughed. “So that’s what the chocolate’s for. I had something else in mind for it. But at least I know you didn’t plan for Martin to spend the night. If you had, you would have bought maple syrup, too.”

“Maybe I forgot it,” she grumbled. She hated mornings, and didn’t feel human until she’d had her first cup of coffee. She blew on it and took a sip, knowing that when dealing with Jack, she needed all the help she could get.

He chuckled. “No, you didn’t.” He set the plate of waffles and chocolate syrup on the table in front of her and sat across from her to sip his own coffee. “I used the new toothbrush.”

She shrugged, digging into her waffles. “I’ll pick up another one. Did you use my bubble bath, too?”

Jack laughed. “Not yet, but whenever you’re ready...By the way, I fed the horses and Lucky. Last I saw, he was chasing another rabbit.”

The caffeine hit her system, and she remembered her dinner appointment. “Jack, what happened with Martin? Why the hell did you let me sleep so long?”

“Martin showed up right on time. We had a beer and a talk, and he

left.”

Emily flew to her feet, throwing her dishes in the sink and stomping around the kitchen. “Damn it, Jack. I needed to talk to him. He works at the bank. I wanted him to see the place so he would give me the loan I need. Artificial insemination is expensive. I’ve got vet bills, and I need more tack.”

“You don’t need the loan anymore, Em. And you can forget about Martin. Christ, you could eat a man like him for breakfast. He’d never be able to handle someone like you.” He grinned around his cup. “I think he’s scared of you.”

Emily wanted to stomp her feet in frustration, but she knew it would only amuse Jack. She settled for clenching her jaw. She moved to the pot to refill her cup. She definitely needed more caffeine. “I needed to talk to him. You had no business—”

Jack shot to his feet, slamming his hand on the table. “No business? I come home after busting my ass for three months to find my wife has a dinner date. Throws divorce papers at me? Is so fucking exhausted that after making love, sleeps like the dead for fourteen hours? Did you really think I would wake you up to entertain another man? You need somebody to take you in hand, darlin’. And I’m just the man to do it.”

Emily slammed her cup down on the counter. “You arrogant son of a bitch.”

Jack moved closer. “Yeah, darlin’, I am. You need a man who can handle all that fire you try so hard to hide. In fact, Em, you *love* when I handle you.”

Emily stomped her foot, her anger growing when Jack just grinned. “Damn you, Jack. I don’t need to be *handled*.”

Jack shook his head. “Tsk, ts, ts. How soon you forget. Well, I guess I’m just going to have to remind you.”

Emily shrieked as he moved in fast and swung her over his shoulder. “Put me down!” She started beating on his back and kicking wildly, freezing when he slapped her ass.

“Be still, you little firebrand. You need to be handled, all right, and I’m just the man for the job.”

“You can’t use sex to get your way. I’ll get even with you for this.”

Jack chuckled and tossed her onto her bed. “Yes, I can, and I know you will. Then I’ll just have to spank that sweet bottom of yours.”

Emily came up on her knees, tossing her hair out of the way. “Damn you, Jack. You can’t spank me like a child every time I do something you don’t like.”

“Sure I can,” he replied easily as he undressed. “It’s what the spanking leads to that keeps making you get into trouble. Every time you misbehave, I’ll know you’re feeling neglected and need my attention.”

Emily scrambled off the bed to the opposite side as Jack kicked off his boxers. “You can’t hit me whenever you’re mad at something I do.”

Jack’s face hardened. “Hit you? I’d cut off my own fucking arm before I hit you.” He stood stark naked, with his hands on his hips as he watched her. “When I paddle your ass, you get nice and wet. You get all soft and so fucking hot, and you let me do whatever I want to you because you know I’m gonna make you come real hard.”

“You are not going to use sex to get your way. I’m not that easy.”

“I know, baby. You’re tough as nails. Tough enough to handle this place on your own. Tough enough to put up with me.” He smiled tenderly. “But you don’t have to do it on your own anymore. I’m here. I know you have trouble letting go in anything. But in bed, you go wild when I make you forget everything else but the pleasure. You do the same for me.” He grinned and started around the bed, cutting her off when she would have escaped. “But it’s always a battle. And a helluva lot of fun.”

Emily feigned to the right, frustrated when he didn’t budge. “I’m not going to make this easy for you, cowboy.”

Jack's grin was pure evil. "Good. Fight all you want, cowgirl. I'll have you begging to come in ten minutes."

Emily raised a brow, doing her best to look bored, while inside her heart raced and her body sizzled with need. "Maybe you'll be the one begging. It looks like you need to be taught a lesson, rodeo man."

The heat in Jack's eyes made her burn. "I think you're the one who needs to be taught a lesson. You're really gonna submit to me this time. This time, I'm going to fuck your tight ass."

Emily fought the raging need his words had begun building inside her. Damn, he could talk. No other man could ever get her so hot by just talking. "Awfully cocky, aren't you?"

Jack grinned again and began to slowly stroke his cock in the way that drove her wild. "All the better to fill that ass, darlin'. Think about how loud you're gonna scream when I work my cock into your sweet ass. Then well see who's in charge."

A sliver of fear ran through her. "Jack, I don't know if I can let you do that to me."

Jack started to work his way around the bed again. "You have no choice. I know you, baby, remember? You don't want a choice. I'm taking that ass, tough girl. And before I do, you're gonna beg for it."

Emily believed him. It made her even more determined not to make it easy for him. When she saw him open a drawer and take out what looked like a black rope, her eyes flew to his. "What's that?"

Jack ran his hand down the rope. "The circuit stopped in a town that had the greatest store. I spent a coupla hundred dollars there, buying things to use on you. I bought the lube there." He gestured toward the tube on the nightstand she hadn't noticed. "I bought these soft velvet ropes. I can tie you up, and you can struggle all you want and not hurt yourself."

"Tie me up?"

"Sure, darlin'. Once I get you tied to the headboard, I can use both hands on you without having to keep you from getting away. It'll also keep you from reaching for your clit the way you do." He raised a

brow at her. "Can't have you pleasin' yourself, now, can I?"

Emily fought the wave of panic that washed over her. She'd never been tied up before and didn't know if she would like it or not. "Jack, I'm scared. What if I don't like it?"

The glitter in his eyes dimmed. "Then I'll know it. You still don't trust me at all, do you?" He went to the door, closed and locked it, and turned back to her. The glitter had returned. "You're gonna trust me. I'm gonna tie you to that fucking bed, and you're gonna beg me to fuck you in the ass, hard and deep, before we're through here."

When Jack started toward her, Emily knew she was in big trouble. A look of fierce determination settled over his features as he moved steadily toward her. He came around the foot of the bed, leaving her no choice but to attempt to scramble over the mattress to escape. Knowing full well she'd never make it, she knew she had to try.

They both knew where this would lead, but for now at least, she couldn't give in without a fight. Damn, he knew her well. Sure, sometimes she wanted it slow, but having him force the pleasure on her drove her wild.

Keeping her eyes on him as he steadily moved closer, she knew the chase excited him as much as it did her. When he came around the side, she leapt onto the bed and scrambled for the other side, shrieking and laughing as Jack caught her ankle and pulled her back.

"Now you're in big trouble, darlin'."

Jack picked her up, tossed her onto the center of the bed, and covered her before she could blink. Gripping her wrists in his, he raised them over her head and expertly tied them to the headboard. "All those years in the rodeo paid off."

Panicked at being tied, Emily immediately began to fight, pulling against her bonds. "Jack, let me go."

With his body covering hers, Jack lowered his mouth to hers before nuzzling her jaw and throat. "Shh, relax, sweetheart. It's me. You know I would never hurt you. Close your eyes and just feel. I just want to make you feel good."

“Jack, I—”

He turned her to face him. “I love you, Em. You know that, don’t you? Just trust me, and let me make you feel good.”

“Oh, Jack. I love you, too, but—”

He kissed her, his lips lingering over hers. “We’ll talk later. For now I’m going to show my wife just how good I am at handling her.” He leaned back, straddling her hips, and slowly began to unbutton her shirt.

She bucked under him, trying to throw him off.

Jack laughed. “You’re gonna have to do better than that. In case you didn’t know it, I’m the bull-riding champion, darlin’. Staying on a little she-cat like you is not hard at all.”

Emily bristled, indignant. “She-cat? She-cat? I’ll show you a she-cat.”

Jack laughed and pulled aside the sides of her shirt and quickly unfastened her bra, easily overcoming her struggles. Moving to lie beside her, one muscled leg over hers, he leaned over, taking a nipple into his mouth and reaching for the fastening of her jeans.

His hot mouth closed on her nipple, sending a jolt of raw pleasure through her. The hand at the front of her jeans slipped over her abdomen and lower, caressing her mound.

Jack lifted his head to stare down at her. “You kept this shaved for me, didn’t you?”

Emily shuddered as his fingers moved closer and closer to her center. “Yes.”

“I knew it. You missed me like hell, didn’t you?”

Emily opened her eyes and met his arrogant expression, fighting to keep her look cool. “Sometimes, but I got a vibrator, and then I knew I didn’t need you at all.”

“What?” Jack’s eyes burned her. “You think you can satisfy all that fire inside you with a vibrator? Oh, darlin’, now you’re really in trouble.” He reached down to pinch a nipple. “Before I let you come, you’re gonna admit that vibrator can’t make you feel the way I do.”

He got to his knees and stripped her jeans down her legs. Her panties quickly followed.

Moving up her body, he made a space for himself between her legs by pushing her thighs wide with his knees. Leaning over her, he bent down to touch his lips to hers again, taking her mouth in a dominant and purely possessive kiss.

Emily fought against the bonds keeping her from putting her arms around him. Being restrained added another layer to her excitement she hadn't expected.

Emily moaned as Jack reached out to toy with a nipple. With him leaning over her, stark naked and desperately aroused, she felt her own arousal heighten, and arched upward, involuntarily offering herself to him.

Jack's eyes flared. "You are so beautiful, so soft. I missed you so damned much."

His words dripped over her like warm honey. He made her feel desired and beautiful, and she basked under his praise. No one had ever spoken to her this way before. She wanted to touch him.

"Untie me."

"No. I'm going to make you wild first." He covered her lips with his, taking her mouth in a kiss so raw and possessive, it took her breath away. She arched into him, trying to rub her aching nipples across his chest, but he moved slightly away.

He used his own muscular legs to keep hers held wide as he lowered his mouth, watching her face as he licked a nipple. "Look at how hard your little nipples are."

He ran a hand down her body, and she could feel her stomach muscles quiver as his hand slid over it. When his hand moved between her legs, she sucked in a breath. He circled her pussy opening with his finger and gently began to press inside her.

"You're so soft, so wet. And you think you're not passionate?"

Emily moaned as his finger began to stroke inside her. Her eyes fluttered closed when he touched the spot inside her that he always

seemed to find and that always drove her wild. He nipped her nipple warningly.

“Keep your eyes open and on me.”

His tone and the sharp sting caused a rush of moisture between her legs. With his finger pressed deep inside her, she knew he had to be aware of it. The pleasure-pain of his teeth on her nipple added to her arousal. He lifted his head and stared down at her as he continued stroking her pussy.

“Your skin is nice and flushed. You look so beautiful, darlin’. I want to see your face flush even more when I lube your tight ass and press my fingers into it.”

When his thumb flicked over her swollen clit, she moaned and forgot what she’d been about to say. He pressed against the magic spot inside her, rubbing at it insistently, at the same time flicking his thumb back and forth over her clit, never taking his eyes from hers.

She couldn’t lie still. She thrashed as much as she could with her hands held immobile and her thighs spread. Just as she thought the next stroke would send her over, Jack stopped his erotic stroking and removed his hand.

“No. Damn you, Jack.”

Jack chuckled and lightly pinched her nipple, making her gasp and sending another jolt of pleasure between her legs. “My wild little wife. A lot better than a vibrator, isn’t it?”

Emily closed her eyes as Jack circled her slick opening with his finger. Her legs fell open as she lifted into his caress. A painful tug at her nipple made her gasp and had her eyes flying open.

“Don’t close your eyes. Look at me.”

Emily couldn’t help but pull against her bonds, even though she knew she couldn’t break free. Why did the sensation of struggling uselessly against them turn her on even more? Jack slid a finger inside her, grinning down at her. He had to know how much this feeling of helplessness turned her on. His next words proved it.

“You can’t get away. You’re completely helpless.”

“Oh God!”

Emily felt her face burn even as she pushed against the finger inside her. He stroked her far too slowly, enough to keep her on edge, but not enough to push her over. “Jack, I—”

“Shh, baby. You’re not running the show. And I’m not your fucking vibrator.”

“Jack, I don’t know if I can do this.”

He raised a brow. “You have no choice now, remember. You love it. You’re soaking wet.”

God, how that deep drawl of his turned her inside out. Already feeling the warning signs, she knew she’d never be able to hold off. When he withdrew his finger from her dripping slit, she whimpered in distress.

“Hot, huh? You want to come so bad, don’t you, babe? Well, you’re just going to have to wait. I like playing with you. It’s like having my own little toy. You can’t stop me. I can touch, pinch and lick anything I want on you, and there’s nothing you can do about it. I could spend hours just working on your ass.”

His words almost sent her over. She trembled with both nerves and arousal as she watched him pick up the tube and open it. He squirted a generous amount onto his fingertips, his eyes on hers as he recapped it.

When he leaned over her, his eyes steady on hers, her trembling increased. He used his legs to spread hers even farther apart, nudging them under her to lift her, leaving her completely open and vulnerable to him. He knelt close, bracing his weight on his elbow on the bed next to her. He held her face, his fingers brushing her cheek, his thumb under her chin to keep her facing him.

Jack’s eyes flared when she shuddered as the cool lube touched her most vulnerable opening. “I want to see your face when I enter you.”

Emily couldn’t stop the almost continuous whimpers as he circled her opening over and over and began to press against it. Her breathing

harsh, she struggled against her bonds. When the tip of his finger slid past the tight ring of muscle, she really started to shake.

“Yes, baby. Let me inside you.”

“Jack. Ohh!”

Emily felt him push deeper as his thumb flicked lightly over her clit. Her body jerked, taking his thick finger even deeper. “Jack?”

His eyes glittered like never before. “I’m right here, baby. You look so beautiful, all flushed, and your eyes...I’m ready to come just looking into those beautiful eyes. Your ass is so tight on my finger. I’m going to have to stretch you a little more before I can take you there. One day soon I’m going to shove one of the butt plugs I bought up your ass. How would you like to sit on my lap and go riding with a plug filling your ass?”

She felt a chill go through her even as she imagined it. His words made her even hotter. The struggle against her bonds added to the feeling of helplessness as Jack’s finger slid all the way into her bottom.

It felt too naughty. She felt too taken and fought against the incredible, forbidden feel of having her bottom penetrated. She fought against how much it excited her. She fought against how completely he controlled her. The tight look on Jack’s face as he worked his finger in and out of her as he held her legs wide excited her even more.

She felt his cock jump against her as he continued to stroke her anus with his lubed finger. “You’re so tight, darlin’. How does it feel to have my finger shoved up your ass? To know that you can’t escape it? To know that I’m going to put another one in and stretch your tight little hole even more?”

She struggled to catch her breath. Nerve endings she’d forgotten about came alive as she felt her bottom adjust to his invasion. “Jack, I can’t do this. It feels so naughty. It’s too much.”

He bent to tug her bottom lip between his teeth. “You like being naughty. Your pussy is dripping all over my fingers. And nothing I’ve

done to you has been too much. I'll know if it is. But we haven't reached the limit for either of us yet, have we? You're so fucking hot. And all that passion belongs to me." His voice sounded even harsher, even deeper than before. He ran a thumb lightly over her clit, making her jolt. "Your clit is swollen and slippery. Your ass is gripping me good. It likes having me inside, doesn't it, Em?"

Emily panted breathlessly, bucking and writhing, crying out at the sensation of his finger moving in her bottom. Shudder after shudder ran through her, and she whimpered almost continuously now. Her nipples felt so sensitive that even Jack's warm breath on them sent little arrows of pleasure to her pussy and anus.

"You love this, Emily. Let yourself go. Just feel how good it is to let me have my way with you. Let me take care of everything. Let me show you how good it can be if you trust me."

When she saw a brief flash of vulnerability in his eyes, Emily automatically tried to reach for him, moaning in frustration when she couldn't lift her arms. She nodded and caught her breath as his eyes flared once again.

He grinned evilly as he stroked his thumb over her chin. "Now let me see your beautiful face when I have two fingers in your ass."

A thumb flicked over her clit, and she bit her lip to stifle her moan as her body jolted at the almost painful pleasure. "Jack, please. I can't stand it. I need..."

Jack kissed her jaw. "You need what? Tell me."

"Jack, damn you."

His finger slid out of her bottom, only to be replaced by two fingers poised at her opening, pressing lightly against her tight hole. "Say it. What do you need? Do you need to come?"

"Yesss!"

"Say it. Beg me to fuck your ass and make you come." His voice had firmed even more.

Emily gulped in air, her chest heaving. Her body remained poised on the edge. Still, she defied him. "No."

Jack's fingers pressed insistently into her bottom. "You will."

Emily groaned at the pinch, then the burn, as his fingers entered her. "It burns. Oh God! Jack. Jack. It burns. It's too much."

When his thumb flicked over her clit again, she jolted, impaling herself even further on his fingers. "Jack. They're inside me. Oh God."

"Only about halfway. You're really tight here, darlin'. Can you imagine what it's going to feel like when I work my cock into this tight little hole? Your ass is gonna burn so good."

She couldn't stop shuddering as chills ran through her. His fingers felt huge, burning and stretching her anus as they continued to press forward.

It felt so intimate, too intimate, especially with Jack's eyes on hers, holding her gaze as he worked his fingers into her anus. She felt her body surrender to him even as her mind continued to rebel against losing herself this way.

"That's it, baby. Let me inside. Your body knows what it wants, no matter how much your hard little head fights it."

Emily had no choice. Her mind and body gave him whatever he wanted as erotic pleasure suffused her entire being like never before. Her eyes fluttered closed. Her hands clenched into fists as she continued to rock her hips. She needed more.

Jack gave her more. She cried out as he thrust his fingers deep.

"Open your eyes."

Her eyes popped open to see his face look even harsher than ever. He looked tortured, his eyes narrowed dangerously.

She took in great gulps of air. Her pussy dripped as her anus clenched on his thick fingers, making it burn even more. It only increased her arousal. A fine sheen of perspiration covered her body. Her clit felt so swollen, and it throbbed terribly. If only he would give it attention, she knew she would go over.

"Fuck. You are so tight. Your ass keeps clamping down on my fingers."

He leaned down to take a nipple into his mouth, and she cried out again as she bucked her hips, the pleasure almost more than she could bear.

“Jack! Do something. I can’t stand it.”

He lifted his head and smiled darkly. “And you think you’re not passionate? You think you’re plain? You’re beautiful, baby. You’re the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.”

She couldn’t believe the sounds that came from her, and she couldn’t stop them. She couldn’t stop clenching on the fingers in her bottom, and she couldn’t stop bucking against them.

When he withdrew his fingers and moved to kneel between her legs, just watching her, Emily screamed. “No! You bastard. Don’t you fucking stop now.”

Jack’s brows went up. “Do you really think you’re in the position to tell me what to do?”

“Fuck you.”

Jack chuckled, pissing her off even more. “The more aroused you get, the worse your language gets.” With a hand on each thigh, he moved closer and closer to her center.

Emily bucked and twisted, trying to get him to touch her clit, kicking her legs when he only chuckled.

He separated her folds, and even the air moving on her clit became too much. “Your beautiful clit is peeking out, looking for attention, Em. It’s nice and wet and red.”

Emily felt her clit swell even more. “Jack. Please.”

In a move so fast it startled her, he flipped her over and had her on her knees, her legs spread wide. “You need some more lube, darlin’.”

Emily shivered as he worked more cold lube into her, moaning and whimpering and trying to draw him deeper. She bucked wildly, becoming a creature of pure need.

He played with her bottom hole, twisting his finger inside her and stroking the ultrasensitive opening. Soon it tingled and clenched, and when he withdrew, she tried to draw him back in.

“Jack, you son of a bitch.”

When the head of his cock pushed lightly against her opening, she froze. He teased her, caressing the puckered opening with his cock, pressing lightly, but not hard enough to penetrate. She pushed back as far as she could, but restrained, she couldn't move back far enough.

Her bottom tingled with the need to be filled, a sensation she'd never before experienced. “Jack, damn you, fuck me.”

Jack groaned. “Jesus, Em. Your ass is so fucking beautiful.”

Emily caught her breath as he pushed harder, a hand in the middle of her back, holding her in position. Her bottom clenched, fighting the invasion, but Jack pushed relentlessly until the ring of muscle at her opening gave way.

“Ahh! Oh my God, Jack.”

He paused with just the head inside, and she was grateful that he gave her time to adjust. She panted, the feeling in her anus far different than it had been with just his fingers.

“Jack, I, ohh... it feels—Jack...Oh God...it feels-”

Jack groaned, his voice deeper than she had ever heard it before. “Hot? Do you know how good it feels to take you this way? You're so fucking tight, and I'm barely inside. Do you know how good it feels to be fucking my wife's ass? I'm taking you good. You're never gonna forget who you belong to.”

As Jack worked more of his length into her tight channel, Emily knew he spoke the truth. She felt taken in a way she never had before. He dominated her body, her mind so completely it shook her.

“Jack, it burns,” she cried out even as she pushed back for more.

Jack's strokes took him deeper and deeper, stretching her impossibly, and she lost more of herself with each stroke. His hands tightened on her hips, and he pushed so deep it took her breath.

“I'm balls deep in your ass. Fuck, you're rippling all around me. So fucking tight.”

By this time, he owned her. She struggled just to get enough air, her breath coming in short pants as erotic chills shook her. He began

to move again, and the sounds that came from deep in her throat sounded animalistic.

The space between her legs burned, from clit to where he thrust steadily. She could feel her juices running down her thighs, her pussy and anus clenching desperately, out of her control. Everything was out of her control. All she could do was feel.

“Mine, Em. Do you hear me? Mine.”

She could deny him nothing. “Yours. Oh God, Jack. All yours.” The friction of the sheets on her nipples threatened to drive her mad.

“Can’t last. So fucking good.”

Already the sizzles of pleasure had begun to radiate from her slit. When Jack reached around her and touched her clit, Emily screamed, the pleasure more than she could bear. She bucked, jolting as her body struggled to escape such strong sensations, but Jack wouldn’t let her.

His long, deep groan sounded tortured as he thrust deep into her and held himself still as his cock pulsed, shooting his seed inside her. He kept his finger on her clit, moving it lightly, steadily, and not allowing her to escape it.

“No more. Too much. Oh, Jack. Ohh! I can’t... Ahh...I can’t-”

“You can. Let go. I want it all.”

Emily had no choice. She couldn’t stop coming.

Fire licked at her, burning her everywhere. Her bottom burned where Jack penetrated her. Her pussy and clit burned as her orgasm went on and on.

Her clit felt more sensitive than it ever had, the softest touch on the swollen bundle of nerves sending shockwaves throughout her body. Her body continued to jerk, the pleasure so intense it hurt.

When she finally began to come down, the jerking became trembles, and she moaned into the pillow.

He eased from her bottom, and the soft strokes on her clit finally stopped. He collapsed on the bed beside her, reaching up to untie her wrists. As he pulled her against him, Emily cuddled close, her face in

his neck, as she struggled to catch her breath.

He pulled away slightly, cupping the back of her head as his lips touched hers. "I love you so much, Em."

She looked up into eyes filled with so much love, it brought tears to her own. "Oh, Jack. I love you, too."

At that moment, her stomach growled, and Jack's eyes went wide. "Fuck. You didn't eat your breakfast. Shit. I'm sorry, Em. I'll go fix you some more waffles." He scrambled from the bed and, after a quick trip to the bathroom, threw on his jeans, leaving the button open, just the way she liked it.

She cuddled the pillow closer. "I'll be out in a little while, Jack. I don't want to move."

"You stay right there, honey. I'll serve you breakfast in bed. I'll be right back."

Emily smiled as he winked and walked out of the room. If this was how Jack took charge, she wasn't about to complain.

Chapter Five

All the horses had been put out into the yard, and Jack and Emily had just finished cleaning the stable. Jack's four horses had been delivered earlier. Jack had told her about them while she'd eaten her breakfast in bed.

"I've had them for a couple of years. A friend's been keeping them for me. I arranged to have them brought here before I left." He shrugged, not looking at her. "I wanted to hire somebody to help with the horses. My friend has a couple for sale I really want. I was hoping that when we had some help, you and I could go look at them, see if you're interested."

Emily couldn't help but smile at his nervousness. "Of course, Jack." She reached out and covered his hand. "This is *our* ranch now."

Once the horses had been taken care of, they walked leisurely, bouncing ideas off of each other for things they both wanted to integrate.

"Who was the woman who answered the phone the day I called?"

Jack's lips twitched as he understood immediately. "Sally, Jed's wife. He's the one who kept the horses for me. He was also on the circuit. He'd broken his leg right before I met you. That's how I knew I could win. He's my closest friend and my main competition. They stayed to cheer me on until we got closer to their hometown. I gave her my phone while I was competing in case my wife called."

"Oh."

"Yeah, oh. You'll like her a lot. She gave me hell for leaving you behind. But I told her you couldn't leave the ranch right then. Maybe I

should have brought you with me, Em.” He sighed. “I don’t know. I just knew I had to leave.”

Emily didn’t say anything as Jack apparently gathered his thoughts.

“My mother was a whore.”

Emily froze, blinking at the abrupt declaration. “What?”

Jack scrubbed a hand over his face and sighed. “I want to explain to you why I left, why I felt I had to leave. Why I didn’t push too hard to explain. I need you to understand. I need you to believe I won’t leave again.”

Emily stopped and reached for his hand. “Jack, I’d like to know, but if you don’t want to talk about it...well, I trust you not to leave again.”

Jack’s hand tightened on hers, interlacing her fingers with his. “No. I want no secrets between us. No misunderstandings.” He sighed and started walking again.

Emily walked with him, not saying a word, waiting for him to speak. It was several minutes before he sighed again before beginning.

“I have no idea who my father is. My mother worked in a bar and went through men so fast, it was hard to keep up. Most of them were deadbeats, living with us and not doing a damned thing to help out. My mother didn’t make a lot of money, but the men she brought home had no problem with letting her support them. She bought them whiskey, clothes, whatever, but eventually they all left.”

He stopped and turned her to face him. “They sickened me. I swore I would never be like them. I left home as soon as I could. The rodeo came to town, and one of the riders took me under his wing. When the rodeo left, so did I. Bud taught me everything I know about riding, roping, everything. I bought the horses, but I pissed away most of what I made on good times.”

His eyes softened. “And then I met you.”

He reached out to touch her cheek. “I felt like, for the first time in

my life, I could breathe. You're so soft and sweet. You made me feel clean, like I've never felt before. I knew damned well I didn't deserve somebody like you, but I just couldn't stay away. I married you before you realized what a bum I am."

"Jack, I—"

Jack touched a finger to her lips. "Let me finish. When we got married and I moved in here, I suddenly realized I was just like those men my mother brought home." He shook his head when she would have interrupted. "No. I was. I was going to live here on your ranch and had brought nothing with me. I couldn't stand it. I knew that Jed, the only one who could have beaten me, had broken his leg and would be out for several months. This was my chance. I knew if I left, I could make enough money to make a difference here, to help out. I'll work my ass off here, Em. I'll build this into something good, something we can leave to our children. But I had to get that money, Em. I couldn't just live off of you. I'm done with the rodeo. I won't leave again, I promise." He leaned close and brushed her lips with his. "Everything I want is right here."

Emily's eyes filled with tears. Happiness warred with the sadness for the little boy Jack had been. "I love you. I missed you so much I thought I would die without you."

Jack kissed her deeply, lingeringly. Raising his head, he wiped the tears from her cheeks with his thumbs. "I should have explained all this to you before I left. Pride got in the way. I tried to tell you, and when you didn't want to listen, I was relieved. But when you got so mad at my leaving, I should have told you everything. Instead, I got pissed off. Here I had the greatest thing I ever had, and I thought I'd showed you and told you over and over what you meant to me, and you accused me of not caring and running away from commitment."

Emily nodded. "I'm sorry, I—"

Jack touched her lips again with his finger. "No. The past is over. All of this is my fault more than yours. But from now on, we talk."

Emily smiled. "Absolutely."

Jack started toward the house, his arm around her shoulder. “And no more dates with bankers.”

Emily laughed as the tension passed. “You’re just going to have to keep me in line.”

He reached down to deliver a playful slap to her bottom. “No problem.”

Emily laughed up at him and reached out to poke his chest. “We’ll see about that.” She was taken aback when he sobered. “What’s wrong?”

Jack rubbed a hand over her shoulder as they continued walking. “It’s given me several bad moments, wondering if you were turned off by my need to be so controlling. I think it comes from being out of control as a child. Hell, a psychiatrist could probably have a field day with me.”

“You’re going to piss me off if you talk like that. You’re a wonderful man, and I don’t want to hear another word about it.”

The tension disappeared from Jack’s face. “I’m going to remind you of that the next time you get pissed at me for something.”

They walked into the house, and Emily turned in Jack’s arms. “How about some nice, slow loving? No ties, no games, just us.”

Jack’s eyes flared, and he lifted her high against his chest. “There’s nothing I’d like better.”

* * * *

Once in the bedroom, both quickly undressed. When Jack lifted her high in his arms and bent to kiss her, Emily knew she’d found heaven. The sheets felt cool on her back, her husband hot at her front as he lay over her.

He ended the kiss to nuzzle her jaw. “I missed you so much, honey. I dreamed about you every single night.”

Emily held on to him tightly, loving the feel of having him wrapped around her like this. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she

lifted her hips as he slid inside her. Emily rained kisses over his shoulder and neck, before whispering softly in his ear. "I missed you so much, too. I thought I would die when you left. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. I picked up the phone to call you a million times."

Her breath caught as he began stroking, slow, smooth strokes as he covered her mouth with his again. Between soft, lingering kisses, they spoke words of love and need to each other as they made love so slowly, so beautifully, it brought tears to her eyes.

"I want babies with you, Em."

"Oh, Jack. I want that, too. Oh God, I love having you inside me this way, all around me."

"And I love having your soft little body under mine. Nothing feels as good as when I'm inside you."

"Oh, Jack. Make it last. I want to feel this way forever."

"We'll fill the rest of our lives with lovin', honey, I promise. You're so soft, so beautiful. My own little firebrand."

When Jack bent to capture a nipple between his lips, the fluttering started, and Emily knew she could never last. Her grip on him tightened as the fluttering became more intense. "No. It's too soon."

He took her lips again, whispering against them. "There'll be more, baby. Lots more. Just let go. I've got you."

The flutters became tingles, and she trembled as her orgasm washed over her, a long, slow rush that held her in its grip as it went on and on.

Jack's strokes came faster now, and he groaned, pulling her tightly against him as his cock pulsed inside her.

Wrapped tightly in each other's arms, they let the pleasure consume them. Burying her face in his throat, she breathed in the intoxicating scent of her husband, her lover, her everything, as they both trembled.

Feeling his lips in her hair, she felt a tear escape. Nothing had ever been more perfect.

He lifted his head, smiling down at her. "I love you, Em. So

damned much.”

Drowsy with repletion, she snuggled into him. “Oh, Jack. I don’t know how I ever made it without you.”

He kissed her so deeply, so thoroughly, her toes curled. Ending this kiss, he rubbed her nose with his. “That’s something you’re never gonna have to do again.”

* * * *

A long while later, Jack rolled to his back, pulling his wife over him. He pulled the sheet over her still-trembling body, running his hands soothingly over her back. The feel of her soft skin under his hands delighted him, as did the way she snuggled against him. God, he loved her.

He had no idea what he’d done in his life to get lucky enough to have her, but he was determined to make the most of their lives together. He could no longer imagine a life without her in it.

Though passionate and sweet, his wife had a fiery temper. She excited the hell out of him even as she smoothed his rough edges. They had so many plans for the ranch, and he knew they would fight about some of them. God, would they fight.

His cock, still inside her, stirred just thinking about it.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

He smiled at his wife’s grumpy tone. “I can’t help it if you’re hot.”

He had to clench his jaw to keep from laughing when she turned her head and propped her chin on his chest. “I’m dead. I’m never moving again.”

He moved his hands along her sides, running his thumbs over the curve of her breasts. His cock stirred to life, and he grinned when he felt her begin to move, slowly at first, then more desperately. When she sat up, straddling him, he reached for her breasts, tweaking her pebbled nipples. He groaned when her tight pussy clenched on his

cock.

She moaned. "Oh, Jack."

He gripped her hips. "Ride 'em, cowgirl."

* * * *

Emily hummed as she folded the laundry. It had been over two weeks since Jack came home, and she was happier than she'd ever been. They'd talked so much over the last two weeks, loved so much, and she couldn't keep from smiling as she thought about how much they'd argued.

The making up had been incredible.

They'd hired a man to work with the horses. He appeared to really know horses and was young and enthusiastic to learn more. Today was his day off, and Jack had gone out to saddle the horses so they could go for a ride.

Emily felt her body stir to life when she thought about the look on Jack's face before he'd gone out. His eyes had been full of promise, and she couldn't wait to see what he had planned for their ride.

After putting the laundry away, she put on her boots and hat and started outside. She'd expected to see Jack in the yard with the saddled horses, but he was nowhere in sight.

"Jack?"

"In here, darlin'."

She walked into the stable and came to an abrupt halt, her eyes going wide as lust slammed into her. The horses were all put away in their stalls, and Jack stood in the middle of the wide aisle coiling a rope. He wore those leather gloves that she fantasized about so much. A rope, with a loop at the end, hung from the center beam.

"Guess what I'm going to do to you."

Emily gasped and spun, running across the yard toward the house, her heart beating frantically. She'd never survive Jack's fantasies. He hadn't mentioned this particular one again, and she thought he'd

forgotten about it.

She didn't get more than a dozen steps before a rope settled over her, closing tightly, effectively trapping her arms at her sides. She should have known better.

"You forget who you're dealing with, darlin'. I can rope with the best of them. You're not getting away from me."

A hard arm came around her, pulling her back against him. Need clawed at her already. She struggled to firm her voice, but it came out whispery. "Jack, what do you think you're doing?"

He pulled her hair aside and buried his face in her throat. "I'm going to do what I told you I'd do to you the day I came home. Didn't I tell you not to lift that feed bag? You lifted it anyway, didn't you? Now you're gonna hafta pay."

Emily shuddered when his hands closed over her breasts, pinching her nipples as his teeth scraped her neck. "I always lift feed bags."

"Not anymore. I already told you that. But you didn't listen."

"You can't boss me around, damn it."

"Sure, I can."

"I do what I want."

"Me too. Which is why you're gonna pay for lifting that feed bag."

Emily let her head fall back against his shoulder as need took over. "Do your worst, cowboy. I'm not afraid of you." Her voice came out breathless. Her shudders became shakes when Jack tied a bandana over her eyes, blindfolding her.

"I thought the blindfold went on after I was tied up."

"Change of plan. There are a few other additions you'll like. I know I will."

He moved around her, and with a shoulder pressed to her stomach, lifted her over his shoulder so fast, it took her breath away.

Emily struggled to loosen the ropes as she bounced on Jack's shoulder, but they didn't give at all. She should have known. He was an expert at ropes. "You're not scaring me."

He patted her bottom. “Yet. You will be as soon as you find out about the butt plug and the nipple clamps. You can scream all you want. Besides me, only the horses will hear you.”

“What? Butt plug? Nipple clamps?” Emily struggled, even though she knew it was useless. Fire raced through her. Her pussy and bottom clenched in anticipation. Her nipples ached already. Damn, he excited the hell out of her, but she wouldn’t make this easy for him. “You can’t do this to me.”

Jack chuckled, slapping her ass. “Wanna bet?”

THE END

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Leah Brooke juggles her time between reading, writing and family, and mapping out new stories to tell.

BACK FOR MORE

Wilder, Texas 1

Wendi Darlin

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Chapter One

“No,” Alana whimpered. Her arms trembled in the restraints that held them over her head. Her ankles wobbled in the five-inch stilettos Dirk had strapped to her feet.

“You don’t want me to stop? Are you sure?” Dirk’s tanned skin shone with the heat flaring between them and the efforts of his own self-control.

She had seen that look before. His big cock strained against his old faded Wranglers, and his thighs bulged beneath the beat-up leather chaps he wore. She knew she was killing him the same slow, sweet way he was killing her.

“We ain’t got all night, darlin’.” His slow drawl didn’t hide the tension in his voice, and the moonlight streaming through the open door of the barn’s loft bathed his skin.

Standing on a hay bale, she towered over his tall frame. “Lick me.” Even tied and physically helpless, she retained complete control, something that kept them both hotter than the Arizona sun even when the cool West Texas wind pricked her skin like gooseflesh.

His eyes flared. “Where?” The word barely ground out of his tight throat. His naked chest heaved and his hands fisted at his sides. “Goddamn it, Alana. Tell me where,” he said through clenched teeth.

“My pussy. Lick my pussy. Hurry, baby.”

His callused hands dug deep into the pliable flesh of her ass. His rough jaw scratched the inside of her thigh. She spread her legs and leaned toward him. His hot breath hit her. His tongue speared her swollen lips in a long, slow stroke that ripped his name from her lips. God, she wanted his thick dick deep inside her. He could fuck her like nobody else, and these games they played were pure torture. He spread her open with his thumbs. His nose nudged her clit as he drove his tongue toward her dripping hole in another body tingling stroke.

The friction of his tongue sent shivers all the way to her toes. The spikes of her heels sank deeper into the hay, and her arms ached from the tension of the leather straps suspended from the rafters.

The clap of boots on the barn floor below sent another thrill up her spine. They could be caught at any minute. Wouldn't that be something? Sure as hell would give the cowboys around these parts something to talk about besides the price of steer.

Dirk grabbed her ass, the tips of his broad fingers edging closer to the crease between her cheeks. Her tight little asshole started begging for attention and her clit hummed under his tongue.

Judging from the sounds of his footsteps, the cowboy below was making his way dangerously close to the ladder that led to the loft. Dirk pulled away, ready to yank free the knots that held her and hide her behind his big body if he had to.

She shook her head in an emphatic “no” and hooked her calf around the back of his head. She rubbed her pussy along the ridge of his nose and bit back a gasp as he ate her with renewed vigor. Her bare breasts bounced with the rhythm as she rode his face. Her nipples drew tighter and her breasts grew heavier as her orgasm neared. She bit down hard on her bottom lip. Her hot channel contracted, searching for a cock that wasn't there. Dirk didn't insert a finger to relieve her from the torture of his tongue. He knew from experience he could make her hotter by keeping her from what she wanted most. God, she loved him for that.

The explosion started to slowly unfurl deep in her belly, touching the base of her spine and shooting like fireworks through every nerve. She tried in vain to hold back the screams of pleasure until finally she let loose, calling his name, rotating her hips against the rough stubble of his face and screaming anew when he sucked her exploding clit into his mouth. Her breasts stung from neglect and her asshole puckered tight, pouting from the lack of attention. But her heart swelled as she opened her eyes and saw Dirk's dark gaze sparking with desire. A bead of sweat ran from his jet-black hair down his temple. They had the barn almost to themselves for at least two more hours while the weekly rodeo in town kept all the cowboys on her daddy's ranch occupied. They were just getting started. The cowboy downstairs had undoubtedly heard what was going on in the loft. If he was any kind of gentleman at all, he'd hightail it out of there and leave them alone.

Alana couldn't hear anything over the rush of her own breath, but she knew the instant Rayne Hawthorne's Stetson cleared the edge of the loft and his wicked green eyes landed on hers, the cowboy who'd caught them was no gentleman.

Chapter Two

“Darlin’, if you hadn’t screamed Dirk’s name, I could’ve left you two all alone.” Rayne pushed his hat up with one finger to get a better look at her. “But hell. Any man in his right mind couldn’t walk away from this.”

He stood as tall as Dirk and was good-looking from the word go. Strong arms filled out the long-sleeved denim shirt he wore and the bulge from a long shaft of hard cock snaked up the front of his faded blue jeans.

Dirk had turned around, blocking her pussy from Rayne’s searing eyes, but he couldn’t do anything about the man’s view of her breasts. “Get out of here, Hawthorne,” Dirk warned him.

“Wait a minute, honey.” Alana hooked her leg around Dirk’s upper body and ran the sharp spike of her heel slowly across his rippled abs. “Maybe he wants to watch.”

Dirk’s chest rose under her calf and his heart pounded beneath his heated skin.

“Little lady, I want to do a hell of a lot more than watch.” Rayne pulled his hat off. Dark blond hair fell loose and hung nearly to his shoulders. “I ain’t ever seen anything hotter than what y’all got going on up here.”

“You like what you see, cowboy?” She gave him a little wink. “Why don’t you come over here and get a better look. Dirk will explain the rules to you. If you can’t follow them, he’ll kick your ass like it’s never been kicked before. Can you live with that?”

“I reckon I can live with anything that’ll get me a piece of this action.” He moved slowly, never taking his eyes from hers.

“You mind if he looks, sweetheart?” she asked rubbing her shoe over Dirk’s stomach. “We always said it would be fun to let somebody watch. And I always did like Rayne.”

“Fuck.” Dirk’s breath was heavier than she’d ever heard it.

He might have a hard time admitting he wanted Rayne to watch, but she’d bet the ranch his dick was getting harder by the minute.

“What makes you so sure he won’t go running his mouth?” Dirk’s shoulders were rigid, his arms tense at his sides.

“He likes working for my daddy too much. Ain’t that right, Rayne?”

Rayne nodded once. “Yes, ma’am.”

“There are plenty of ranches in these parts that would hire him on,” Dirk said.

“Not after you and Daddy got through with him.”

Some of the tension slipped from Dirk’s body. His shoulder relaxed beneath her leg.

“I don’t run my mouth,” Rayne said. “This here looks like a secret worth keeping.”

“If you play nice, it will be.” She gave him a look that had melted more than one cowpoke. He teased her with a lazy wink before letting his gaze drift down to her nipple, still tight and rosy from the orgasm Dirk had given her. A strand of her long dark hair had slipped loose and curled around the curve of her breast, giving her skin a sensual caress.

“Untie me,” she said softly, lifting her leg from Dirk’s chest. The ache in her arms had become bothersome, but not nearly as urgent as the hunger between her thighs.

Dirk climbed onto the bale and made quick work of the leather straps that bound her wrists. He massaged her arms and kissed her shoulder while the blood flow returned to normal. She leaned into him, his smooth chest hot against her back. The denim of his jeans bit into her thighs and ass. She reached down, caressing her clit while Dirk supported her back and kept her balanced in the high, narrow

heels.

“He likes looking at me,” she whispered, never taking her eyes off Rayne.

Rayne’s searing stare was locked on her pussy as she continued to stroke the swollen nub and aftershocks skittered through her nerves.

“Ain’t a man breathing that wouldn’t give his left nut to see you now,” Dirk growled in her ear.

“Come a little closer, Rayne, so you can see me better.”

Rayne took a quick step up to the hay bale. His hands automatically reached for her.

“She said look. Not touch,” Dirk warned. “Listen to the lady and we won’t have any problems here.”

Rayne’s lip curled up in a cocky smirk. “I heard her loud and clear. Get the burr out of your blanket and we can all have a good time.”

Dirk snorted and wrapped his arm tighter around her waist. “You sure about this, honey?”

“I’m sure it’s making me hot.” She rubbed her ass against his crotch. “You like it when I get all hot and bothered, don’t you?”

He bit her at her neck and groaned. “Goddamn. You’ve got me by the balls and you know it.”

Alana pushed her fingers between the swollen folds of her pussy and soaked them in her juices.

“I don’t trust him,” Dirk whispered in her ear.

“Is that jealousy talkin’ or common sense?” She tilted her head to give him better access to her neck.

“Hell if I know. I can’t see straight.”

She turned slowly, raking the sides of his hair beneath her fingernails and pulling his face toward hers. “Honey, if you don’t want to do this, we won’t. But he looks like a hell of a toy.” She edged closer, pressing her breasts against his chest. “A hot-blooded toy, with a big cock that might make both of us come so hard we forget what day it is.”

“You sure you ain’t interested in anything else from him?”

“I don’t know the first thing about him, except he works for my daddy. Always been polite.” She cut her eyes toward Rayne and licked her lips. “But look at what’s trying to come out of those worn out jeans he’s got on.”

Rayne’s cock stretched the faded denim of his fly.

“You like ’em big, don’t you.” Dirk pressed his hips to hers. “You think you can handle two that size?”

Chapter Three

Rayne could taste her sweet pussy on the back of his tongue and he hadn't gotten a single taste of her yet. The scent of her lingered in his nose and stretched his cock to its limit. They'd moved from the hay bale to a blanket spread on the floor in the back corner of the loft. From his position between her thighs, Dirk's big fingers worked her little red clit. Rayne stood on his knees next to her hip, close enough to reach out and touch her, but he knew better. Her breath came so fast it took everything he had not to lean down and suck her hard, rosy nipple into his mouth.

"Goddamn it, fuck me!" she cried.

Dirk didn't change a thing. He kept at her clit, dipping his fingers low enough to tease her hot hole but not going in.

Rayne swallowed hard. He'd never seen anybody show such restraint. Hell, he would've fucked her four times by now and she damn sure wouldn't have had to beg for it.

But God, she loved to beg. She threw her leg up on Rayne's shoulder, and he summoned every ounce of willpower he had not to grab onto it, to hold her sweet body in his hand. Her slick calf slid against the sweat on his skin. Dirk glanced over at him with a satisfied smirk.

"Dirk, please." A moan that struck Rayne's dick like lightning rolled out of her throat.

Rayne couldn't hold back anymore. "Fuck her or let me!"

"Come for him, darlin'. Show him how much you like what I do to you." Dirk leaned closer to her, taking one of her nipples between his teeth.

Rayne couldn't take it anymore. He twisted the button at his fly and shoved his jeans down. His thick cock fell forward, heavy as lead and ready to blow. He stroked himself hard and fast.

She screamed once, a short little shout that rang through the rafters. A song more seductive than any siren's followed. She shot off, soaking Dirk's fingers and drawing Rayne's balls tight.

Dirk looked back at him. "Don't waste that," Dirk said. "You'll piss her off good."

Rayne squeezed his cock hard against the pending swell, not sure what the other two had in mind, but game for any damn thing they could dish out. Alana's gaze locked on his.

"Get over here and let me see that thing." Breath clung to her words and her skin shone in the moonlight. Rayne had never laid eyes on a more beautiful woman. Her dark hair fanned out on the blanket beneath her. One long leg was wrapped around Dirk's waist, the other was still propped on Rayne's shoulder. He took his hand off his cock to keep from blowing his load before she wanted him to.

"Let me suck your tit," he said.

Dirk laughed. "Tonight you get to watch, asshole. I'll decide later if you ever get to touch my woman." He spread his hand protectively over her thigh. "Now get up there and show the lady your big cock like she told you to."

Rayne bristled. He sure as hell wasn't used to taking orders from anybody when he had his pants down. But damned if he wouldn't let her do just about anything she wanted to with his cock.

Rayne lifted her leg slowly off his shoulder, caressing the soft skin as he guided it down to the blanket.

Staying on his knees, he moved closer, so close his dick jutted out just a hair from touching her gorgeous tit. His hands flexed at his sides as she stared at him. Her tongue flicked against her dark lips and her breath hitched, sending her chest up. For the briefest of moments, the hot skin of his cock brushed her soft breast. Rayne sucked in a sharp breath.

She licked her lips and cradled her breasts in her hands. "Let me watch you come," she said.

His Johnson jumped. He wanted to come in her and all over her. Goddamn, he didn't know where he'd stick it first if she gave him a chance. Those plump, shiny lips. Her hot, wet pussy. Or in between those glorious tits she held in her hands.

He wrapped his palm around his dick and gave it a slow stroke. "Aw hell, honey. You gonna make me do this myself?" Sweat ran down his temple.

She nodded and ran her teeth over her bottom lip. He stroked himself again. A knot twisted low in his gut. He needed to come something fierce. He heard Dirk's zipper and the brush of fabric as he shucked his jeans, but he couldn't take his eyes off Alana. A rosy flush crept across her chest and spread up her neck.

"God, I want to taste you." Her eyes were locked on his cock. She squeezed the soft flesh of her breasts.

"Ain't happening tonight, darlin'," Dirk said as he bent over her.

Dirk thrust his cock into her and her eyes slammed shut. A gasp shot from her throat, followed by a succession of pants and moans as Dirk's long cock disappeared into her again and again.

Rayne matched the rhythm with his wrist. He could almost feel her tight, wet pussy wrapped around him, fucking the cum from his cock. "Goddamn it!" he growled.

She reached out, covering his hand with hers, following the stroke of his palm. Her mouth opened and closed, her tongue darted out, looking for a taste. "Let me suck him," she cried.

"Hell, no." Dirk slammed into her hard.

"I want you both!" She was desperate now, twisting her body and lifting herself up. "Oh, God! Let me suck him while I come! Now! Please now!"

Her body arched, panting breaths pushed her breasts against his knuckles. Unable to keep his hands to himself another second, Rayne fisted her long hair in his free hand. Her stormy gaze shot to his. His

balls gave a final clench and a flurry of mind-wiping pleasure hit the base of his spine. His cock jerked once before he lost his senses completely. He leaned over, sucking her lips into his mouth, diving into her with his tongue while cum spewed like a fountain from his dick, running over their hands, and every nerve in him shot off like a rocket.

Dirk swore, pumped hard and fast, then stilled before collapsing into a fit of groans and ragged breaths against her shoulder.

Chapter Four

From her seat on the porch rail, Alana watched every slow stride Rayne took as he left the bunkhouse and headed for his truck. He passed close to the back porch of the big house, but didn't turn toward the steps.

"You ridin' rodeo tonight?" Alana asked.

Rayne stopped and shook his head. "Gave that up after my bones got tired of breaking."

"You rode bulls?"

He nodded once. "A long time ago."

"Got the scars to prove it?" She knew good and well he did. She'd seen them and there wasn't an inch of his body she'd be forgetting anytime soon.

"And some pretty belt buckles in my dresser drawer."

"So you've always liked the wild ones, huh?" She could tell by the way he looked at her, last night was still fresh on his mind, too. His easy manner and sinfully good looks had captured her attention the day he stepped foot on Grainger Ridge for the first time. She'd kept an eye on him over the years, watched him work, heard him joke with the other men and saw the respect her father had for him. Rayne Hawthorne was a fine man, in every use of the word. Last night in the barn, one of her fantasies had come true, but there were many more ways she'd thought of having this cowboy. And if Dirk would let her have her way, she was a long way from done with him.

"I reckon I like 'em wild. Couldn't always handle 'em though."

"I doubt that. Where you headed tonight?"

An easy smile spread his thick, masculine lips. "Figured I'd grab a

beer at Tucker's. Want one?"

She lifted the bottle in her hand. "Beat you to it."

"That man of yours leave you sitting around much?"

"He works hard."

Rayne nodded. "Heard that about him."

"Daddy says the same about you."

"Work never hurt anybody." He climbed the porch steps and sat down on the rail facing her.

"Gotta play, too." The air between them crackled with the current of attraction. He had to feel it as much as she did. She pushed for conversation that wouldn't lead them down any roads she wasn't ready to travel. "Dirk says he'll be hiring a foreman soon. The operation over at his place is getting big enough to justify some help." His closeness unsettled her, and hunger dug deep into her gut. Other than Dirk, she hadn't ever wanted a man this much. But she didn't dare throw away what she had just to scratch an itch. No matter how bad that itch got.

Sounds of the ranch stretched between them, and cricket songs vibrated through the cool evening air. Rayne thumped out a rhythm on the porch step and finally broke the silence with a question.

"Why ain't you and Dirk married yet? You been together since before I got here four years ago."

"Mama gave me some advice just before she left." Alana half laughed and took a long swallow of beer. "Don't ever get married. She said no matter how much you love a man, the day'll come when you want another one."

Rayne took the beer from her hand and lifted it to his mouth. "Probably good advice."

"Too bad her mama didn't tell her the same. But I guess I'm lucky she told me. I'm more like her than I want to be." She studied his rugged face and big broad hands. He was too damn good-looking for women not to try and rope him in. "What about you? You the marrying kind?"

He grunted. "Never planned on it."

"Why not?"

He turned the bottle in his hand. "We might need more than one of these." He nudged the beer toward her again, offering her a taste. The tendons in his forearm twisted and her belly did a slow, burning roll.

He put a warm hand on her knee, scorching the skin beneath her jeans. His hair edged from beneath that old Stetson he wore and the soft heat of his eyes settled deep in her heart. Her mouth went dry and her breath came faster than a boy getting his first piece of ass.

"It's probably a good idea if I go get that beer now." He gave her knee a squeeze before walking away.

Old jeans had never fit a man better. Hot didn't begin to describe him or the temperature he raised her to. This was what her mother had warned her about. She loved Dirk so much it hurt sometimes, and still there was room for this cowboy in her thoughts, her bed and maybe even her heart.

Chapter Five

Rayne gripped his mug and leaned over the scarred bar at Tucker's. He kept his back to the action. Pool balls cracked against one another on the tables. Country music blared from the jukebox and high-pitched laughter rang out of the handful of women in the place, all of them a little too rough for his taste. The beer was a little too watered down. The air a little too dank. Not a damn thing about this place felt right. But a man on the run didn't have many choices. At least here in Wilder, Texas, folks didn't ask too many questions.

Grainger's Ridge was a fine operation. He'd worked at worse, that's for sure. He slugged the beer back and nodded to the bartender for another. What in the hell had he been thinking? He'd gone four years without crossing the line with Alana. But he just couldn't leave well enough alone. He had to have her. He'd known that the first time he laid eyes on her. He'd also known that Dirk Lowry had made his claim on her clear. He grabbed up the mug the bartender slid toward him and nearly spilled his beer when a lean flannelled elbow came to rest on the bar a little too close for comfort.

"Rayne Hawthorne. Folks been wondering where you ran off to."

Every muscle in Rayne's body tensed. He didn't know the weasel's name, but he recognized the tone of his voice and the tattoo that snaked up his neck. The rough-looking cowboy wore his hair in a long ponytail and his hat down low.

"That seat's taken," Rayne warned in a low growl.

"Hell, Hawthorne. I been asking around about you. Didn't even have the sense to change your name? There's a bounty on your head, boy. Times are tough. Somebody might turn you in just for a little

pocket change.”

Rayne slung back the last of his beer and slammed the mug down on the bar. He tossed some folded bills next to it and stood.

“Follow me outside, shithead, and I’ll be wanted for another murder.” He walked out of the bar without another word. The man at the bar didn’t follow him, but Rayne knew they’d meet again.

Chapter Six

“You can do better.” Drake Grainger stared at Dirk’s tailgate as the broad end of his dual-tired truck wound down the road away from the ranch.

“You’ve said that about every man I’ve brought home.” Alana was used to her father not liking her boyfriends, but he disliked Dirk more than the rest of them.

“I ain’t been wrong yet, have I?” His faded blue eyes landed on hers.

“Daddy, I’m twenty-eight. I’ve learned a thing or two about men.”

“And I’ve heard the boys around here talkin’. Dirk Lowry ain’t got the best reputation amongst the men. Don’t set well for a rancher if the hands don’t trust him.”

“Excuse me for butting in on a private matter.”

Alana and her father turned toward the cowboy who had walked across the corral and come up behind them. Rayne Hawthorne stood there in the dusty arena like some image in a movie. His green eyes were lit with their usual humor but a look as serious as a heart attack had settled on his face. She turned back around slowly — tearing her eyes off him got harder every time she saw him.

“If you don’t mind me saying so,” Rayne said. “The main thing the boys have against Lowry is standing right there next to you.”

Drake shot his daughter a look.

“If he hadn’t laid the law down solid,” Rayne said, “he’d have to kick more ass than he’s got time to bother with.”

Her father put a callused hand on her shoulder. “You look too much like your mama for your own good.” His grin spread beneath a

nose that had been broken too many times to ever be straight again and stories of his youthful brawls were rowdier than anything Dirk had ever done.

Alana spoke to Rayne without turning to look over her shoulder. "If I ugly myself up, you think the boys'll talk nicer about my man?" She didn't dare look at him and those dangerous green eyes of his. She hadn't been able to get him off her mind since the beer they'd shared, and she needed his big rough hands on her more than she ever wanted him to know.

Rayne leaned against the fence rail, close enough his hand brushed against the back of her arm. "Not unless you start dressing in feed sacks and smelling worse than anything they've taken a roll in before. And I don't see that happening, sweetheart."

Her father shot him a look, but Rayne just gave a low chuckle before he sauntered away in that slow, wicked way of his.

"You fight 'em off night and day, don't you darlin'?"

She looped her arm around her daddy's waist. "Nah. Dirk takes care of that for me. He's a good man. Give him a chance. Lowry Lake Ranch is growing. He's been working hard to turn it around. It's going to be as big as your spread before long."

"Think you'll marry him?"

"Roped and tied?" She glanced toward the barn Rayne had ducked into. "Not me."

Her father's eyes softened. "Marriage ain't all your mama made it out to be." He patted her shoulder before heading toward the house.

Alana started off in the opposite direction.

She entered the barn and ignored the low whistles that shot from beneath bent, beat-up Stetsons. Attention from the ranch hands had gotten old soon after she started filling out her bras. Near the back of the barn she spotted the cowboy she was looking for. Even soaked in sweat and smelling like barn dust and horses, he looked good enough to eat. She walked over to Rayne slowly and made a point of letting her eyes wander down to his crotch.

His lazy grin came to life at its usual speed, and his eyes held a spark that left her panties damp.

“What can I do for you, Miss Grainger?”

“Dirk said you should come by the main barn over at his place tonight.”

“You his messenger?”

She gave him a saucy smile. “He’s a little too tied up right now to tell you himself. Said he’s got something you might want to take a look at. Said maybe it’s about time you got your hands on something like that.”

His Adam’s apple bobbed and his green eyes smoldered.

“He say what time he’d be around?”

She shrugged. “Probably anytime after dark and until the cowboys over at his place come back from the rodeo rip-roaring drunk.”

She turned on her boot heel and headed out of the barn.

“You going to the rodeo?” He called after her, probably for the benefit of any ears that might be curious about what might be going on in Dirk’s barn.

“I never miss a chance to see my favorite cowboys in action,” she called back. “Any of you boys riding tonight?”

A chorus of “yes, ma’ams” erupted around her.

“Guess you know where I’ll be,” she hollered to Rayne.

Catcalls and curses followed her out of the barn, but the hands knew better than to do anything more than run their mouths. She put a little extra sway in her step. She was going to watch her favorite cowboys in action, all right.

Chapter Seven

“He stood up for you today.” Alana licked Dirk’s ear and ran her fingertips over the ridges of his abdomen.

“I’ll buy him a beer.” His voice was gruff and full of stubborn protectiveness.

“I know a better way to thank him.”

He tipped her face up to look in her eyes. “You want that boy pretty bad, don’t you?”

“Only if you’re there with me.” She nipped at his jaw. “Just imagine what the three of us could do. He’s willing.”

“Hell. Half the county’s willing if they can get a shot at you.” He placed a rough kiss on her mouth that barreled straight down to her toes and left her wanting him with a fever she couldn’t cool. “You sure you can handle us both?”

She nodded as her lips spread into a slow smile. “Just you wait and see.”

Boots clapped on the floor below. Alana kissed Dirk’s thick lips. “He’s here.”

“You invited him?”

She nodded. “I promise I’ll make it worth it.”

He grabbed her ass in both hands. “You know I love you.”

She looked him fiercely in the eyes. “I love you, too.” She leaned closer and whispered, “It’s just like we talked about doing.”

He heaved a breath and nodded. When he spoke, his voice carried through the barn. “All right. But he damn sure better play by our rules. You hear me, Hawthorne?”

A thud sounded near the ladder and the floor of the loft vibrated.

Alana turned and gave Rayne a smile. A battered leather bag lay on the floor near his boot.

He gave Dirk a quick nod. "I know the score." His gaze wandered to Alana. "She's yours and I'm just the lucky bastard invited out to play."

"Damn straight." Dirk's shoulders relaxed slightly and his hand started a slow stroke over her ass. They'd played enough games for her to know he was as up for this as she was, even if his manly pride kept him from admitting it as easily.

"What'd you bring?" The leather bag piqued her curiosity.

He picked the bag up. "Maybe we should take this up to the house."

"Alana likes the barn," Dirk said.

"No chance somebody might catch us in the house," she added.

He tossed the bag toward Dirk. "If the lady likes keeping it on the edge, you might find something in there she'll get off on."

Alana's heart pounded as Dirk tugged the zipper and opened the bag. She caught a glimpse of a braided whip before he pulled out a blindfold and dropped the bag back to the floor.

Her eyes darted to Rayne. "You freak." She couldn't keep the smile from her face.

Dirk tied the blindfold at the back of her head and she adjusted it so only blackness surrounded her. She reached back and brought Dirk in for a kiss. "I want you both," she said. "But I don't want to know who's doing what."

He squeezed her hip hard. "I don't know if I can let him touch you."

"I won't know it's him," she said. "And you call the shots tonight."

Chapter Eight

Dirk had already brought her to orgasm twice before he let Rayne do more than suck her tits.

He could understand a man not wanting to share Alana. Hell, if she was his, Dirk wouldn't have gotten anywhere near the action. She was prettier than a picture pulled right out of those magazines kept behind the counter at the convenience store.

She lay on a section of the loft that had been strewn with a thick mattress of hay and two old flannel blankets that kept most of the spines from poking her. Rayne knelt between her knees while Dirk hovered near her hip.

"More," Alana begged. "Please don't stop." She twisted her head against the blankets, the blindfold still in place.

Dirk shot him a look and gave him the go-ahead. Rayne's cock was ready to explode, but when he reached for his zipper, Dirk grabbed his arm and motioned toward Alana again. Tonight was all about her, and he read Dirk loud and clear. He might get to taste her, but his cock wasn't seeing any action yet.

If he didn't want her so bad, he'd tell Dirk to go fuck himself. Hell, he could get laid out in town any night of the week. He ran his hands up her smooth calves and watched her respond to his touch. He might be able to get laid, but he couldn't get Alana any other way. And this was the woman he wanted. He'd wanted her longer than he would admit, and now that he'd gotten a sample of what being with her would be like he couldn't walk away. He pushed her knees apart. His tongue watered. His cock swelled and his gut twisted with hunger.

She reached out blindly. Her hand landed on Dirk's thigh and

quickly made its way to his dick. She coaxed him closer until he straddled her face. Rayne knew she'd taken him in her mouth when Dirk swore, but he was too busy focusing on that sweet pussy he was about to get his mouth on to look up at anything else.

He spread her soft, hot lips with his tongue. The first taste of her juices hit the back of his mouth, and he nearly came unglued. Goddamn, she was something. And he couldn't get enough.

He ate at her. Sucked her clit. Fucked her with his tongue. Her hips jerked. Her legs trembled. But it wasn't enough. He needed more. She needed more. Above him, Dirk panted, and the wet sounds of his dick sliding in and out of her mouth echoed around the loft.

Rayne slid two fingers into her crease, soaking them, then drew them in a line down to her ass. He traced her tight little asshole, loosening it with every stroke, until he sank one finger deep. She came up off the floor, but he kept fucking her pussy with his tongue as he eased another finger in her ass. She bucked and trembled. Goosebumps rose on her skin. Goddamn, he'd never met a woman like her. He reached up to pinch her nipple while he sucked her clit into his mouth.

Dirk came first. Shouting and cussing, his big body shook. His hairy leg rubbed against the back of Rayne's hand as he held onto Alana's tit. He didn't stop. If Dirk wanted him off her now, he was going to find himself in a fight. She was going to come. Hard. And this time she was going to do it for him.

Chapter Nine

Alana left the groceries in the car and pulled up to the curb outside Boot Scooters. In the sacks on her passenger seat was a bottle of wine, garlic, cheese bread, and a bag of frozen Chicken Portobello for another late dinner at Dirk's; chocolate syrup and bubble bath for dessert; a toothbrush to replace the one she'd worn out at his place; and frozen waffles to pop in the toaster when she woke up hungry and alone.

One day his ranch would be as big as her daddy's. He'd have a cook whipping up stick-to-your-ribs meals and a bunkhouse full of rowdy cowboys to help him pull the load. She had no doubt he would make his dream of owning a big ranch come true. Dirk could do anything he wanted. She crossed the sidewalk as her heart swelled with pride. He'd make any woman proud.

Hand-stitched boots stood on display in the window of Boot Scooters, and country music drifted through the open door.

Raised voices greeted her as she stepped inside the store. "Wait outside darlin'," Scooter Austin told her.

She'd grown up with Scooter and recognized the warning in his voice instantly. The interior of the store was dim compared to the midmorning sun outside, and it took a second for her eyes to adjust. Two rangy men leaned over the counter and, from the looks of things, Scooter was ready to throw them out on their asses. He not only designed the hottest, best-wearing boots in Texas, but Scooter could kick some serious butt when he needed to. He'd grown up with three rowdy brothers. Between them they'd broken more bones than half the bull riders in Texas. But their contagious grins and handsome

faces got them out of trouble more often than not.

Alana waited outside the door and peered into the display window while Scooter took care of his business. A pair of hot-pink boots with white stitching hit the girly streak in her like a jackhammer. Damn it. Now she was gonna have to buy another pair.

The first of the two cowboys stumbled out the door. He wore his long hair in a ponytail and a tattoo snaked up his rough-looking neck. He was closely followed by a man equally grungy wearing a pair of beat-up turquoise boots that had Scooter's mark all over them. Scooter stepped out behind them, a Louisville slugger in his hand.

The man in the turquoise boots spat a stream of brown tobacco juice on the sidewalk. It landed inches from Alana's foot. The glint in his eye raised the hair on the back of her neck. These men were no good and didn't even try to hide it.

Scooter didn't take his eyes off them until they'd climbed into a pickup truck and turned out of sight at the end of the block.

"Boot burglars?" Alana asked.

Scooter gave her a warm laugh. "Not while I'm here. Lowlifes like that don't belong around here. Hopefully, they'll slither out of town as quick as they slithered in." He took her by the arm and guided her inside.

"You didn't have those pink ones made in my size did you?"

"I'd be a sorry excuse for a businessman if I didn't." He showed her to a comfortable chair next to the mirror and disappeared into the back to get the boots she'd already ordered. He returned with two boxes.

Scooter lifted the lid off a big pair of black men's boots with custom stitching up the side. Alana ran her finger over the Lowry Lake Ranch logo. "He's gonna love them," she said.

Scooter put those aside and opened the other box. He lifted out the match to the pink boot in the window. Alana sucked in a breath as he helped her into it. Something about the scent of new leather and the buttery feel of Scooter's boots sliding up her calf got her every time.

It was no wonder she was addicted and his best customer by a mile. "It's perfect," she said. The heel rose at an easy angle and the boot fit her like a glove. "Oooh, please get the other one for me. I can't take them off. I'm wearing them out of here."

Scooter made his way to the window slowly. They had the place to themselves and knew one another well enough to get personal.

"I reckon you ought to know people are talkin'," he called back to her.

"Ain't nothing new."

He laughed. "Sweetheart, you make it too easy for them." He made his way back carrying the matching pink boot. "Look. I wouldn't say nothing, but there's speculation Hawthorne's been making a move on you. Some of the fellas at the bar were putting money on how long it'd be before Dirk threw him in the dirt." He slid the boot up her leg. "I figure neither you nor Dirk need that headache."

"What are you saying?"

He scratched the back of his head for a minute. "Just thinking you might want to let Dirk know before the fellas do. Give him a chance to handle it before somebody calls him out just to make a public spectacle of it."

"Dirk ain't gonna be kicking anybody's ass. Rayne hasn't crossed any lines."

Scooter lowered his voice. "I know you and Dirk. What you do is your business. But you know how those boys are. If they see one of their own taking a shot at you and Dirk doesn't do anything about it, they'll all give it a try."

"You talk like I'm the only woman around this place."

"Might as well be. You ain't built like the rest of them around here." He gave her knee a friendly pat.

She stood up and turned slowly in the mirror. "It's the damn fine boots I wear."

"It's the damn fine ass you've got." He laughed, then his tone

grew serious again. “Those two that were in here earlier have been hanging out at Tucker’s looking for a fight. A dirty one, I’d imagine. Make sure Dirk knows what’s going on so he doesn’t have to do anything he’ll regret.”

Chapter Ten

Alana raced Dapple Jack around the last barrel of the day and reined him to a walk before heading toward the corral gate. A rough-looking hand she didn't recognize leaned over the fence on his forearms and watched her pass. Tattoos started at his wrists and disappeared beneath the rolled-up sleeves of his shirt, and a tiny gold earring glinted on his left ear.

"Pretty good rhythm you got there," he called over to her.

She nodded a quick thanks and swung out of the saddle to open the gate. The hand ran over to shut the gate behind her.

"Thanks again," she said.

"Anything for a pretty little thing like you," he called back. She was used to the hands flirting with her, but something about this one rubbed her wrong. Like those two she'd seen at Boot Scooters. She shook it off and walked Dapple Jack on to the stables so she could brush him down.

She hung the tack on the wall, but kept an uneasy eye over her shoulder as she took care of her horse. Luckily, the new hand didn't make another appearance.

Alana led Dapple Jack into his stall and shut the door. She turned and gasped.

"Didn't mean to scare you." Rayne's sexy mouth quirked in a smile that just begged to be eaten. His green eyes danced with their usual humor and something darker that clenched her belly. Her heart pounded and her body tensed. The things he had done to her weren't something a woman would ever forget. Everything she ever hoped he might do to her next time rushed to her mind. Her skin heated and her

breath came fast.

He reached out, tracing a rough finger along her jaw, then smoothing her lip with his thumb. "Am I going to see you tonight?"

She swallowed hard. Tonight seemed much too long to wait. She shook her head. "Dirk's looking at cattle up in Howard County this morning. He won't get back 'til late."

"Don't suppose he'd want me taking you to dinner."

Her throat closed around the words, but she shook her head.

"What about you? Would you want me to take you to dinner?" His green eyes almost made her forget the arrangement they had. Almost made her forget she wouldn't run around on Dirk. But she loved him too much to ever hurt him that way.

"Sounds an awful lot like a date."

He shrugged.

"That's not the way this works." Her words were barely more than a whisper.

He cupped the back of her neck and pulled her close. His lips caressed hers in a kiss so gentle she had to grab his shoulders to keep from melting at his feet. His tongue coaxed hers briefly, then he stepped back. Her arms fell to her sides and her hands trembled.

He gave her a smile. "Why don't you and Dirk talk about our arrangement and see if ya'll can't come up with something that would keep you from ever having to eat dinner alone."

Chapter Eleven

“I knew I’d have to kick his fucking ass.” Dirk’s dark hair dripped water onto his cheeks and moisture from the shower still clung to his chest.

“You don’t need to kick anybody’s ass. He didn’t push it when I told him no. And he only asked me to dinner.” Alana tugged the towel from around his hips and pressed her body to his. “I missed you today.”

His arm curled around her back and his mouth came down on hers in a hungry kiss. The friction of his tongue shook her clear to her soul. She had no doubt he was the man she was born to be with. She’d known that within the first hour of their first date. “I love you,” she said as he drew back.

He tossed the towel to the floor and lifted her in his arms. The old floors of his house creaked as he carried her across the room.

“Are you taking me to the barn?”

“Not tonight, darlin’.” He laid her on the bed and crawled in next to her. She loved staying at his place. The ranch was much smaller than her father’s and settled in around her like a blanket at night. He only hired about a half-dozen hands and there wasn’t a bunkhouse on the property. The men all lived in town and slept in their own beds at night. Except for the few meandering around to keep an eye on the animals or finish up some stubborn chore, they usually had the place to themselves.

The house was made of local stone and built by Italian masons over a hundred years ago. What it lacked in size it made up for in character. She loved every cove and arch, the exposed wood beams

and the old creaky floors. Every room had a fireplace and only bathrooms and a new kitchen had been added to the original design.

"I love it here," she said.

He worked the buttons of her blouse and kissed her neck. "Move in with me."

His mouth touched every nerve in her skin and his touch swelled her heart. He stopped kissing her and leaned on his elbow so he could look her in the eye. "I'm serious. I want you to move in."

"You know I can't. My daddy—"

"You're daddy knows damn good and well you ain't a twenty-eight-year-old virgin."

She grinned. "It's not that. I promised him I wouldn't move out 'til I got married."

"Marry me, then."

She ran her fingers through his wet hair to fight off the old, familiar fear that seized her. "I'm not the marrying kind." She saw the argument waging in his dark eyes and cut him off with a kiss. He hesitated only a moment before taking over completely and pressing her into the bed with the weight of his big chest. She reached between them and stroked his cock.

"Honey, you got a fine way of changing the subject." He made quick work of her clothes, kissing and feeling her body like he wanted to prove his love inch by inch. They'd talked about marriage before. He'd sworn he'd wear her down eventually, but deep in her heart, Alana knew she was too much like her mother to ever be the kind of wife he deserved.

Chapter Twelve

From the saddle of his horse, Rayne watched Alana's little convertible kick up dust as she made her way down the driveway toward the house. She had her long hair pulled back and her shoulders bare to the sun. He remembered the smell of her skin, the little noises she made when he kissed her neck. His dick pushed against the zipper of his jeans and a smile tugged at his lips. She was something. But hell, he'd known that before he ever laid a hand on her.

She parked behind the house and gave him a wave before she headed up the back porch steps. He touched the brim of his hat in acknowledgement and watched her little butt sway until the screen door slapped shut behind her.

"Better watch it with that one," Tanner Dawson said.

He cut his eyes toward the other man. "Don't I know it."

"Figure she'll be marrying Dirk Lowry one of these days."

"That's about the way I figure it," Rayne said. "What do you make of that new hand?"

"Abe Wentworth?" Tanner grunted. "Heard plenty. None of it good."

"Keep an eye on him," Rayne said. "Especially if he starts getting too close to the lady."

"Word is he's got some friends out in town. None of them worth a shit. Figure they'll be out here looking for a job next. With all the baling to be done and the drive coming up, Grainger might not have much choice hiring them."

"We'll need to keep 'em separated and a couple of our regulars with them. Don't let 'em wipe their ass without somebody close

enough to smell it.”

Tanner nodded. “I’ll spread the word. And watch your back.”

“My back?”

“Some of the boys figure old Hardy will be retiring soon. They know you’ll want the job. One or two of ’em ain’t above getting you out of the way so they have a shot at the position themselves.”

Rayne gave his friend a quick nod. He figured there’d be others vying for the foreman position, but he hadn’t counted on any of them being cutthroat about it. He had more friends than enemies on the ranch, but it only took one ‘accident’ to put a cowboy out of commission long enough to miss an opportunity. When old Hardy did retire, Grainger wouldn’t waste any time replacing him. The ranch was too big to go without a foreman for long.

Two hours later, Rayne wound the rope around his arm slowly. Anything for an excuse to watch Alana longer. She worked Dapple Jack like a pro. Why she didn’t ride rodeo, he hadn’t figured out yet. He’d asked once, but she’d been tight-lipped about it. Back then he hadn’t known her like he did now. Maybe she’d be more inclined to tell him since they’d gotten to know one another the way they had. His dick got hard just thinking about her body and what she could do with it. Goddamn, she was something else. He’d been around plenty of women in his life. Back when he’d ridden bulls for a living, buckle bunnies had been more than happy to show him a trick or two. There were some wild women out there, but he’d never seen anything like Alana. Gorgeous enough to stop his heart every time she looked his way, and freaky enough to blow his mind. Underneath her feminine blouses and designer jeans, she had it all. Everything he’d ever wanted in a woman. But, hell, he hadn’t thought women like that existed outside his imagination.

“Check the east fences this morning?” Hardy asked.

Rayne jerked at the old foreman’s voice. He didn’t know how long the old man had been standing there, but it had to be long enough to know where Rayne’s thoughts were.

“Yeah. Saw some cat tracks. Big ones. With the calves we’re expecting, better tell the boys to carry their guns.” Cougar attacks on the newborns had increased in the last couple of years. Development to the north had cut into the big cats’ hunting territory. The small cattle were easy prey.

Hardy scratched the scruff on his jaw. “You and Tanner go ahead and load up. We’ve got some temporary help coming on. I ain’t too sure I want them armed.”

Rayne glanced at Alana. She’d just cleared a barrel and raced for the next one. Dapple Jack’s hooves pounded the dirt arena. Alana’s hair flew out behind her and her body rode the rhythm of the horse. Old Grainger took more chances on the help he hired than Rayne ever would, especially with a temptation like Alana on the property. There hadn’t ever been any trouble, but that didn’t keep him from worrying about her.

Chapter Thirteen

“Hawthorne!” Alana yelled.

Rayne jerked his head up as he came out of the barn. Alana stood on the porch, hands on her hips. She’d seen him watching her on Dapple Jack, and it was time to see what he was made of.

“When you get done out there, Daddy needs a hand up here at the house.”

He started her way, keeping his eyes on her the whole time. Her skin sizzled from his gaze and her heart fluttered. He was something. And Mama was right. If he didn’t pass this test she was going to find herself in a world of trouble.

The porch steps groaned beneath his weight. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

She led him around the house, following the wraparound porch to the far side, out of view of the hands in the barn.

She placed her hand on his arm and gave the muscle beneath his worn denim work shirt a squeeze.

“You trying to get me fired?” His voice was low, the heat in his eyes more fiery than the sun setting on the horizon.

“Nobody’s going to fire you.” She ran her hand along his arm and licked her lips.

“What do you want, darlin’?”

“I want you.”

He glanced toward the French doors that led off the dining room. “Dirk here?”

“I want you to be my man.”

“I ain’t got nothing to offer a woman like you but what I’ve got in

my pants.” He stroked a hand through her hair and turned her around so she could see the pastures rolling down from the big house. “You’re used to all this. Hell, I’d give you more than this if I could, but I left dreams like that behind when I walked away from riding bulls. I ain’t nothin’ but a hired hand, looking to land a foreman gig if I ever get lucky enough.”

“I don’t care how much money you make.”

“One day you will.” The certainty in his voice told her he’d been down that road before.

She leaned against his chest. The warmth of his body spread through her and the beat of his heart seeped into her soul. “Do you love me, Rayne?”

He wrapped his arms around her. “It ain’t gonna do either one of us a bit of good if I answer that. You’ve got a good man. I wouldn’t do anything but mess that up for you.”

“And if I love you?”

He buried his lips in her hair. “Don’t do that, sweetheart.”

“Don’t love you?” She turned around slowly. Her breasts pressed against his chest. Her heart opened for him a little more. “How am I supposed to have any control over that?”

His eyes softened. She saw his kiss coming.

“Don’t,” she said.

He blew a heavy breath between them. “See what I mean? How can anything come of this? I can’t even kiss you without Dirk’s permission. And how much longer do you think he’s going to allow this to go on? He’s not a stupid man, Alana. Neither am I.” He dropped his arms from around her.

“If you’d never come up to the loft that first time...”

He cupped her face in his broad hand. “I’ve been wanting you since the day I pulled up here looking for a job. You were out on Dapple Jack, looking like every dream I ever had. I’d been prepared to walk away if your daddy couldn’t offer me a promotion within a year. I should’ve been running a ranch years ago. I damn sure didn’t

need another dead-end job.”

“You took the job because of me?”

“There ain’t much I wouldn’t do for you. I’d heard you and Dirk up in the loft before. Finally I couldn’t take it anymore. I had to see for myself if you looked anything like I imagined you would.”

“What took you so long?”

“Dirk’s been known to mark his territory pretty good.”

“He worries about me over here with all these men.”

“He should. And don’t think for a minute you can trust more than half of them.”

“I can trust you.”

He swallowed hard. “How do you know?”

“I just know.”

A truck started up the drive toward the house. Rayne glanced over his shoulder and stepped away, putting more distance between them.

Dirk’s truck kicked up a cloud of dust on the sandy driveway, and he waved his arm out the window at them. Rayne lifted his hand in greeting.

“I’ll talk to him,” she said.

“Probably better just to keep things the way they are. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

“I want more,” she said. “And I’m a little disappointed you don’t want to fight for me.”

He shook his head. “I ain’t got no right fighting for you. You made it clear you won’t leave him, and I don’t go around trying to steal something that doesn’t belong to me.”

“What would you do if I was yours?”

“I’d love you like the devil.” A wicked grin spread across his handsome face and he gave her a wink before walking away. He’d disappeared into the barn by the time Dirk pulled her in for a kiss that shot straight to her toes. Even after all these years, the chemistry between them was as strong as ever.

“You invite him to join us tonight?”

She shook her head. "How about we keep to ourselves tonight?"

He smoothed the frown line across her forehead. "He do anything I need to know about?"

"He did just what we expected him to do." She felt Dirk relax a little. Rayne was every bit the man she expected him to be, but the word love wasn't anything she'd meant to throw at him. She hadn't been ready for his response either.

"I still ain't sure I trust him." Dirk pulled her closer, holding her tight in his arms. "Anybody can walk away once. Don't mean he won't come back when he realizes what he passed up."

Chapter Fourteen

“Where is she?” Dirk’s eyes darted around Grainger’s barn. Another week had passed. The Friday night rodeo had lured all the hands from the ranch, and Alana was in the mood for some action.

“I figured she was with you.” Rayne kicked himself for showing up to begin with. Alana’s games were addictive, but he needed to get out while the getting was good. The episode on the porch had left him unsettled. He didn’t go around messing with taken women. He didn’t need to call any more attention to himself.

“She told me to meet her here.” Dirk walked toward one of the dark corners of the loft.

“I got the same message.”

Dirk shot him a look, but didn’t say anything. Rayne didn’t blame the man. If he had a woman like Alana, he’d make damn sure every other man knew his place, too. “She ain’t in the loft, I checked.”

Dirk walked back slowly, his mouth set in a firm line. “Did you see anybody else around here?”

Rayne shook his head.

“Her car’s out front.” Worry edged Dirk’s voice.

“I’ll check the stables. Maybe you ought to go up to the main house. Better for you to call on her there than me.”

Dirk nodded once and headed out of the barn in a hurry.

Rayne ran down to the stables. The horses were locked up tight for the night and not another soul was around.

Worry trickled into his gut. Nothing would have happened to her here on her daddy’s ranch. The cowboys got a little rowdy sometimes, but they’d all headed off to the rodeo. There wasn’t a hell of a lot to

do in this town that wouldn't end up in a brawl at Tucker's. Except for the rodeo. That was the reason Drake Grainger sponsored any of his men who wanted to participate and paid admission for the rest. They might come to work Monday morning a little bruised, but he wouldn't have to bail them out of jail.

He left the stables and started for the nearest bunkhouse just to be sure none of the men had stayed in for the night.

Dirk's boots pounded a rhythm as he ran down the back porch steps of the main house. He caught up with Rayne and together the two of them hurried to the bunkhouse.

The Grainger ranch was far enough out that the bunkhouses were well-used. Not more than a handful of the hands had a place of their own in town. The old hewn-log structures had been modernized over the years, but like everything else on the ranch they wore their age with pride. A light shone through the window and a curl of smoke rose from the old iron-stove chimney of the nearest one.

Dirk swore and broke into a jog. Rayne kept pace with him. She might ultimately be Dirk's lady, but he'd gotten used to being the only other man in the picture. Jealousy spiked his blood and territorial instinct clenched his fists. The door, centered on the long side of the building, stood open enough to let soft yellow light spill onto the concrete step below.

Dirk swung the door open so hard it slammed against the inside wall. Rayne ran into the room behind him. Both men ground to a stunned stop.

"Oh, shit," Rayne said.

Dirk didn't say a word, but his breath flew from his lungs in a single gust and a growl rumbled deep in his throat.

"Lucky bastard." Rayne groaned.

Chapter Fifteen

Alana dragged her dark tongue across her plump lips and gave Dirk a look that would melt most men. Rayne's groin tightened and his breath hitched, but he kept his boots planted firmly just inside the door. Dirk circled the chair she'd pulled to the center of the floor. Rayne's old leather satchel of sex toys lay open at her feet.

Even with the heat from the old iron stove, goose bumps puckered her naked skin. She'd tied her ankles to the bottom of the chair with rope, and her arms were behind her.

She'd somehow managed to tighten a lasso around her shoulders and held the rope behind her back, pulling it taut. The rope pinned her arms and her bare breasts jutted toward them.

Rayne's lungs were ready to combust. Flame spread through his chest. His arms burned with restraint. He couldn't tear his eyes off that rough rope biting into her soft skin. His cock thumped against the worn-out denim of his jeans. To hell with watching. He needed her sweet pussy wrapped around him, squeezing and pulling, taking him for all he was worth.

"I gotta have her," he said.

Dirk glanced his way and walked around the chair to pick up the dangling end of the rope at her back. "Stand up." He tugged enough to make her gasp and wound the rope around his wrist.

Alana lifted her ass off the chair and twisted her head back to see him. "What are you going to do?"

"I ain't decided yet."

"I know what she needs." Rayne's voice was gruff even to his own ears. His hands were itching to get on her and it took everything

he had not to go over there and give her just what she needed.

Dirk tugged at the rope and twisted her hair in his fist. "You think he knows what you need?"

She bit down on her lip and shook her head.

"No?" Dirk laughed and shot Rayne a challenging look. "She thinks you want to give it to her now. Not make her wait for it." He leaned in close to her neck. "Ain't that right, baby?"

"That's what he wants," she said.

A rosy flush had begun to creep across her chest. Goddamn, she got off on this. The open bag on the floor caught his eye and his cock heaved again. She had added something from her own collection.

"There's something else in that bag," Rayne said.

Her eyes shot to his, wide with excitement. Her breath came in pants.

"You keeping something from us?" Dirk asked and wound the rope around his wrist again. He motioned to Rayne. "Go on and get it. Let's see what she wants to play with."

Rayne moved toward the bag. Alana shook her head and he paused.

"Go on," Dirk said. "If she really didn't want it, she'd put up a bigger fight than that."

Rayne pulled a long, thick dildo out of his toy bag and held it up to her. "Two ain't enough?"

She moaned and her eyes went wild with passion. He brushed the fake cock over her nipple. "Exactly where did you want this one to go?"

She leveled her heated eyes with his. "My pussy."

Hell. He stepped closer and teased her lips with the dildo. Her tongue flicked out to taste it. "What if I want to put something else in your pussy?" Her gaze flew to his fly and another shot of lust struck his dick. "That's right. How long you gonna keep that from me?"

Dirk wound the rope tighter. "What would those boys think if they got back a little early from the rodeo?"

Her breathing sped up, increasing the rise and fall of her breasts.

Dirk didn't stop giving her what she wanted. "What if they saw you fucking three cocks? Goddamn, Alana, what would those boys do?"

Rayne lowered the dildo and massaged the plump lips of her pussy with it. "You got her all wet," he told Dirk.

Dirk gave the rope another yank. "He ain't seen wet, has he, baby?"

She shook her head. "I want to see his cock," she said.

"My cock?" Rayne dipped the dildo between her folds. "You're gonna have to ask *me* for that."

She lifted her head to meet his gaze. "Show me." Her teeth grazed her bottom lip and her gaze fell to his fly again.

He reached for his belt with one hand and gave her pussy a harder stroke with the dildo. She trembled. Her nipples had tightened to rigid little nubs and her hot breath hissed. He twisted the button of his fly free while teasing her clit. He hadn't laid a finger on her yet, and she had him harder than granite. Her eyes never left his crotch.

"Show me." Desperation laced her words.

"You want to see this?" He lowered his zipper and pulled his cock through the open fly.

She gasped.

"You're gonna have to do a lot more than look at it," Dirk told her as he wrapped the rope around his wrist again, pulling it tighter against her skin. "We'll be nice. You can tell us where you want that one." Dirk bit at her neck. "But you better decide fast, or we'll decide for you."

Her gaze was locked on Rayne's dick. He stroked it once and gave the dildo a quick push toward her little wet hole.

She cried out. "In my ass."

Rayne's cock jumped and his balls tightened. He closed the distance between them, teasing her with the dildo the whole time and kissed her once before throwing his leg over the chair behind her.

Dirk pulled the rope out of the way, but didn't give her an inch of slack.

Behind her, Rayne pushed his jeans down to his knees and teased the crease of her ass with his shaft. She whimpered.

He leaned close to her ear, and pulled her against him. "It's about time you took one of 'em, don't you reckon?"

She nodded. "Just one."

His arm still wound around her waist, he guided the dildo with one swift stroke into her pussy. She choked on a scream and leaned against him. Her shoulders fit against his chest like he'd been made to hold her in just this position. His gut twisted. Goddamn, she felt good in his arms. He caressed her breast and kissed her shoulder. She rolled her head to the side, giving him access to her neck. Her roped arms pressed into his ribs and her hands grazed his cock.

"I'm gonna fuck you 'til the cows come home, sweetheart."

"Shit!" Dirk grabbed her arms and worked the rope off as headlights flashed through the windows at the end of the bunkhouse.

Rayne snatched his jeans up and shoved his raging cock inside before whipping the rope off one of her ankles. Next to him, Dirk freed her other leg and shoved the chair toward the wall.

Alana ran to the nearest bed, where she'd thrown her clothes. Dirk cussed up a storm while Rayne shoved the toys back into his leather bag.

The three of them hurried out of the bunkhouse, nearly knocking into two hands headed inside.

Alana didn't say a word, and the dark sky hid her features, but when they passed close to the barn and the floodlights lit up her face, Rayne could see how pissed she was.

She stormed into the house. The screen door slapped shut behind her.

Dirk followed her onto the porch and turned back to Rayne. "It ain't your night, is it?" he said with a laugh before going inside and letting the door slam shut a second time.

Chapter Sixteen

The afternoon sun beat down with a vengeance and perspiration dampened Alana's temple as she hefted a saddle into the backseat of her convertible and started for the barn to get the other two in need of repair. Rayne had already started toward her, a saddle in each hand.

"I can send one of the boys to take care of these." He didn't slow down, didn't give her that slow wink or sexy smile she was fast becoming addicted to. Maybe he didn't like coming as close as he had the night before only to have to go home and jerk off alone.

She knew he had jerked off alone. If he had gotten laid, his mood wouldn't be nearly this foul. Satisfaction and relief filled her chest. God, she didn't want to think he was with anyone else. For a woman who liked to be shared, she damn sure didn't want her men messing with anyone else.

"I pull my weight around here, too." She matched his long, steady stride. At his side, she had a better view of his features beneath the shade of his hat. "What's the matter, cowboy?"

He didn't answer. At her car, he put the saddles with the other one. She grabbed his wrist before he walked away.

He moved faster than she'd expected, pinning her against the car with his big body. His hands gripped the doorframe next to her hips. Her heart pounded. The clean scent of his skin settled deep in her chest. He stood so close their thighs touched and she wanted him with a passion that burned hotter than hell. He lowered his face until the brim of his hat touched her head.

"You have any idea how hard it is to keep my hands off you?" His voice was low, meant for her ears only, but his actions were sending a

message loud and clear to anyone who might see.

“Meet us tonight, here at the barn?” Her fingers brushed the soft denim of his shirt and his warm breath caressed her cheek. No matter what they’d done, or what she wanted, without Dirk there, Rayne was off-limits.

“You talked to him yet about spending time with me when he ain’t around?”

“A little bit.” Her heart beat like thundering hooves.

“He ain’t tried to kick my ass yet.”

“I talked him out of it.”

He lifted her chin. “I’ll talk to him myself tonight.”

Oh, hell. That could be a good thing, or could turn ugly fast. With two hard-headed men like those two, anything could happen. “Why ain’t you got a woman of your own?”

“I want his. Even if I’ve gotta share.”

Her belly flipped. God, she wanted him, too. Both him and Dirk. Would Dirk even consider making this a permanent arrangement?

Chapter Seventeen

Dirk opened the door at the back of the house and called her name. Before she could get there to let him in, he met her in the hall, grabbed her in his arms and swung her around.

She wrapped her arms and legs around him. Nothing in the world felt more right than holding him close. “What are you doing here? I thought you had to work.”

“Work’ll get done, but right now I need to take you out. We’ve got celebrating to do.”

“You got it?” She squealed. “Oh my God! Did you get the land?”

His grin, stretching from one side of his gorgeous face to the other, gave her the answer before he said a word.

“I did it, baby. My ranch is bigger than your daddy’s now. All I need are the cattle to fill it up and the men to work it.”

She hugged him tight. “I knew you would.” She kissed him hard before asking, “Where do you want to go?”

“Get dressed up. I’ll take you to a nice dinner and then back home.”

“Home?”

“My home. Our home, if I can ever convince you. I want the ink to dry on the deed while I’m making love to you in our bed.”

Twenty minutes later, Alana walked downstairs in a little black dress that hugged her curves and heels that added four inches to her already long legs.

Dirk whistled low. “What’d I ever do to deserve you?”

She turned around slowly so he could check out every angle. “You deserve better than me. I’m the luckiest woman in the world.”

He drew her into his strong arms and held her close.

“Let me be your man. Give me a chance to prove your mama didn’t know what in the hell she was talking about.”

“You are my man.”

“But I’m not enough?”

“You’re more than enough tonight, tomorrow, next week, probably next year. I don’t ever want to lose you, but ...”

“That doesn’t stop you from wanting Hawthorne.” He blew out a heavy breath. “I knew I should’ve kicked his ass.”

She ran her hands along his sides, feeling his body beneath his shirt. She knew every inch of him by heart, loved every smooth inch of skin. But more than that, she loved the man beneath it all. And she would never deceive him or hurt him the way her mother had done her father.

“I like Rayne.”

She felt him tense. “You planning to trade me in for him?”

“I’ll never trade you in for anybody.”

“But you want him, too?”

“I’m starting to. It’s the way I’m made. You know that about me. Tie me down, and I just want to break free.”

“You like being tied down as long as you’re in control. Just like you know you won’t ever leave me. You’re just too afraid to admit it.”

Chapter Eighteen

The morning dew still clung to the grass when Rayne watched Alana's little red convertible turn out onto the main road and head toward town. She'd gotten under his skin good, and he didn't think for a minute trouble wasn't far behind. She'd left with Dirk the night before, dressed to kill, and hadn't come home until after sunup.

And she was gone again already. He had been nursing a cup of coffee and the bitter taste of jealousy when he saw her drive up to the house earlier. Her loose hair was twisted into a knot. She wore a pair jeans and what had to be Dirk's shirt. That little black dress she'd left in lay in the crook of her arm.

Hell, he knew she wouldn't ever be his alone. But he didn't like being left out in the cold one damn bit. Better get his ass to work. This way of thinking could only go one way: Bad.

As he neared the barn, a prickle crept up the back of his neck. There was hell to pay, and it was close. He could feel it. The doors to the barn stood open, but the old building had its back to the sun. From Rayne's vantage point, the inside was dark as a cave. And quiet. Too quiet for this time of day on a working ranch.

The first punch hit him before he'd cleared the barn door. He kept his balance and swung into the shadowed barn at the first figure he saw.

Hardy shouted his name, but it was too late. Rayne's knuckles connected with the weathered skin of the old man's face. Boots pounded the wood floor as someone ran out the back of the barn and old Hardy hit the floor.

"Shit!" Rayne fell to his knees. The old man had gone down hard.

His eyes were closed, his body still. Rayne tapped his cheek. "Hardy, wake up. Come on. Wake up now."

He jumped up and grabbed the phone off the wall. Within minutes, paramedics were on the way and Grainger was leaning over his foreman demanding to know what in the hell had happened.

Rayne wiped the blood from his nose and told the rancher the truth.

He probably got lucky. Most of the hands were out baling hay and Tanner had made a run into town. If any of them had seen him hit the old man, they'd have put him in the grave already.

"You didn't see who the hell it was?" Grainger yelled before throwing his hat to the ground in frustration. "Goddamn it, this ain't the way I run my ranch!"

Rayne left the foreman in Grainger's hands and stepped back into the sun. Just outside, he leaned against the barn and raised his eyes to the sky. It'd been a long time since he prayed. The words didn't come easy, but they came. If the old man died, he'd never forgive himself.

Another bounty on his head didn't mean a damn thing. He didn't kill people. Not if he didn't have to.

Chapter Nineteen

Grainger waited until the ambulance pulled off the ranch before he turned to Rayne. The old rancher's mouth was pulled into a tight line. "I reckon you know you're fired." Grainger shook his head and hooked his thumbs in his pockets. "I'll let Hardy decide whether or not to press charges."

Rayne nodded.

"It'd make things a good bit easier if you could say who jumped you," Grainger said.

He'd bet his left nut Wentworth was the one who'd ambushed him, but he hadn't seen him do it. And he wasn't one to go around accusing anybody without knowing for certain they were to blame. The old foreman probably knew what had happened, but he hadn't woken up yet.

Rayne could've argued for his job, but he knew why Grainger hadn't wasted any time letting him go. Half the ranch hands had worked for Hardy a decade or more. They respected the old man and they wouldn't take kindly to Rayne laying him out for any reason. If he didn't get his ass off the ranch, more fists would fly.

Besides, whispers had already started. Plenty of the men figured he was looking to step into Hardy's place when the old man retired. And he wasn't the only one wanting the job. No doubt some of them had already heard other rumors, too. That lowlife that he ran into at Tucker's didn't seem like the sort to keep his mouth shut.

Rayne collected his stuff from the bunkhouse. Everything he owned didn't fill up his old duffle bag. Grainger tipped his hat to him as he drove away. He lifted his wrist in a wave and said goodbye to

the best damn job he'd had in a long time.

Two miles down the road, Rayne slammed his palm against the steering wheel of his pickup truck. In the past two hours, he'd nearly killed a man, lost his job and any chance of something with Alana. He hit the steering wheel again. A dull ache settled deep in his chest, and the weight of the regret was suffocating. He felt sick. Literally sick. Her pretty face wouldn't leave his mind. He melted under her touch. A woman had never left her mark on him so completely. He wanted her. He needed her. He shook his head. Dumbass. She'd never be his. Dirk would be a fool to let her go, and Dirk Lowry was no fool.

He pressed the gas pedal to the floor and watched the tall Texas pines go by in a blur. The farther he got from Wilder, Texas, the better. The speedometer's needle swung to the right and the straight blacktop stretched like a drag strip ahead of him. The muscles in his jaw jumped and the ache in his heart turned so raw it burned. The steering wheel vibrated once before it locked. He jerked hard. The truck veered slightly but didn't even cross the center line.

Just what he needed. He pulled his foot off the gas and eased on the brakes. The power steering had picked a fine time to go. The speedometer read forty and the steering wheel vibrated again. Rayne glanced down at the dash, taking his eye from the road only for a second. He didn't see the deer that jumped in front of him until he'd hit it.

The impact sent the truck into a slow spin. Rayne fought for control, but the broken power steering didn't make it easy. The truck left the pavement and slid onto the grassy shoulder of the road. The thick trunk of a tall pine loomed closer by the second and the impact of truck against tree sent him hard into the driver's door. The steering wheel slammed into his chest. His shoulder shattered the window. Cubes of tempered glass fell like rain and the crunch of metal ripped through his ears.

Then the whole world stood still.

Rayne waited for the other shoe to drop, but the wreck was over.

The damage done.

He gave himself a onceover. Aside from feeling bruised and a minor cut on his shoulder, he was no worse for the wear. He found his cell phone under the seat where it'd landed and sat for a good five minutes staring at the keypad.

Alana had probably heard what happened by now. He was battered enough. Saying goodbye to her now wouldn't ease any of the pain. He mentally ran through the people he could call and immediately discarded any of the men who worked for Drake Grainger. He needed to put some distance between them. He finally punched in Dirk's number.

Chapter Twenty

Dirk picked up the extension in the barn. "Lowry here."

"It's Rayne. I'm in a bind."

Dirk watched Hank Daughtry climb down from his truck. He'd parked at the side of the house and had a roll of blueprints for the new bunkhouse in his hand.

"I'm in the middle of something," Dirk said. "What do you need?"

"I hit a tree about a mile from Dylan Crossing. Broke an axle." Even over the static of a bad connection, Dirk could hear how much Rayne hated calling in a favor. "I'm looking for a ride out to Raider's Ridge."

"Headed out of town?"

"I lost my job over at Grainger's this afternoon."

Dirk's mind flew straight to Alana. If her daddy saw one of his men touch her, he'd fire him on the spot. Rayne must have sensed the conclusion he'd jumped to because he explained without prompting, "It didn't have anything to do with Alana. But you need to get her out of there. I don't trust some of those boys Grainger just hired. And I ain't around anymore to keep an eye on her."

Dirk stepped out of the barn far enough to wave at Hank. The architect saw him and started in his direction.

"I can't give you a ride out to Raider's 'til tomorrow, but Lucky, one of my hands, is out near Dylan's Crossing now. He can pick you up and drop you off at Grainger's."

"I ain't welcome there."

Dirk lowered his voice so Hank wouldn't hear. "Alana's meeting me in the barn later. I been trying to call, but she never answers her

damn phone. I need you to make sure nobody else finds her before I get there. I don't know how late I'll be."

Dead silence met him. Rayne had either hung up or didn't know what to say.

"I got some business to tend to," Dirk said. "Lucky should be heading back soon. I'll tell him to pick you up."

Dirk hung up without waiting for an agreement. Rayne didn't know it, but he was about to get one more chance to turn his day around. It was about to either get a whole lot better or a hell of a lot worse.

Chapter Twenty-One

The drive into town didn't do anything to clear Alana's head. Her heart raced a mile a minute and she squinted at every pickup truck in the distance, praying it was Rayne. She needed to find him. Whatever had happened in the barn, she knew he hadn't meant to knock Hardy out cold. He hadn't caused a day's trouble since he came to work at Grainger Ridge.

Scooter's warning echoed in her mind. Where had Rayne Hawthorne come from before he ended up in Wilder? Had this sort of thing happened to him before? She shook her head in stubborn defiance. There wasn't a man alive who'd never made a mistake, but she refused to believe that Rayne was anything but honorable.

She turned into the dirt parking lot of Tucker's and drove slowly around to the back of the building. Early afternoon didn't bring many people to the bar. Only a few trucks were parked around back, and none that she recognized. She pulled back onto the road and headed farther in to town. She didn't know where he would go. Maybe he'd gone out to one of the other ranches to look for work. Deep in her gut she knew he hadn't. But the truth stung too bad. She'd rather keep looking for him than accept that he'd hightailed it out of town like his britches were on fire and hadn't even bothered to say goodbye.

Her cell phone rang and she pulled it out of the cup holder.

"You can quit looking for him," Dirk said. "He just called."

Relief filled her chest briefly. "Where is he?"

"He'll meet us at the barn tonight."

The tears she'd fought all afternoon pricked at her eyes. "He's coming back?"

“Yeah, but I got some bad news. Hardy had a stroke on the way to the hospital. If he don’t recover, this ain’t gonna blow over easy.”

Alana did a U-turn and headed for Wilder General. “I’ll go check on him now. Dirk, talk to Daddy. You know something’s not right about this. Rayne wouldn’t have hit an old man.”

“He hit him all right, but I don’t think he meant to. I might be a little late tonight. I’ll get there as soon as I can. I heard something else about Rayne I need to look into.” He paused for a minute. “Alana?”

She heard the worry in his voice. “Yeah?”

“You know what to do?”

“I know. Don’t worry. I’m right about him.”

Chapter Twenty-Two

In Grainger's barn, not three feet from where old man Hardy had hit the floor, Abe Wentworth spat a stream of tobacco juice out of the corner of his mouth and gave Rayne a cocky glare.

"If you don't want that shit-eating grin knocked off your face, you better head on out of here." Rayne had run up against men like Wentworth before, a drifter with a history of trouble, but enough experience with ranch work to keep himself employed until he got his ass shown the gate for stirring something up. "You ain't got no business here," Rayne warned him.

"I make my own business." Wentworth's eyes darted toward the loft. "And right now I figure there's a little gal that might be needing a little company."

"Ain't no women around here but Grainger's daughter. You lay a hand on her and he'll shoot your balls off himself." Grainger wouldn't get the chance before Rayne did it, but he knew better than to say anything. If he acted too protective, Wentworth would go after Alana just to spite him.

"He ain't shot your balls off yet." Wentworth reached for a pitchfork hanging on the wall. "Now get out my way before I have to hurt you."

Rayne charged, knocking Wentworth to the ground. The pitchfork hit the worn wood floor next to him, its tines curved up only inches from the drifter's face.

Rayne slammed his fist into Wentworth's jaw and kicked at the long handle of the pitchfork to get it out of the other man's reach.

A shadow fell over them a second before a boot connected hard

with Rayne's ribs. He swore and rolled out of the way. Two rangy cowpokes had joined the fray. One of them yanked Rayne off the floor while the other swung a fist toward his face. Rayne ducked the punch, but another connected with his gut. Looked like he was in for an ass-kicking.

Blood dripped from his nose, but he wasn't going to bleed alone. He sent an elbow toward the one behind him, and connected with a solid blow. He focused on the other man, but didn't catch Wentworth's intention in time. Wentworth kicked him in the groin, doubling him over.

Rayne coughed and spat. Nausea curled in his belly and black shadows swam in his eyes.

"Y'all finish him," Wentworth said. "I'll go take care of the lady."

The crack of a pistol hammer being pulled into place sounded from the doorway. Rayne lifted his head and the other men froze.

Old Grainger leveled the long barrel of his gun on Wentworth, who had one boot on the ladder to the loft. "You wouldn't be figuring on my daughter being up there now, would you?"

Wentworth half laughed. "Hell. I'm just protecting her from your boy here." He motioned to Rayne. "Saw him messing with her in the stables the other day."

Old Grainger's cloudy eyes never wavered and neither did his gun. "Rayne's been with me a long time. Ain't never caused any trouble he could help."

"Maybe you just ain't keeping a close enough eye on things." Wentworth spat another stream of tobacco to the floor.

Rayne unfolded his body, standing to his full height. His balls felt like they'd swelled to the size of grapefruits and a dull ache pounded through his thighs. Blood from his nose had dripped onto his jeans, leaving dark stains. "If Grainger don't kill you, I will," he said through clenched teeth.

"You're a dead man, Rayne, and that little lady of yours'll belong to me."

A scornful laugh echoed through the barn. Dirk pushed his way past all of them, pausing only long enough to lay Wentworth out cold with a single punch. He climbed up the ladder to the loft. His low voice whispered through the rafters. "You all right, baby?"

No one below heard Alana's response, but Dirk turned back. His eyes fell first on Rayne, then moved quickly to the other two standing between him and the barrel of Grainger's gun. "Y'all don't belong around here, do you?"

Neither man said anything.

"Get in the back of my truck. I'll haul your asses to the county line and if I ever see you around here again, I'll shoot first and ask questions later."

He jerked his head at Rayne. "Get up here and see to her while I take out the trash."

Rayne wiped the blood off his face with his shirttail, picked his hat up off the floor and headed for the loft. Dirk met him at the bottom of the ladder and slapped a palm to his shoulder. "Glad you were here," he said.

He called the men headed out of the barn to a stop. "Come get your boy here and throw him back there with you. When he wakes up you might want to tell him what I said."

"Alana, come on up to the house," Grainger yelled.

Dirk stopped at the barn door and shook the old man's hand. "Rayne'll bring her up after she settles down."

"You're a trusting soul," Grainger muttered.

"He can be trusted." Dirk didn't look back at Rayne when he said it, but Rayne tipped his hat to him anyway.

Drake Grainger gave Rayne a nod and balanced his gun in the crook of his arm. "We'll look you over at the house. Get you a doctor if you need one."

"I'm all right." Rayne knew from the burning sting in his side he had at least one cracked rib, but it wouldn't be the first. The old man left and a few minutes later, he heard the engine of Dirk's truck turn

over before the tires sprayed gravel.

Rayne pulled himself into the loft. Alana's dark hair hung over her shoulders and her jeans hugged every curve. She ran to him. Her hands went straight to his face, inspecting the worst of his battle scars. He expected her to fuss over him. That's what women did. He didn't expect the hunger in her kiss or the fire in her skin against his. He held on for the ride then finally gave in, roaming her body with his hands and walking her back to the blanket she'd spread over the hay.

"Dirk ain't here," he told her.

She nodded and pulled open the snaps of his shirt. "He knows I'm going to take care of you."

Her hands flattened against his bare chest and he swallowed hard. He'd never reacted to a woman's touch the way he did hers. Every muscle burned with want and his cock, even bruised and battered, stirred. "Took a boot to the baby maker."

She laughed and reached for his belt. "Want me to kiss it better?"

He grabbed her wrists. Her eyes settled on his with a mixture of softness and lust that uncoiled ropes in his chest he didn't know were there. "You know what I want," he said. "But I ain't ever been the type to take something that ain't mine."

"No reason to start tonight, then," she said as she worked his buckle free and twisted the button at the top of his fly.

A shiver shot down his spine as she eased his zipper down. "Dirk's going to be in a hell of a mood when he gets back."

"Uh huh," she said. She kissed his jaw and stroked the front of his briefs.

His cock could've been trampled by a bull and it'd still stand up and salute for her. "Goddamn it, Alana." His hand fisted in her hair and his mouth watered for the taste of more of her skin against his tongue. He hadn't ever let a woman twist him around like this before. He had a code he lived by. It'd kept him honest, probably kept him alive, for thirty-two years. Wasn't a good idea to chuck it now. But his gaze wandered over her pretty face, down to the soft swell of her

breasts. The slow stroke of her fingers against his cock did him in. "I don't know if I've got it in me to tell you no," he said.

Her lips curled into a smile. "I like that in a man."

Rayne closed his eyes. He couldn't get her out of his mind. Couldn't sleep without dreaming about her. Couldn't wait until she asked him to meet her at the barn again. And not a day passed he didn't wish he had seen her before Dirk did. He was in for all he had, but he didn't hold the winning hand. Sometimes a man's just got to know when to walk away.

He pulled her face to his, tasted her sweet lips, dove into her mouth and felt himself sink so deep he knew he'd never get out. She kissed like an angel and loved like the devil. And that wouldn't even be what he missed the most about her.

He drew back while he still could. "I'm gonna miss you, darlin'."

"I'm not going anywhere." She closed the last few inches between them and pressed her soft body to his.

"I'm sorry, baby. This ain't the way I do things. I'll walk you up to the house and probably head on out as soon as I can find a ride."

The tremble of her lip nearly undid him. "Where will you go?"

"Heard they're hiring out near Tulsa. Thought I'd give it a go. I've got a friend up in Raider Ridge, probably spend a night or two there first."

"Is there anything I can do to make you stay?" Her eyes told him she meant it, but she couldn't be his. And that's all he wanted.

He kissed her goodbye and tugged her hand toward the ladder.

"Go on," she said, the glimmer of a tear in her eye. "I'll be right behind you."

Rayne left her there, and a piece of himself stayed, too. He wouldn't ever be the same. Wouldn't ever get her out of his mind. The dull ache in his chest sang louder than the sting in his ribs and the throb in his balls. He kept his feet moving and didn't dare look back. Outside the barn, the night fell around him like a blanket. The windows of the big house glowed and cool air settled into his bones.

He'd never been one to move much when he had a chance to stay put. He'd thought this place might be his last stop, with Hardy getting ready to retire and himself first in line for the job when it came open. He would've been set.

"Aw, hell," he muttered and headed for the bunkhouse. Maybe one of the hands would give him a ride, if they didn't all jump his ass and kill him for what he did to Hardy.

"You're all right, Hawthorne." Dirk's voice came from the shadows at the corner of the barn. He stepped out into the soft beam of the floodlight.

"I thought you were hauling those assholes off."

"Grainger and Lucky took them."

"You waiting around to see if you needed to kick my ass, too?"

"Something like that."

Rayne looked him dead in the eye. "You ever let her go, I'll make sure she ain't alone."

"I figured," Dirk said.

Tension hung between them. A cow called across the pasture and Alana's boots clapped across the floor of the barn.

They both glanced toward the sound, then back to one another.

"I already told her goodbye," Rayne said. "No need to do it again." He started for the bunkhouse.

"She's moving out to my place tomorrow," Dirk didn't raise his voice, but the words sank into Rayne's back like a knife.

He didn't slow his pace, didn't look back. "Lucky bastard," he said. He'd been a fool to think he could come back to the barn for more and then leave town with anything but a load of heartache.

"Thought you might want to move out there, too," Dirk said. "Could use a foreman. Got plenty of room in the house."

Rayne stopped in his tracks. When he turned back, Alana was there in the crook of Dirk's arm, a smile spread across her face.

"She told me I could trust you," Dirk said. "I just needed to see it for myself."

“You set me up?”

“Not the shit with Wentworth and those dickheads.” Dirk squeezed Alana close to him. “I’m glad you got here before I did.” He repositioned his hat on his head. “But, yeah, I set you up with Alana. She said you weren’t the type to run off with another man’s woman. And she ain’t ever wanted to settle down with one man.”

“So, what? She’s yours and I get to live in the same house and play sometimes?”

“I want you both,” Alana said. “I love you both. Dirk needed to make sure you wouldn’t try to push him out of the way if I gave you a chance.” She leaned her head on Dirk’s shoulder. “And you couldn’t, in case you were wondering. I won’t give him up for anybody. Or you. I don’t want to give you up either.”

Rayne stood for a minute while his mind wrapped around what they were offering. The two of them stood bathed in the light of the barn, waiting to see what he had to say about it all. “And you think this’ll work?”

“I want it to.” Alana’s voice cut straight to his heart.

Dirk shrugged. “I don’t see why not. We both want her. She wants us. I know I can trust you with her, and I figure I’ve proved myself to you by now.”

“You planning to tell Grainger about this arrangement?”

“Hell no.” Dirk laughed. “But I already talked to him about hiring you to come work at my place. And Alana agreed to go up to the courthouse with me tomorrow afternoon and get hitched if you agree to be part of our happy little family. Nobody’ll know what goes on over at our place but us.”

“The three of us,” Alana said. “If you’ll have me this way.”

Rayne swallowed the lump in his throat. “I got to be batshit to say yes, but damned if I can say no.”

Alana squealed and ran to him, her arms closing around his neck. His ribs screamed, but his heart pumped like a jackhammer. “I ain’t ever really loved a woman before, but you had me tied up first time I

saw you,” he said into her hair.

Alana kissed him full on the mouth. “We’ve got a big ol’ bed and the whole night ahead of us, if you’re up for it.”

“Lead the way, darlin’.”

“I checked into that bounty your head,” Dirk said.

Rayne stopped in his tracks and gripped Alana’s waist. Damn, he was going to lose her yet.

“It’s bullshit,” Dirk said, “but we’re going have to get it taken care of.”

“A crooked sheriff and a greedy judge won’t ever give a man a fair trial,” Rayne said. “If I thought they would, I’d have turned myself in already.”

“My attorney’s a bigger snake than any podunk judge or sheriff in New Mexico. He’ll take care of it, and shitheads like Wentworth won’t have any reason to keep hunting you down.”

“What about Hardy?”

“He came around this afternoon,” Alana said. “He’s got some recovering to do, but he’s gonna be all right. He’s pressing charges against Wentworth. He saw the whole thing.”

Dirk jangled the keys to his truck. “Now come on. I’ll drive while she plays nurse.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A native and lifetime resident of the South, Wendi Darlin writes the people and places she knows and loves. For more Hot Southern Lovin' visit www.wendidarlin.com.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Delectable Bad Boys 2

Sofia Hunt

DEDICATION

This novella is the sequel to *Winner Takes All*. It's dedicated to my readers who asked for Levi's story.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Delectable Bad Boys 2

SOFIA HUNT
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Chapter One

Voluntary celibacy sucked.

Just show Levi Kelly a single woman with all her teeth and within fifty miles of this godforsaken place and get out of his way. So far, he hadn't found one. At least, not one that didn't have a ring on her finger or wasn't vying for psycho status.

What had he been thinking when he bought this remote ranch in Pine Bluff, Montana? Using his hand and his imagination was getting old. He wanted to feel a real woman underneath him, soft, warm, pliable, horny, squirming, and screaming.

One year. One long year.

Shit. He'd even tried the Internet. What a bust that'd been. Good girls, upon realizing who he was, ran like hell. Bad girls either wanted him for his dick or his notoriety, which wouldn't be bad except for the "psycho" thing. His mega dick attracted those types. No one wanted him for him.

Heck, he really wasn't that picky. He didn't need a raging beauty. In fact, he preferred anything but. Those types were usually shallow and self-centered. He'd had enough of that in his life. He wanted a nice little country girl to share his ranch, his bed, and maybe even his life. Fuck, he had to be getting old if he was thinking of settling down with one woman.

He raked a hand through his blond hair and busted open a bail of hay. Picking up several flakes, he walked down the barn aisle and tossed a generous portion in each of the five occupied stalls.

Some fucking rancher he was. So far, his barn stabled only five Quarter Horses, while a minuscule herd of three dozen purebred Angus cattle grazed on his hundreds of acres of rangeland. His father, a third generation Texas rancher, would laugh his ass off if he saw his son's ranch stock.

Not only could he not get laid, but he hadn't found time to attend auctions and increase his herd. He could hear Dad now. *Stupid, worthless little fucker. Never could do anything right.*

So, he'd been busy restoring the ranch house and the barns, all of which had been abandoned for the last few years.

Levi blew out a breath and walked out of the barn. He pulled up the sheepskin collar of his bulky coat. Hands on hips, he studied the sky. Not promising at all. If only this damn storm held off until his friends arrived. After that, it wouldn't matter. They'd all be here and hunkered down in his cozy, cedar-planked ranch house for the weekend.

It'd been a year since he'd socialized. This Super Bowl weekend party gave him a chance to see his old buddies, reminisce, and end his self-imposed isolation. For a month he'd planned this reunion, ever since his former teammates lost out in the first round of the NFL playoffs.

One year ago, he'd been the one playing in that Super Bowl, winning that ring. Then some little prick of a reporter unearthed his deepest, darkest secret and all hell broke loose. Within a few short, painful hours the entire world knew he'd supplemented his income during his college days by moonlighting as the elusive and popular porn star, Cowboy Long Dong. His old porn videos flooded the Internet and flew off the shelves in XXX movie stores. Natalie, the woman he'd been madly in love with, dumped him and ran like hell. She'd deserted him when he needed her the most, got out when the

going got nasty and the rumors flew.

The League pressured him to retire. They weren't about to take any more hits against their reputation as a "family-oriented" sport. Ostracized and humiliated, he'd retreated to this ranch like a coward and licked his wounds.

Entering through the back door, he stomped the snow from his feet and kicked off his boots in the laundry room. He brushed snow from his ever-present black Stetson and hung it on a peg, followed by his coat.

Clarence sauntered into the room and rubbed around his legs. Levi grinned and bent down to scratch the orange tabby cat on his back. Once a confirmed cat hater, Levi was adopted by the cat that came with the ranch. He tried to convince the animal it belonged in the barn hunting mice. Clarence would have none of that. Now the spoiled little shit had a cushy cat bed in front of the den fireplace. He also had his own spot at the foot of Levi's bed when he wasn't perched on the back of the couch or sleeping on Levi's lap.

Levi wanted to be a cat in his next life. Cats didn't worry about reputations or how to keep women happy. Hell, Clarence didn't even have balls anymore, so sex didn't enter into the picture. He ate, pooped, slept, and expected his servants to serve him when he requested it.

Shaking his head, Levi walked into the kitchen with the cat on his heels, bitching the entire way. The damn thing had food but refused to eat it if it wasn't fresh. He poured food into his little ceramic cat dish, engraved with his name. The cat sniffed at it, turned up his nose, and strolled from the room, tail in the air. Levi sighed. He couldn't even please a cat.

Levi paced the house, while Clarence lounged in his warm cat bed and enjoyed a blazing fire. The snow came down hard. It piled on top of the foot that'd already existed. The fat flakes restricted visibility. His friends were late and a severe winter storm blew its way through the valley. He rubbed his eyes and peered through the window again.

His ears picked up the sound of a truck outside. Not caring if he looked pathetic and needy, he ran to the door and threw it open. Lord, he spent too much of his day with only a cat, horses, and crusty old cowhands for company.

Tire chains rattled on the snow covered driveway as a pickup labored up the road to his house. The beat-up Ford, almost pushing snow with its bumper, ground to a stop in front of his garage. Levi fought back the disappointment. None of his friends would be caught dead in a piece of shit like that.

As the driver door opened, a long pair of legs encased in tight, faded jeans emerged. Levi held his breath as the body attached to those legs straightened and turned to face him.

Holy shit.

A painfully familiar mass of shoulder-length rich brown curls framed a face that would inspire any poet or painter and a body that was Viagra itself. His cock bore witness to that. It'd gone from limp to hard in seconds, while his heart raced ahead and tread where only fools had tread before. He knew. He'd stood in a fool's shoes.

There she was. The only woman he'd ever loved. The only woman ever to get close enough to break his heart. The woman he never wanted to see again.

Natalie Andrews.

She waved at him. He gritted his teeth and seethed inside. She had a lot of nerve showing up like this.

Levi yanked on a pair of snow boots near the door and stomped through the snow to her truck.

"What the fuck are you doing here? I didn't invite you." He was being rude and didn't give a shit.

"I'm the caterer."

He stopped beside her, looking her up and down. "You sure as hell don't look like Mitch."

"Mitch has another commitment. I'm taking his place. Could you get those?" She pointed at a couple boxes on the passenger side, as

she *accidentally* brushed against him and gazed into his eyes with her bright blue ones. He stiffened, while his body sang with that old familiar tune—lust.

He planted his feet and propped his hands on his hips. “No. You need to leave. I want Mitch. You’re not welcome here.”

“Mitch is in LA. If you want a caterer, you’re stuck with me.” Her carefully crafted, cajoling tone got under his skin and into his heart. He didn’t like that one damn bit.

“I’ll do the cooking myself. You can leave.”

“No, you won’t. I know you, Levi Kelly. You’ll want to hang out with your buddies and reminisce about great tackles and hard hits.”

“You can’t stay.” He refused to back down.

She looked down the winding road that led to the highway. The snow came down harder as the wind whipped it into what promised to be a blizzard. “You expect me to drive through that? I was lucky to get here.”

“I’ll drive you.”

“What about your guests?”

“They aren’t here yet.”

“Well, guess what. I’m not leaving. I have a job to do, and I intend to do it. Get my boxes, please. I’m freezing my ass off out here.”

Fucking princess. She turned and tramped through the knee-deep snow to his front porch. Grumbling, Levi crossed to the other side of the truck, stacked one box on top of the other and carried them into the house while his former wet dream waited for him at the front door. She was right. He didn’t have a choice. She’d trapped him.

He ignored her and stalked into the house. As she followed him into the kitchen, a traitorous part of him would have preferred dispensing with formalities and heading straight for the bedroom. Levi placed the boxes on the counter. “Where do you want these?”

“Right there.” Her voice caressed and stroked.

“Can I take your coat?” As much as he hated it, he salivated at the

thought of what might be under it. She'd always had a hot body and wasn't afraid to show it off. She didn't disappoint him. She wore a tight little sweater that didn't cover her midriff. It clung to that oh-so-impressive set of tits, and he'd always been a tit man. Shit, in his career—both of them—he'd seen some great racks, but hers ranked right up there with the best. Her low-rise jeans teased a man to slip a hand inside and finger her crotch. Her exposed belly button sported a piercing. He raised an eyebrow at that new addition.

None of his buddies would buy that he wasn't doing her. She was that hot, scalding hot.

Natalie looked out the window over the kitchen sink. "It's really piling up out there. I was worried I might not make it."

"Lucky for me," he grouched. Their inane conversation did little to mask the underlying sexual current. Chemistry was alive and well between them.

"The roads are covering up faster than the plows can plow them."

His eyes flicked to the steadily falling snow then back to her. If his guests didn't get here soon, they wouldn't make it.

"Can I show you to your room?" *Or my room?* He mentally slapped himself. He would not fall under that woman's spell again.

She smiled a triumphant smile. "So, I'm staying?"

"I don't seem to have a choice. I don't know what kind of game you're playing here, lady, but stay away from me. Get it?"

"I get it, Mr. Kelly. Loud and clear. As soon as I check my supplies, you can show me my room. Have the groceries been delivered yet?"

"Uh, no. You don't have them with you?" He rolled his eyes. Just one more sign of her incompetence. Mitch would hear about this in more ways than one.

"No, they were supposed to be delivered first thing this morning."

"Hmmm." Right now food was the furthest thing from his mind, despite his *hunger*. "Why the hell did you come here?"

* * * *

Why *did* she come here? What did she expect? To be welcomed with open arms by the man whose heart she ripped out and hung on her door for all to see?

She opened her mouth to answer, but nothing came out. Levi glared at her, a scowl on his handsome face. Storm clouds gathered in those gray eyes of his. Those same gray eyes haunted her dreams too many times over the past year.

Levi snorted and shook his head. “Just as I thought. You don’t want to admit what you’re doing here.”

“What do you think I’m doing here?” His disdain pissed her off.

“Fuck if I know, but it can’t be good.”

She didn’t dare tell him because she didn’t even know herself. Sure, she’d wanted to see him again. Yes, she’d done it on a whim when Mitch had asked her to help him out. They’d both assumed there’d be a houseful of people. Mother Nature intervened and stranded her on this ranch with just this man. Somewhere in the back of her muddled brain, she’d hoped for a second chance with him.

“Levi, I..”

Levi turned and stalked from the room, grumbling about crazy women.

Natalie frowned at his back. Her hands shook as she started to unpack the boxes. The man was hotter in person than he’d ever been in pictures or on film. But then, she should know. She’d slept in the same bed with him for close to a year. One incredible, wonderful year.

A vehicle badly in need of a muffler roared up the driveway. Natalie ran to the kitchen door. A pimple-faced kid jumped out of a four-wheel drive truck with a canopy.

“Hey, lady, I got a delivery for you.”

“Great. I was afraid you wouldn’t make it in this snow.”

“This is my last stop. I’m heading home before it gets any worse.

The roads are almost impassable.”

“Just leave everything in the pantry. I’ll unpack it in a moment.”

“Okay, you got it.” The skinny kid didn’t look old enough to drive, let alone deliver groceries.

She shrugged and walked into the kitchen, leaving him to carry in the items. She debated on snagging her small suitcase and going in search of Levi. She should settle into her room before she got to work, or let him settle into her. She laughed at that thought. She was behaving like a stalker.

The kid finished in a flash, found her in the kitchen, and waited expectantly for a tip. Natalie dug in her pockets and found a couple bucks. He took it, scowled at the measly amount, and let himself out the door. She finished unpacking her supplies and went to the pantry to get the groceries.

With a dread that jammed in her throat, she stared at the two bags of groceries sitting on a small counter in the pantry. She checked the floor, outside on the porch. Nothing. Moving closer, she plucked a receipt from the bag and looked at it.

She was in deep shit. It was her order, her personal one, not her business one. This should have been delivered to the house she’d rented in town. They’d gotten the orders confused.

Why hadn’t she checked before she’d let the kid get away?

Levi appeared behind her and she jumped. “Let me get those for you.”

Before she could protest, he grabbed the two bags, carried them into the kitchen, and deposited them on the counter. She stared in mortification, knowing what he’d find. He reached in one bag. *Oh my God*. He’d think he’d been setup. He’d never believe it was an accident.

Levi removed one bottle of wine—at least it was good wine—garlic cheese bread, a frozen Italian meal in a bag, chocolate sauce, bubble bath, a toothbrush, and a box of frozen waffles.

“What the fuck is this? It’s a joke, right? You can’t feed a half-

dozen pro football players on this crap. Hell, I can't even feed their emaciated wives on this."

Natalie swallowed and met his angry eyes. "I don't know. It's a mistake. This is the wrong order."

"What do you mean it's the wrong order?"

"This is stuff I ordered to be delivered to my house, not here."

"Your house? In LA?"

"No, I rented a small cabin near Pine Bluff for a month or so."

He eyed her warily. "Call them and get them back here."

"I will. Can I use your phone? Cells don't work out here."

"Don't I know it." Levi handed her the cordless phone from its stand on the counter.

She dialed. "Damn."

"Now what?"

"I can't get a dial tone. When's the last time you used this?"

He thought for a moment. "I don't think I've talked on it since last night."

"I'll go back to town and get the food."

He glanced out the window as the snow piled higher. She followed his gaze, lingering for a moment on his strong jaw and that cleft in his chin. A small scar ran along his jaw line. His lips set in an uncompromising, tight line. Pissed or not, he made for one hot package of masculinity at its best.

She forced her eyes away from paradise to the scene outside. The wind had picked up. Drifts blew across the driveway, making it hard to tell where the road began and ended.

Levi shook his head. "You can't go out in that. Besides, it's getting dark."

"What do you suggest we do?"

"Fuck if I know. Some caterer you are."

"I'm a good caterer. One of the best around here."

"You do realize that's not saying much." He pointed at the frozen meal. "If you're so good, why are you buying that shit?"

"I hate cooking for just myself."

"Yeah, right. I've had your cooking. A starving dog wouldn't eat it. This is great, just fucking great."

"I'm sorry. I should have checked the bags when he brought them in."

"Damn right you should have." His body tight with anger, Levi turned on his heel and stomped from the room.

* * * *

Fighting back tears, Natalie walked through the ranch house. The place brought back bittersweet memories of the ranch she'd grown up on in Wyoming.

She loved ranch life. It still pissed her off that her own father had sold the family ranch out from under her while she'd been in college. It'd been in her family for generations. It was supposed to be hers.

Instead, her dad sold it all to finance his political campaign and move to the city. He'd always hated small town life and the amount of work a ranch required. Her mother just wanted to shop and socialize and resented the isolation.

A cat walked by, stopping to assess her with knowing yellow eyes. Levi had a cat? Levi hated cats. Give him a good hunting dog any day, but cats were worthless in his eyes. Or had been.

So why was this cat strutting around like it owned the place? Maybe Levi didn't realize the animal had gotten into the house. Natalie bent down and picked him up. The cat meowed in protest and struggled to be free of her arms. She put him down. The cat shook, ridding itself of her germs. He tossed the intruder a scathing look and ambled to a cat bed in front of the fire. With one last annoyed glare at her, he lay down and commenced to groom himself, as if Natalie soiled him.

A cat bed? Levi bought the cat a bed?

The Levi she'd known would have never done that.

Chapter Two

With reluctance, Levi walked into the den. Natalie sat on the leather couch by the fire. Clarence lounged nearby. His suspicious cat trained one yellow eye on their unwanted guest. Natalie glanced up at him, gnawing on her lower lip. So, she was nervous, too.

“I see you’ve made yourself at home.” He crossed the room to the small wet bar in the corner. If he was lucky he’d get shit-faced and pass out. Maybe when he woke up she’d be gone.

He was pissed. Pissed at her for being there. Pissed at his friends for not showing up. Pissed at the weather. Pissed at God. And most of all pissed at himself for still wanting her.

Shit, he’d been sporting a raging hard-on since that first leg emerged from the truck. Now he faced the inevitable. They’d be fucking like two pigs rutting on a spring day before the night was over. That’s the way it was with them, had always been with them. The sex had been hot, hot, hot. That’d been one of the problems. He could do conventional sex for a while, but he had more unconventional needs. The deeper they dove into the relationship, the more he wanted to share his atypical appetite. But he realized she wouldn’t understand, so he held back. She was a lady, a good girl, a class act.

Then the bottom dropped out of his world. The love of his life dumped him when the going got rough. He couldn’t forgive that. He’d needed her. She slammed the door in his face. Simple as that.

She looked at him now in that way she had, through lowered lashes and with a hint of shyness. He steeled himself against the emotions she evoked in him. Being head over heels for one woman

did that to a guy.

The wounds still bled, still hurt like hell.

“You’re upset.”

“No shit. I don’t want you here. You have a helluva lot of nerve showing your face.”

“I hoped you’d forgiven me. It’s been a year.” She sipped her wine and studied him over the rim of the glass.

“A lifetime won’t be enough time to forgive you.” He sat on a barstool a safe distance from the couch.

“Hey, you aren’t the only injured party. You lied to me.” She bristled, her blue eyes flashed fire. He recalled a particularly hot night in bed when that same heat smoldered in her eyes for a different reason. Lust stirred the ashes inside him and lit small embers of desire.

“I didn’t lie to you. I never lied to you.” He took a long hard swig of his whiskey.

“You withheld the truth. In my book that’s lying.” She absently reached down to pet the cat. Clarence swatted her with one quick slash of his paw. She yelped and pulled her hand back. “You little sucker. You had your claws out.”

“Leave the cat alone. He belongs here. You don’t.”

She glared at Clarence. Clarence glared back. Natalie looked away first. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“That I had a cat? I didn’t know it was important to you.”

She blew out an exasperated breath. “No, about your porn career.”

“No one knew but a few of my closest friends.”

“Cody knew. Taryn knew.”

“I trust *them*.” How they found out was another story. One she’d never be privy to.

She winced at the dig. “If you’d only confided in me, I would’ve been prepared for the fallout.”

“Yeah, well, I knew you wouldn’t understand, and you didn’t.”

“You never gave me a chance.” Her blue eyes captured his, and

all the old feelings flooded back. “Levi, don’t you still want me?”

“Does an addict want a fix? It doesn’t mean he loves the drug. It doesn’t mean it’s good for him. He just wants it.” Hell, and he did want her. Bad. A year of celibacy didn’t make it any easier. They couldn’t keep their hands off each other a year ago, and they wouldn’t be able to now, no matter how he felt about her. If they were going to be stuck here for God knows how long, he’d set some ground rules.

“So what do we do now?” She ran a delicate finger around the rim of her glass.

Levi shook off most of the tender feelings then bludgeoned the remainder with his next words. “I guess I’ll have to fuck you. But don’t read anything into it. This is pure animal lust, nothing involving any other emotion. You burned those bridges a year ago. I want your body, but I sure as hell don’t want anything else.”

* * * *

“You always knew just the right thing to say to a girl.” Natalie couldn’t believe the nerve of the man.

“It’s a special talent. So, you wanna fuck?”

“That’s it? What happened to foreplay?” Over her dead body would she be that easy. If he wanted her, he’d need to work for it. A man never appreciated things given to him.

“Who the fuck needs foreplay? I get naked. You get naked. We screw. End of story.” His gray eyes blazed with anger and lust.

“I think I’ll pass.” Her stomach rumbled, and she held a hand to it. “How about dinner?”

“In a bag?” He snorted.

“That’s the best I’ve got.”

“And you call yourself a caterer.”

“We won’t go into what you call yourself.”

He cringed. His expression darkened, and the walls around him snapped in place. That was a low blow. She immediately wanted to

take it back, but the bullet had already hit its mark. If he could kill her and get away with it, she'd most likely be dead by now.

"I'm sorry. That was mean."

"Don't sweat it. It's not like I give a shit about your opinion."

"Touché. So are we going to sit here all night and trade insults?"

"I told you what I wanted to do."

"Fuck?"

"Well, hell, yeah. Fuck. That's it. Pure, raw sex. Nothing but the physical. You strangled the life out of everything else a year ago."

She couldn't give him that satisfaction. Not yet. She couldn't be his fuck buddy without a spark of something more. She wanted forgiveness from a proud man, which made her three kinds of a fool. The weather was on her side, and she'd find a way to get through to him.

Natalie studied the angry, handsome man sitting next to her, remembering how he'd come on to her the first time they'd met two years ago. It'd been at a campaign fundraiser for her father's Senate bid. Levi attended as the guest of a friend.

She'd always been the model daughter on the surface. Ever cognizant of behaving in a manner that would reflect well on her politician father as he rose through the political ranks from small town mayor to a powerful senator for the state of California.

Under that model daughter exterior lurked a different woman. She had secrets even Levi didn't know. She wrote hot erotic romance as Mia Lange and had for years. Once she'd met Levi, every hero in her books had a bit of him in them. So she'd withheld information from him, too. He'd be even more pissed when he discovered she, too, had a private life.

Needing to be doing something, Natalie stood. "I'll make dinner." She left the room. The cat watched her go, pleased his competition had retreated in defeat.

* * * *

They ate dinner in front of his big flat screen TV. Sitting together, though not too close together, they ate in relative silence. An old John Wayne movie played on the TV, one of their favorite lazy day things to watch. She glanced at his profile, happy to see the tense lines on his face had relaxed somewhat. Outside the wind blew snow in large drifts against the windows.

The cat cast a disdainful look at her then climbed onto Levi's lap. He absently stroked Clarence, his eyes glued to the credits rolling by on the screen.

"You hate cats."

His gaze swung to hers then back to the TV. He shrugged. "Yeah, so? I still do."

"That *is* a cat, if you haven't noticed."

"I'll be damned. It is." He looked down, pretending to be shocked by the cat in his lap.

"So, what's the deal?" She laughed at his *surprised* expression.

"This is a special cat."

"He's just like any other cat. Admit it, you do like cats." Natalie reached out to pet the cat, and their fingers touched. Her heart skipped several beats. She cleared her throat and peeked at him through lowered lashes. He stared at her, his gray eyes dark with undisguised hunger beneath a layer of pain. Pain she'd caused.

He cleared his throat. "I tolerate this cat."

"Bull. You're a softie, Levi Kelly, and we both know it."

He shrugged. A muscle twitched in his jaw. The tight lines returned to his face. The mask slipped in place.

"I've missed you." She reached for his hand. He jerked it away.

"I told you the deal. I'm more than willing to fuck you. That's it."

He kept using the F word. The significance of his intentional slam wasn't lost on her. He knew she didn't like the crassness of it. To her, fucking was something a hooker did or happened during a one-night stand. They'd made love in the past, never just fucked, even that first

time. She sighed. "Let's play cards or something."

"You? Play cards? Won't happen. You just don't get it. You can't even figure out which card is higher than which."

"So, I think a queen should rate higher than a king. You come up with something."

"I did. You wouldn't play."

"Levi." She rolled her eyes. Some things never changed. She missed the easy bantering between him. She missed his sly sense of humor and his smoky gray eyes. She just missed him.

"Fine, how about Monopoly?"

"You always steal all my property."

"That's the idea." He almost smiled, ruthless ass that he was.

* * * *

Her property wasn't all he'd steal tonight. He might be pissed as hell at her. She might have broken his heart. He might not want to ever see her again after this weekend. Regardless, he lusted after her hot body. He wanted his cock buried deep inside that tight pussy of hers. He wanted to push her limits if she'd let him. What the hell? What was it to him? They'd part ways once the snow stopped, and he plowed their way out of there.

The wine mellowed him a little and took the edge off his anger. It didn't take the edge off his sexual appetite.

He set the Monopoly board on the coffee table, and they picked their game pieces. He grabbed the race car. She took the thimble. Levi licked his lips and rolled two sixes. His eyes leisurely traveled up those long legs, heavenly thighs, past her pierced belly button and great tits to her midnight blue eyes. He lifted his eyebrows and waited. She tossed him a challenging grin and rolled a two and a one.

"I go first." He snorted.

"Do you have to make everything a competition?"

"Honey, I'm a former professional athlete with two Super Bowl

rings. Everything to me *is* a competition.”

“You’re retired. Get over it.” Her blue eyes sparkled with the thrill of the argument and sucked the breath from his lungs.

“Not on your life.”

“Whatever.” She waved him off with a hand. He chuckled in spite of his moratorium against enjoying her company.

Levi played the only way he knew how, with a ruthlessness that didn’t accept defeat or show mercy, just like he’d been taught by an unyielding and emotionally abusive father. And just like he’d learned in twelve years of pro football as one of the best linebackers ever to set foot on the field.

Natalie didn’t have that killer instinct, and he exploited that weakness for all it was worth. Monopoly became a tool by which he extracted revenge, however small. He bought up every property he could and placed hotels and houses all over the board with reckless abandon. Between his risk-taking, in-born luck, and her conservative approach, she went broke faster than the nation’s banks.

Natalie’s next roll put her in jail. Levi moved in for the kill. “Go directly to jail. Do not pass go. Do not collect two hundred dollars, and hand me your blouse.” He grinned, feeling fucking pleased with himself.

“You’re enjoying this way too much, you ass.” She studied the board and chewed her lower lip.

“Sore loser.”

“I am not, and I haven’t lost yet. Maybe I’ll just stay in jail awhile and plot my next move.”

“That’ll get you far. If you land on any of my properties, you don’t have enough money to pay the rent on a dog house, let alone Park Place.”

Defiantly, she picked up the dice and rolled doubles, which landed her on Tennessee Avenue, complete with a hotel.

Unable to suppress a smirk, Levi held up the card. “That’ll be nine hundred and fifty dollars.”

"I don't have nine hundred and fifty dollars."

"Too bad. I guess I win. Unless. Hmmm." He rubbed his chin. "Let's see, I am the banker."

"Fine, moneybags, I want a loan. I'm down but not out."

In less than an hour, she would be down. He'd see to that. "I'll need collateral."

"Take Baltic."

"Baltic isn't worth shit. You haven't even developed it yet."

"I'm waiting for the economy to recover. What do you want?" She held up the measly few property cards in her possession.

"Your sweater."

"My sweater?"

"Two thousand for the sweater." He nodded. The tension between them oozed as thick as warm mud on the bank of the lake on a hot summer day.

"Two thousand? For a sweater?"

"For what's under it."

She hesitated as she digested that information. With a nod, she whipped her tight sweater over her head and tossed it aside. Triumph gleamed in her eyes. Clarence immediately claimed the designer garment for his bed. Natalie glared at the cat. He made himself a nest and purred like a chainsaw.

"Fork over the money, buster."

Levi's brain couldn't wrap around her words. Her little pink lace bra did little to conceal gorgeous tits that would look even better without the bra. He should know. His hands itched to touch them, knowing they were real. Not that he gave a shit at this point, but he did have a preference for the real thing, a rarity where he came from. They were ample sized, too. A nice handful for a man with large hands.

He reached out and fingered the belly button piercing. "This is new." His voice sounded gravelly, deep.

She nodded. Their eyes locked. The intense heat generated

between them cracked and snapped like high-voltage electricity.

“What else is pierced?”

“That’s for you to find out. Now give me my money.” She held out a hand.

He counted out the money, keeping his share for the rent of Tennessee Avenue. He’d always loved Tennessee. Now he knew why.

Levi’s cock twitched in anticipation of action to come. And he did mean “come.” Over and over again. All night long. He’d make up for one year in one night if he had his way. Thank God for his legendary staying power and their legendary chemistry.

She glanced down, avoiding his hungry eyes. Those little glimpses of shyness did more to him than all her boldness. She didn’t do this often, if at all, but for some reason she chose to do it with him.

Oxygen jammed in his throat. Had she watched those porn videos he’d made in college? Did she know the decadence he was capable of? Did it turn her on instead of being a turn-off? Is that why she came here? To have a piece of the infamous Levi Kelly, aka Cowboy Long Dong, one-time king of hard-core porn?

He shook off those thoughts. He’d worry about that later. Tonight it just didn’t matter. Those videos were all over the Internet. She could’ve easily satisfied her curiosity about his infamous past. Hell, everyone else had watched them, even the people in this remote redneck town. So much for escaping LA and all those prying eyes.

Little towns were the worst. He should’ve realized that. It wasn’t possible to get lost in around here. That’s why he seldom left the ranch and why he hid out on his thousands of acres.

“Are you gonna roll?”

He looked up from her tits and met her eyes. “Uh, yeah. Sure. Is it my turn?”

“If you hadn’t been concentrating on my chest, you would know. Good thing *I’m* honest.”

Two more rolls, and she was in trouble again. He, on the other

hand, held enough money to pay off the national debt.

“Another loan?” He raised one eyebrow. “Three thousand for the jeans.”

“Five.”

“Four.”

“No deal.”

“What the hell, five. Take ‘em off.”

She stood and peeled those tight jeans from her body, revealing a pair of pink lace bikini panties that matched her bra. He loved that she wasn’t wearing the usual butt floss that the other women he dated wore. He never could understand how women tolerated wearing those damn things. Her underwear was much sexier.

She played with a lock of her hair and studied the board.

“Ready to quit?”

She met the challenge in his eyes with one of her own. “Never. Roll, Cowboy.”

He hesitated. His eyes searched her face for an indication that she knew how far he’d gone in those videos, but he found none. If she did know, it didn’t deter her from this sexual game they played. A tell-tale wet spot dampened the crotch of her panties.

She’d lost her shirt on Tennessee, her pants on Pennsylvania. He owned the utilities, one railroad, and half of the properties. She spent the last of her latest loan on buildings, hoping to extract a little revenge on him. It worked, along with a string of bad luck in the form of bad Chance cards he drew and bad rolls of the dice. Before he knew it, he was taking off his shirt. He didn’t mind one damn bit.

* * * *

The jerk was baiting her, and the bait worked. The man was ripped. Retirement hadn’t made him soft. He still had his six-pack abs, a dusting of blond chest hair, well-defined pecs, and muscular arms. He’d traded his football bulk for a leaner, more chiseled body.

She wiped her mouth in case drool ran down her chin. Her eyes dropped to the big belt buckle he sported.

"Is there a problem?"

"No."

"You're staring at my fly."

"I'm looking at that belt buckle. I've never seen it before."

"Honey, there's no way that's what you're looking at." Her body vibrated at the sound of his rich Texas drawl.

"Your ego's bigger than that belt buckle." She looked pointedly at his crotch. His big belt buckle didn't conceal the erection pressing against his tight jeans.

"Maybe, but not nearly as big as another part of my anatomy."

Boy, howdy, did she ever know that.

"So whad'ya say, darlin? Wanna take it for a test ride?"

"Get back to the game."

"I thought I was." He shrugged. His gray eyes danced with anticipation of what was to come, or who.

She rolled a two, and it put her on Boardwalk, complete with four houses. At which time, the smartass belted out *Under the Boardwalk*, adding his own bawdy lyrics about doing it under the boardwalk.

"Give up?"

"No."

"You never could hold onto money."

"I still have some bargaining power."

He stared at her boobs. "A thousand for each."

"That's it?"

"Times are tough. The bank is running low on cash thanks to your reckless spending."

"And you're money hoarding."

He shrugged. "I'm broke, too."

"You don't seem upset about it. I think you did it on purpose."

"Let's see the goods, babe."

"Two thousand isn't enough. That just pays my debt to you."

“No shit. Like I don’t know that. Take it or leave it.”

She took it because they’d end up naked anyway. She enjoyed this creative foreplay as much as he did. Reaching back she unfastened her bra, watching his eyes all the time. They glowed like sun rays on a mirror. Sitting up straight, she removed her bra and gave him a good view.

“Just one?” He referred to the fact that she’d pierced one nipple.

“To be honest, it hurt like hell, so I couldn’t follow through on the second one.”

“I like it.”

“I knew you would.” She’d done it with him in mind for that very reason. At the time, it’d been stupid, wishful thinking, but she’d done it just the same.

“I like this.” He reached out a large calloused hand and fingered the two-inch long string of miniature beads that dangled from the hoop in her nipple. She moaned at his touch. Heat rushed to her crotch and soaked her panties. “Why did you do this?”

“Get it pierced?”

“Yeah.” His husky voice shot thrills of pleasure through her.

Because she wanted him to see that she could be a bad girl if that was what he needed. She couldn’t tell him that. “I did it on a bet with some girlfriends.”

He accepted that answer. Grasping the beads, he tugged. She gasped. He tugged little harder. Her breath caught in her throat. One more tug, quick and sharp. She yelped as pleasure pain pricked her sensitive nipple. He released the chain of beads. His eyes lifted to hers in surprise. “You liked that.”

She nodded, more surprised than he was.

“Have you been seeing someone since we broke up?” A jealous fire flashed in his eyes.

“No one important.” She couldn’t lie to him about this. She’d only had a handful of men before him. After him, she went through a slut phase, screwing any man that even slightly caught her interest. None

of them replaced him. None of it made the emptiness go away. None of it exorcised his brand on her heart. No one turned her on like Levi. “And you?”

“No one.”

“Levi.” Her heart ached for him. Guilt cut deep. She’d done this to him.

Natalie reached up and touched his strong, firm chin. She pulled his face down to hers and met no resistance. He parted his lips and took possession of her mouth, slow and easy. His lazy seduction of her sent thrills of pleasure zipping through her. Her tongue wrapped around his. Her arms wrapped around his neck. He pulled her closer. His fingers burrowed in her hair, soft and gentle. A slow passion burned between them, like an ember taking its time to ignite.

A yearning for his cock burned between her thighs. A yearning for his heart built passion so hot it should have melted the snow outside.

She dragged her mouth away from his. “I want to try those things you did to women in your videos.”

“Is that why you’re here? You’ve watched my porn movies?”

“Yes. They were hot.” Okay, so it wasn’t the whole reason she was here, but it worked for starters.

His gray eyes drilled into hers, wading through all the crap until he unearthed her soul. She looked down, unable to take the heat.

“What exactly would you like to try, baby? I did it all. No job was too tough or too hardcore for the Cowboy.”

“Maybe we could start small and work our way up.”

“I’m already worked up.” He rubbed two fingers across her crotch. “And so are you.”

“Then let’s saddle up and see where the night takes us.”

Chapter Three

“I’m afraid it’s not going to be pretty, but it’ll be a wild ride, regardless of the duration.” Every muscle he possessed tensed in preparation for a strenuous workout, especially the big one between his legs. He stood and reached out a hand. She swatted it away.

“First put on the hat. The Cowboy never rode without his hat.”

“You got it, darlin’.” Levi grinned and literally ran to retrieve his black Stetson. He crammed it on his head and hightailed it back to the den.

Panting from more than exertion, he picked her up and deposited her ass on the big mahogany desk. She clung to him, and he shook her off. No emotions, and he meant it. None of this clingy crap women liked to dish out. Tonight would be slam-bam-now-leave-me-alone-ma’am. She’d go to her bed, and he’d go to his.

“What won’t be pretty about it?” She looked up at him.

“It’ll be fast, hard, and rough.” He needed to feel her sweet, tight cunt wrapped around his cock. She made him hornier than a three-peckered billy goat, as his gramps used to say.

“Will you go the eight seconds?”

“As long as you don’t buck me off before I’m done.” Levi stripped out of his jeans and briefs in one quick, efficient motion. He grinned as he caught her staring at his dick. Grabbing a condom from the stash on his nightstand, he ripped open the package and rolled it on in one efficient motion.

She licked her lips and met his eyes. “I’ll be bucking. You better hang on, Cowboy.”

The visual of her bucking and him fucking hardened his famished

cock all the more. God, he'd sink deep inside her and forget about the world for a while. A long while.

He grabbed her panties, pulled them down her long legs, and tossed them aside. Her fingernails dug into his shoulders. The pain urged him on, drove him half out of his mind.

"Fuck me, Levi. Take me now." She wrapped her legs around his waist, leaned back and supported her body on her elbows. Arching her back, she raised her hips in an effort to get him closer.

Oh, hell, he didn't need to be told twice. He prided himself on his mastery of foreplay, but ending his self-imposed celibacy overrode all other reason.

He'd be a selfish bastard and make it up to her the next time.

The next time?

Yeah, there'd be a next time. Shit, they were stuck on this ranch for who knew how long, so he'd make the best of it. It didn't mean anything, just the physical act of intercourse.

His dick rubbed against her wet cunt. She was wet and rarin' to go. He was packing heat and needed to empty several rounds into that sweet spot of hers.

His cock throbbed with anticipation as he slid inside her lust dampened walls. A huge groan scratched and clawed its way out of his throat. He sunk in deeper.

Natalie shoved her hips against his, forcing him inside her. Even as her body fought to adjust to his size, she ignored the discomfort and met his thrusts with her own.

Panting, groaning, sweating, and flexing, he buried himself in a blistering, silken heaven. For a moment, he held himself in place and took deep breaths. He fought for control, however tenuous. He fully intended to last longer than eight seconds.

Natalie's deep blue eyes bored into his. She brought up one manicured hand and toyed with her nipple chain, teasing the hell out of him.

Oh, fuck. He plucked the chain from her fingers and held onto it.

Levi pulled completely out, despite her protests, and plunged into her again. Natalie screamed his name and begged him not to stop.

He had no intentions of stopping. His control disintegrated and animal lust celebrated its freedom. He crashed into her again and again, ramming in and out of her. He forgot everything but his needs, but she didn't seem to give a shit. She shouted and urged him on. Her crotch smacked against his with a frenzied rhythm. He hammered into her, each thrust wilder than the last.

Grabbing her ankles, he put them over his shoulders. This new position changed the angle. His cock touched her in different places. The little witch loved it. She writhed under him, her head thrown back against the desk.

Natalie gasped for breath. "Fuck me like you would a porn star. Don't be careful. Levi! Oh, yes! Yes!"

Her fevered cries drove him out of his friggin' mind. He rammed into her, harder than he ever had when they'd been together. She took it and gave it right back, her own rhythm as crazy and frantic as his. Even through the violent fucking, his hat stayed firmly lodged on his head. He liked it that way and wore it like a coat of armor.

He lasted more than eight seconds, but his stamina was coming to an end. He hated to go alone. As he continued to bang into her, he reached between her legs and worked her clit with one hand. His other hand stroked the nipple with the ring in it, toying with the small hoop, tugging on the chain, twisting it, then giving it a sharp tug.

She started to come, and his entire body pulsed with the energy flowing between him. His cock jerked as he emptied his load inside his condom.

Natalie thrashed about on the desk until her body shuddered and grew quiet. Levi watched her, his chest heaving from the exertion. Finally, she opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"Was it as good for you as it was for me?" She rubbed his back.

"Fucking good."

She nodded in agreement. He slid his fingers between her legs and

stroked her slit. His finger dipped inside. He held it up for her to see. It glistened with her cum. Levi brought it to his mouth and sucked the juices off. He dipped it inside again and held it to her lips. Natalie of a year ago would have been repulsed by such an act. This Natalie opened her mouth and sucked his finger clean. He hid his surprise.

He decided to push her a little further. "You do it."

"Do what?"

"Put your finger inside your pussy and then lick it off."

She didn't hesitate. Natalie put her finger inside and buried it up to the knuckle. She started to pull it out, and he stopped her, holding her hand inside her.

"Make yourself come."

"Again? I just did."

"Do you have an orgasm limit or something?"

"No, I don't."

Levi took her hand and began to move it in and out.

"I can do it myself."

"Then do it."

* * * *

Natalie stared up at Levi. Their eyes locked. She read the challenge there. When they'd been dating, she'd been a bit of a prude, she admitted that. Now she'd prove that she'd changed. It was all part of her plan to get him back.

If that was the road she needed to travel, then damn it, she'd do it. She propped her heels on the edge of the counter and spread her legs. Her hand moved faster and faster. Her thumb rubbed her clit.

Already sensitized and a little sore from Levi's hard fucking, she shocked herself when she felt the first waves overtake her. She closed her eyes and arched her back as her hips jerked and her fingers dove deeper, her thumb worked harder. She heard whimpering and realized it was coming from her own mouth. She shuddered and jerked as she

fell apart. When she opened her eyes, her fingers were still buried in her crotch. She pulled her hand away and stared at it in wonder. Cum coated her fingers.

“Nice job.”

She shrugged as if it was nothing. By the end of the weekend, it most likely would be nothing. Whatever it took, she’d do it to prove to Levi that she wanted him back, wanted to make amends, wanted his forgiveness. Besides, it was good book research.

Levi’s expression was unreadable. “How about a soak in the hot tub?”

“Outside? In this?”

“Hell, yeah. So California girl, have you ever sat in a hot tub when it’s snowing?” He peeled off his condom and grabbed a new one.

“I’m a Wyoming girl, but we didn’t have a hot tub.”

He took her arm, pulled her to her feet, and steered her to the door. “There’s a first time for everything.”

“This weekend is all about first times.”

“What the hell does that mean?” His head snapped around, and he shot her a scathing glare. She shrugged.

“You’ll have to figure that out for yourself, Cowboy.”

“I don’t think I’ll bother.”

“Still holding a grudge, are you?”

“No. A grudge would mean I gave a shit, and I don’t.”

She didn’t believe him. He did give a shit. She’d broken his heart, left him to fight the wolves alone, and now she needed to pay. Somehow, some way she’d win him over. She smiled at the snow piled on the ground. Mother Nature was obviously on her side.

Chapter Four

She hated to admit it, but Levi was right. It was heavenly sitting in a hot tub as snow fell in big, fat, fluffy flakes all around them. Natalie leaned back and nestled in the crook of his arm. They sat in silence for several minutes. She felt the rise and fall of his chest against the bare skin on her back. His breath feathered her cheek.

“This is really nice.”

“Yeah, it is.” He sounded sad, almost like he regretted being here with her.

“How come you never tried out any of that stuff on me?” She didn’t look at him, but made circles in the water with her hand.

“What stuff?”

“The stuff Cowboy Long Dong did to women.”

“What do *you* know about any of that, good little senator’s daughter that you are?”

“I’ve seen them.” She turned her head to look up at him. Her cheeks grew hot at her admission.

“You watched my movies?” Frowning, he looked at her. “How many of them did you see?”

“All of them. Over and over again. I own the entire DVD series. They kept me company during those long, lonely nights.”

“Shit.” He pursed his lips and a muscle in his jaw jumped. She’d hit a nerve. By the end of the weekend, she’d hit a lot more. “Are you nuts?”

“No, I’m not. Why would you call that nuts? They’re classics.”

“Classics? They’re porn, pure and simple.”

“All that stuff you did, was it just for the movies or do you

practice what you preach?”

“You’re a little too nosy.”

“How come you were so conservative with me?”

“Because you were such a lady.”

“Maybe I wanted to be treated like a porn star in the bedroom.”

“Look, I made those movies in my wild college days. My old man refused to help me out, and my football scholarship didn’t cover much. One of my frat brothers had an uncle who did high-end porn. He came to the frat one time and filmed a pretty wild party. He saw the size of my dick and made me an offer—”

“That you couldn’t refuse.”

“As a horny, financially destitute twenty-year-old, refusing wasn’t an option. I never thought they’d come back to haunt me fifteen years later.”

“But they did.”

He nodded. “I made good money and had a helluva good time doing them. Even so, I’m not proud of them. I never thought they’d gather such a cult following or that anyone would recognize me.”

“It was hard to tell. You kept that cowboy hat on no matter what position you were in.”

“That took talent.” One corner of his mouth turned up in that familiar sexy lopsided grin. He touched the brim of his hat. “And a good hat.”

“I don’t doubt that. Do you still have the touch?”

“The touch?”

“Can you keep your hat on, baby, no matter the position?”

He snorted. “Of course, I can.”

“I wanna see it.”

“In time.”

“So you’re admitting we have a future?”

“I’m admitting nothing beyond the next few hours.”

“Then we need to get started if we’re going to cover all the bases.”

“Honey, in order to cover the bases those movies covered, we’d need several more people participating and props I don’t have.”

“Then we’ll have to start with the basics and improvise from there.”

He laughed. “Improvisation, I can do. Let’s get this party started.”

“I thought we did that earlier?”

“You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.” Scooting away from her, he stood, the water swirled around him. She looked up as he moved in front of her. His huge cock, the thing from which legends were made, waved in front of her face. She stared up at him, knowing what he wanted, but not how far he’d take it. Or how far she’d let him.

He placed a hand on the back of her head and exerted gentle pressure. She wrapped one hand around the base of his massive penis and bent her head down. A drop of pre-cum glistened on the tip. She licked it off.

“I always wanted you to take me deep and swallow. You wouldn’t do that before.”

“I will now. At least, I’ll try.” He upped the stakes. He was testing her. If she wanted him back in her bed on a permanent basis, she would have to prove herself. Before, he’d treated her like a China doll and catered to her needs. Those days were gone. She wanted them to be gone. She’d seen the videos and fantasized over them for a long, lonely year. Now she wanted the man, along with his massive cock.

“Some of the things I like are not mainstream. Understand?”

“I saw the movies.” She nodded. Getting wetter and wetter, and not from the water. “I know what I want.”

He looked skeptical. “If it gets too much, you’ll tell me to stop?”

“Yes.”

“Promise?”

“Yes.”

“Aren’t you cold?” The snow fell around them, dusting his golden blond hair and his broad shoulders.

“I’m hotter than hell.”

She bent to the task at hand, or in hand. Running her tongue down his cock, she reached deep for every technique she possessed in her small arsenal of tricks, and it *was* a small arsenal. She'd counteract her lack of experience with her enthusiasm. She licked, kissed, and sucked, using lips, mouth, and tongue. Holding her hand at the base, Natalie rotated it and pumped while her mouth did its job. She sucked one ball into her mouth, then licked and sucked the other.

"Shit. Fuck. Damn. Girl, where'd you learn that?"

From writing X-rated erotic romances, but she wasn't ready to reveal that secret yet.

Groaning, Levi clutched a fistful of her hair in his hands and steered her mouth back to the tip. She guided him past her lips, working her hand on the base of his cock while she sucked on the tip. With gentle pressure he pushed her mouth further down the shaft.

"Open wider, like you're saying 'ahhhhh.' Stick out your tongue to leave room in the back of your throat."

She tried, opening her mouth as wide as it would go. He was just so huge. She gagged and pulled back. He gave her a moment to take a few breaths and pushed her face back down on him again. Natalie struggled to take him deeper, but even with her mouth stretched wide, it was a challenge. She had about a third of him in her mouth, she sucked and swirled her tongue on his rock-hard shaft.

Levi threw back his head and made an animal growl. "Damn. As much as I'm liking this, I won't last long enough to fuck you. And I really want to fuck you again tonight."

Natalie leaned back and looked up. His hat shaded his eyes. "You said that earlier and did a pretty good job. I enjoyed it. We have all weekend to try new stuff."

He lifted her to her feet. His mouth crushed hers with fierce possession. His chest hair abraded her bare skin.

"Kneel down in the tub and put your hands on the seat so you can stay above water."

She did as he told her. Her butt was underwater, her chest partially

above. She looked over her shoulder. Levi stared at her ass like a man seeing heaven.

“I’m sorry, baby, but this isn’t going to be one of those times when my staying power lasts all night. But next time, I promise.”

“That’s okay. Just fill me.” She panted.

“I’ll bet under this water your cunt is dripping like a leaky faucet.”

“You do have a way with words, you romantic devil.”

“It’s one of my many talents.” He reached for the condom.

“You don’t need that. I’m on the pill. I don’t have any diseases either. Do you?”

“Hell no, I’ve always been very careful. You know that.” Tossing the condom aside, he positioned his cock at her opening. She held her breath, waiting for the feeling that never got old. He pushed inside her, his size threatening to rip her apart, yet she took him, all of him, and her body adjusted more quickly to him this time.

Natalie wriggled her butt and pushed back, grinding her ass against his crotch. He held her hips with his big hands and pushed his cock home. She felt a slight discomfort, but it quickly faded as he pulled halfway out then thrust deep again. He was so huge. He filled her like no other man ever had or ever could.

All the men she’d slept with in the past year didn’t drive him from her mind. In fact, she wanted him even more. She braced her body with her hands and closed her eyes. Conflicting emotions and physical sensations flowed through her. Levi established a rhythm, not fast, not slow. Not hard. Not soft. So very Levi. Controlled and experienced.

She wondered what the Cowboy felt like. She had a taste of him earlier than evening, and she wanted more.

* * * *

Levi bit his lower lip. The pain didn’t distract him from the tight heaven that surrounded his hungry, sex-deprived cock. Her beautiful butt waved in front of him like red flag in front of bull. Water swirled

around them. He was so tempted. He had been so tempted in the past.

What the hell.

If she wanted to be fucked, she'd be fucked in more ways than she imagined. Levi slid his thumb up her butt crack, fingering her butt hole as he continued to thrust in and out of her tight cunt.

She squirmed underneath him when his thumb pushed against her anus. Natalie attempted to pull away, but he held her tight. He continued to touch her there as he pumped away. She moaned and writhed under him. The jets sent water whirling around them, stimulating them both.

He pushed his index finger into the opening just slightly, pinning her in place with his other hand.

"You don't like that, baby?"

"It feels funny. I don't know."

"We'll work on that." Oh, hell yes, he would. He had a bag of toys he hadn't used yet. He would this weekend. No more coddling. He'd show her who the real Levi Kelly was.

He continued to toy with her butt hole while his thrusts became harder, a little rougher. She angled her butt to take him deeper. That simple movement unleashed the devil inside. He started slamming into her, each thrust more powerful than the last. Her muscles convulsed around his cock, milking it, driving it beyond reason and to satisfaction. He gritted his teeth in an iron effort of will to make this last longer than the first time. Reaching around, he found her clit, good thing he was a multi-tasker. He rubbed her hot little nub. She stiffened and gyrated against his hard-working hand. Then she fell apart underneath him. Her body shuddered. She threw back her head and screamed.

Levi rammed into her a few more times. He released his load inside her, pumping into her again and again. His mind and body fragmented into a million pieces. Heaven. He was in heaven. The water swirled around him. He fought the urge to drop into its warmth and never surface again.

Sated and satisfied, he crawled to a seat in the tub and sank neck-deep in the water. Natalie followed suit. He shut his eyes and let the warmth wash over him while he thanked anyone and everyone for sending this woman and this snow storm his way.

Chapter Five

Levi got out of the hot tub and wrapped a large towel around his body. He handed one to Natalie, who ran for the warmth of the house while he put the cover back on the tub.

He followed her inside. "I'm hungry."

"Me, too. What do you have in this house to eat?"

"You're the caterer."

She cringed. "How about some frozen waffles and garlic bread?"

He made a face. "I'm not paying for this."

"Oh, yes, you are, Mr. Long Dong."

He almost allowed himself to smile. "I'm still hungry."

"Well, if you'd keep your refrigerator stocked, we'd have more to pick from." She wiped the water from her body and wrapped the towel around it.

"If you wouldn't have had the groceries delivered to the wrong place, we'd have plenty to eat." Levi shook the snow from his hat and placed it back on his head.

"I didn't. They screwed up."

"Yeah, right."

"Don't you have anything to eat in this house?"

"I eat out. I never cook. From the looks of the frozen food delivered here earlier, you don't either."

"I'm a good cook."

"Since when?"

"Since I went to culinary school after we split up."

"You? Culinary school." He laughed. What a joke. She'd never expressed the slightest interest in cooking when they'd been together.

“I’ve always been interested. It’s just that kitchens used to intimidate me.”

“Well then, master chef, work your magic on those frozen waffles and garlic bread. And you can leave the towel off, baby.”

She ignored him and kept the towel on. Levi followed her into the kitchen and took a perch on a bar stool. She popped some waffles in the toaster, cut up some garlic, put it on the cheese bread, and stuck it in the oven. Her towel kept falling off, which made for a nice view. Finally, he got up and went into the pantry, snagged an apron, and tossed it to her. She took off her towel and put on the apron. Her breasts peeked out from either side. It didn’t cover her crotch or her butt. Crossing his arms, he sat back and enjoyed the sights. She ignored his leering and went about her preparations.

Levi picked up the chocolate sauce sitting on the counter. “What were you going to do with this?”

“Uh, it’s for the waffles.”

He raised one eyebrow. “I doubt that.”

“I’m open to suggestions.”

“I have plenty.”

“I bet you do, Cowboy.”

“You can ride my range anytime.”

“Is that a promise?”

He backed off. Why the hell was he giving her an open invitation like that? “With an expiration date.”

“I see.” Her face fell, and he felt like an ass, but then, he was one. Not that she didn’t deserve it.

Levi didn’t give love easily, if at all. He’d given his heart to her. She’d flipped him the bird at the first sign of trouble and hightailed it out of Dodge.

He didn’t forgive any easier than he gave love. Even though his cock seemed to have forgiven, his heart didn’t. The problems were still there between them. Her big-shot senator daddy with high political aspirations would never allow his daughter to date a one-time

porn star. Even though that porn star was a potential hall-of-famer and two-time Super Bowl winner, not to mention a former Defensive Player of the Year.

Levi had gotten used to rejection. Once the news of his porn career came out a year go, his entire family wrote him off. His unyielding, hyper-critical father led the charge. He hadn't talked to any of them since. When his beloved aunt died several months later, his father's attorney contacted him and told him he wasn't welcome at the memorial service. That was the last contact he had with anyone regarding his family. For them, he'd ceased to exist.

In some ways, he didn't give a shit. None of them ever showed him much love. His mother resented her son and never wanted a child. His father ignored him unless he felt inclined to whip his ass with a belt. As a child, Levi did his best to avoid the old man, especially if he'd been drinking.

Natalie touched his arm, and he jumped. "What are you thinking?"

"Waffles and sex." He forced all expression from his face. She'd always been able to read him, which pissed him off. Allowing someone to see into his soul gave them the power to exploit him. This was all about sex. That was it. He didn't love her anymore, nor did he give a shit what she felt for him.

"Levi, I doubt it's that simple."

"Okay. Then I'm thinking about the chocolate sauce."

She plunked a plateful of waffles in front of him. He picked one up and studied it. "What? No butter or syrup?"

"You tell me. You got any?"

He sighed. "That's why I hired you. I don't have any food here. I'd been meaning to go to the store but hadn't gotten around to it." Levi chomped on one of the waffles. It was crunchy and hard. "Did you learn how to cook like this in culinary school?"

She gnawed into her own waffle. "Not very good, huh?"

He shook his head.

“Let’s try the garlic cheese bread.”

“Okay.” He watched as she took the bread from the oven and cut it in pieces. It tasted a helluva lot better than the waffles.

They ate in silence. Levi stole glances at her body. His cock grew hard again, and his mind whipped through various scenarios to try next. He picked up the chocolate sauce and rolled it around in his hands, considering the possibilities.

“So, which one did you like the best?”

“Excuse me?”

“Which Long Dong movie did you like the best?”

She considered that for a moment, even as her face grew red thinking about it. “Maybe *Below the Belt Buckle*, *Shootout*, or *Rode Hard, Staying Wet*. I also liked *Whips and Spurs*. And you? Which one was your personal favorite?”

“That’s easy. *The Gunslinger*. Hell, I had a dozen women catering to me. What guy wouldn’t love that?”

“I never saw that side of you before. Were you bored with me? With just one woman?”

He didn’t want to answer that. She could never bore him. Even the traditional sex she’d insisted on hadn’t bored him.

“Levi?”

“Hmmm.”

“*Did* I bore you?”

“No.” He shifted uncomfortably and switched subjects back to safer ground. Sex. “So you liked *Whips and Spurs*? I wouldn’t take you for that type of woman.”

“I guess you never knew me, did you?”

“I don’t want to talk about us. This isn’t about us. It’s about fucking.”

“Okay, fine. Then tie me up and have your way with me.”

“Are you challenging me?”

“You betcha.”

“Do you have any idea what you’re getting into?”

“I’ve seen the movies. I want to try it. I want to do this for you. I want you back.”

He stiffened, feeling sick inside. He hated that feeling. It was the dreaded taste of fear. “This won’t change my mind.”

“We’ll see.”

“Keep this in mind. It was your idea.”

Chapter Six

Mustering up her courage, Natalie trailed Levi into the bedroom. It was so Levi, all rustic, large furniture, huge four poster pine bed. In one corner of the room on a saddle rack sat a saddle.

“Is that a prop or do you always store saddles in your bedroom?”

“Huh?” He swung around and looked at her.

“The saddle.” She pointed at it.

“Oh, that. It’s a very expensive custom-made roping saddle. A master saddle maker in Texas made it for me.”

“Do you just use it for ambiance, or do you actually ride in it?”

“Of course, I ride in it. I just don’t keep it in the barn because I don’t want the leather to get moldy.”

“I see.”

“If you’re a good girl, I might let you take it for a ride.”

“If I’m a bad girl, can I take you for a ride?” She watched his expression, waiting for that shutter to close down and keep her out. Instead, he grinned, that disarming grin that melted her heart. Now if she could only find a way to melt his.

“Saddle up, baby.” He tipped his hat.

She walked over to the saddle. Levi came up behind her and untied her apron. It fell to the ground at her feet. His towel followed. He put his arms around her waist. His cock pressed against her butt. The brim of his hat rubbed the top of her head.

“Have you ever done it in a saddle?” She stroked the leather tooling on the saddle.

“When it was on a horse?” He raised one eyebrow.

“Well, yeah.”

“Only in my movies, and it wasn’t a real horse.” He stepped back and regarded her. His hat shielded his gray eyes and gave him the look of a Wild West gunslinger, albeit a naked one. Wetness pooled between her legs. She’d always been a sucker for a dangerous man.

He walked to the foot of his bed and opened a large, rough-sewn cedar chest. He pulled out a riata, a soft, braided rawhide version of a lasso, and a pair of hobbles.

“What are you going to do with that?” Her voice quavered and her pussy moistened even more. Little prickles of anticipation shot through her, hardening her nipples and settling in her pussy.

“Rope me a little heifer, hog tie her, and brand her as mine.”

She backed up a few steps. Her eyes never left the rope he held easily in his two hands. He swung it in a lazy circle over his head. As quick as a striking snake he released it. Giggling, she turned to run, but it settled over her shoulders, just above her nipples. He pulled it tight and effectively pinned her arms to her sides. The rope put an uncomfortable pressure on her breasts and turned her on all the more. Keeping a taut pressure, he reeled her in. At first she fought out of instinct. He seemed to like that. She willed herself to relax, not wanting to give him the satisfaction.

“Lean over the saddle, sweetheart.” She didn’t move, and he gave the rope a sharp tug and towed her to the saddle. He pushed her body across the saddle’s seat, butt in the air, breasts hanging down the opposite side.

Desire thrummed through her. Her body burned from the heat in his voice and the uncertainty of what would happen next. She wouldn’t stop for the world.

Taking the end of the leather rope, he ran it between her legs under the bottom of the saddle rack then tied the rope to her hands. He kept it just tight enough that if she tried to move her hands, the rope rubbed her pussy and butt crack. Oh, hell, it felt so damn dirty. She experimented with the rope and how it rubbed her pussy. She’d be able to make herself come right here and now.

Levi took the hobbles and spread her legs apart, opening her up. Using the hobbles, he fastened her ankles to opposite legs of the rack, which left her spread open and vulnerable.

He bent down to lick her ear then whisper to her. “You okay?”

“Uh huh.”

“If you want me to stop, just say so, at any time.”

“I don’t want you to stop.”

“Have you ever had anything in your ass?”

“No.” She shivered in anticipation and looked over her shoulder at him.

“Well, then, let’s take care of that little problem.”

She heard him rummage in his chest. More noises, like a jar opening. His big hands touched her butt, and she flinched.

“Relax, darlin’. You’ll love this once you get used to it.”

His finger, slippery with some kind of lubricant, moved the rope to one side, which caused it to tighten on her pussy and clit. She moaned and rubbed against it. Levi spread her butt cheeks. His finger probed her hole. He drew a circle around it with the lubricant and rubbed it all over her. His finger slid inside. She gasped and started to thrash about on the saddle, which only tightened the rope.

“Take it easy. You want me to stop?”

“No.” She gritted her teeth, wrapped her hands around the legs of the saddle rack and held on.

He pushed a little further in. It burned, and she squirmed but found no relief. He left it there, giving her muscles time to expand around his finger.

“Take deep breaths. Really deep. Breathe.”

She did, breathing in and out slowly. The pain subsided. He pushed a little further inside then waited patiently. She continued to breathe, even as new pain washed over her.

It took a while but finally his finger was fully embedded in her ass. He pulled it out gently. She looked over her shoulder as he put a generous amount of lube on his finger, pushed it inside her then

repeated the process.

“You ready?”

“For what?”

“A butt plug. A small one.” He squeezed the lube in his palm and rolled the plug around in it, thoroughly coating it.

He inserted it about an inch, stopping when it felt like it wouldn’t go any further. He paused, pulled out slightly, twisted the plug, waited, and pushed in again, a little further. Her muscles burned as they stretched around the plug, but he was patient. Eventually, the plug moved past the ring of muscles, and the plug seeded itself inside her. Despite the burning and slight pain, it was one of the most sensual experiences she’d ever had.

“How’s that feel?”

“Incredible. Weird. Forbidden. Hot.”

“You like it?” He sounded incredulous.

“I do.” She squirmed, experimenting with the feel of it.

Levi rubbed the riata back and forth between her legs. It pressed against the butt plug and moved it back and forth. Rubbing on her pussy lips and clit, she groaned and pushed back against it, flexing her hips to move it faster.

Levi held it tighter, rubbed it harder. The pleasure and pain caused by the friction drove her insane. She thrashed about as the waves of pleasure swept over her, releasing her body into that state of oblivion.

* * * *

Levi watched her come. She’d surprised him at her ability to stretch her limits. Now he’d stretch them some more and enjoy himself in the process.

Levi positioned his cock at the entrance into her pussy, made even tighter by the butt plug. He tried to go easy but his body wouldn’t cooperate. His hips slammed against her ass and drove his cock deep inside her. She gasped and struggled against the ropes. Panting, Levi

leaned over her, relishing how her pussy closed around him like a fist.

He flexed his hips and pushed deeper. She gasped again and wriggled underneath him. He reached around and found her nipples pressed against the seat of the saddle. He rolled them between his fingers, pinching and tugging them. She yelped when he squeezed a little too hard, but it didn't deter him. He knew how far to take it.

Still playing with those gorgeous tits, he withdrew and slammed into her again, raising her hips out of the saddle. He started a steady barrage of thrusting, slamming, ramming, harder and harder, deeper and deeper.

"Fuck me!" she screamed. "Fuck me harder. Come on, you can do it! Harder! Harder! Give it to me! Ride me, Cowboy. Ride me!"

Aw, hell, her frenzied screaming drove him wild. He slammed into her relentlessly. His infamous stamina didn't desert him this time. He rammed into her with a force that he'd never used before with her.

She came first, over and over again. He gave her a few seconds to recover and resumed his relentless fucking until his own orgasm overtook him. He pulled out and shot his load on her ass and pussy. His cum dripped down her ass and pussy.

Damn. He was a lucky man.

Chapter Seven

Levi squeezed bubble bath into the big tub in his bathroom and checked the water temperature. He glanced at Natalie. She was rubbing her ass after they'd expelled the butt plug.

Levi stepped into the large square tub that sat in front of a picture window overlooking the ranch and the distant mountains. He sank into the water up to his neck.

"Are you going to join me?" He took a sip of wine from the glass he'd just poured.

She hesitated. "I'm not sure. I need a break for a few hours. I'm not used to non-stop sex."

Levi threw back his head and laughed. "Now there's the Natalie I used to know and lo—" He stopped dead. The word caught in his throat. Shit. Despite the fact that he was enjoying the hell out of the sex, he needed to send her packing as soon as was humanly possible. Maybe he should spring for a copter to pick her up in the morning if the snow stopped.

Natalie staggered over to the tub, her gait stiff and sore. He watched as she stepped gingerly into the deep water and slipped down into its warmth. She leaned her head back and shut her eyes. "This feels so good."

"A little sore?"

"Duh."

Levi chuckled. "You said you wanted the Cowboy."

"I did."

"Have you had a change of heart?"

"Not on your life. I'm just getting warmed up."

“So am I.”

She looked almost stricken but quickly hid it. “The snow has stopped.” Natalie looked out the window into the dark winter night. “Maybe your friends will make it tomorrow.”

His friends? Hell, he’d forgotten all about them. “If they do, what will I feed them?”

“If they can make it in, I can make it out to get the right groceries.”

“Chips and hot dogs would be fine.”

“Are you doubting my cooking again?”

“Honey, you didn’t do a great job on the frozen waffles.”

She looked away, pouting, and sank deeper in the water.

Levi leaned back and enjoyed the warm water lapping over his chest. Putting in this huge tub was one of the smartest things he did when remodeling this place. He’d never shared it with a woman before, but he’d always intended to. Somewhere he’d find that one elusive woman who loved him for who he was, not for his big dick or Super Bowl rings.

Natalie was not that woman. She had been once, or so he’d thought. Her father would see to it that it didn’t happen again. In a rash moment of tenderness, he pulled her to him and wrapped his arm around her. She stiffened, probably wary of another sexual onslaught. “Don’t worry. We both need time to recharge our batteries.”

She breathed a sigh of relief. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m loving every moment of it.”

“I can tell.” He chuckled.

“Where do we go from here?”

“I don’t know what you mean.” He approached with caution. Were they starting one of those typical woman things where she wanted some kind of commitment from him?

“I mean sexually.”

“We still have some chocolate sauce we haven’t used.”

Her eyes lit up at the thought. “Can I use it on you?”

“I’ll think about it.”

* * * *

Natalie lay on her back in Levi’s big bed. He snoozed next to her. His arms flung out to both sides. He’d always been a bed hog. Clarence lay to one side on his own pillow, eyeing her like the other woman. She glared back. No way would she let a cat intimidate her. In response, Clarence stood, took a few turns around the pillow and lay back down with his back to her. Probably his way of saying ‘fuck you.’

She propped her head up with one hand and watched him sleep. So peaceful. So vulnerable. Sleep removed ten years from his face with the stress lines gone. What did he have to be so stressed over? It certainly wasn’t money. Was he still hiding out from the scandal caused by the publicity surrounding the discovery of his career as a porn star? Did she cause some of those stress lines?

She stroked his cheek gently. He murmured her name but didn’t wake up. His chest rose and fell in an easy rhythm. Blond hair dusted those incredible abs and pecs. He wasn’t bulked up like he’d been while playing football, but he’d kept his body in amazing shape. If she knew Levi, he’d done a lot of this remodel work himself. He’d always been handy like that.

She’d give anything to go back in time to that day she’d walked out on him. She’d been upset. He’d lied to her. Her father, appalled by the adverse publicity it might bring his next campaign, pulled her in one direction. Love for Levi pulled her in another. In the end, the pressure had been too much. She’d caved and left him to battle alone. She hated herself for that.

She loved him. She’d made a huge mistake. Now this wounded warrior with his stubborn pride and broken heart would make her pay for her stupidity and prove herself. She’d find a way to show him how sorry she was and how much she loved him.

And she'd tell him her own secret.
Closing her eyes, she snuggled against his warm body.

* * * *

Levi tromped through the snow the next morning to feed the horses. Natalie followed him even though he'd begged her to stay in the warm house. She loved horses and wanted to see his animals.

They walked down the barn aisle, and he introduced her to each horse. She stroked the big animals on their soft noses and whispered to them. It warmed his heart to see her with his animals, and he didn't want her to warm his heart. He fully intended to keep it in the freezer.

Levi went through his morning chores, and she jumped right in, tossing hay to the horses and grabbing a manure fork to clean out the stalls. Damn, she looked so good. She'd tied her shiny brown hair in a pony tail, thrown on a too-big sweatshirt of his, one of his jackets, and a faded pair of jeans.

"I'd love to go riding sometime."

He opened his mouth to extend an invitation then promptly shut it. Hurt flashed in her eyes. He ignored her and the sadness that crept over him. He missed her. Damn it. He wasn't supposed to miss her.

He walked into the tack room to get supplements. She tailed after him. He kept the heat on in the big room, so they lingered a moment to warm up, rubbing their hands together.

She inspected his saddles and bridles with the experience of a horsewoman. With a sassy grin, she picked up a whip, western riding quirt. It had a plaited leather handle about a foot-and-a-half long and a double leather lash. She held it up in front of his face. "What's this for?"

"Like you don't know."

"You don't use it on the horses, do you?" She teased him.

"What do you think?"

"I think it would be more useful in other ways." She smacked it

against her thigh, as if trying it out. His body sounded the alert and blood rushed to his cock, giving him the boner of all boners.

“What do you know about that?”

“You’d be surprised.”

“I’d be shocked.”

She was bluffing, and they both knew it.

Grasping each end, she tested its flexibility. He wet his lips and swallowed. Oh, fuck. He adjusted the crotch of his jeans, which had become uncomfortably tight. The wicked gleam in her eyes indicated she’d noticed.

“Show me how it’s used.”

“Are you drunk?”

“I assure you, I’m perfectly sober. There’s no wine left.” She smacked it against her thigh again. He just about exploded. *Shit. Damn. Crap. Oh, hell.*

He crushed her in his arms. His mouth hot and hungry on hers. He squeezed her butt and ground his crotch into hers. She moaned and kissed him back with the same wild fever. They clung to each other as their mouths devoured and attacked. Nothing about the kiss was tame. It was wild, carnal, out of control.

When he finally came up for air, her lips were swollen. His stubble had abraded the soft skin around her mouth. He didn’t give a shit, he wanted her again.

She smacked him on the butt with the whip then stepped behind a saddle rack to evade him. He stalked her around the room, playing cat and mouse and blocking her every move to escape out the door. He toyed with her, letting her get away because he wanted to. It was fun. It was arousing. When she gave him another sound smack on his stomach, he lunged and wrestled the thing from her hands.

“You’re begging for trouble.” He held both her hands together behind her back with one of his big hands.

“Then give it to me.” Her crystal blue eyes danced with mischief and pure devilment. Oh, man, he wanted nothing more than to do that

very thing. Excitement and lust pounded through his body. His cock begged for freedom from his tight jeans.

“I should pay you back for smacking me twice.”

“Then pay me back.” She challenged him with a defiant toss of her head.

Damn. Damn. Damn.

“Act out that scene in *Whips and Spurs*.”

He knew the scene she was referring to and then it began to dawn on him. “You followed me out here for just that purpose, didn’t you?”

She nodded.

“You crazy little brat. Are you serious?” He hoped to God she was.

She nodded again. He didn’t wait for a second invitation. Letting go of her hands, Levi reached for a set of leather reins hanging behind him. He stuck the quirt in his boot.

“Take off the coat.”

She shrugged out of the coat, then stood waiting for instructions, as if she didn’t know already.

* * * *

Okay, so she was crazy, but didn’t give a shit. She wanted to experience this so badly, she could taste it. The fear only served to excite her more. She wrote about this stuff in her books but never personally performed the act.

Levi bound her hands in front of her with a pair of reins. In the middle of the room, a four pronged hook hung from the ceiling for cleaning bridles. He cleared the area around the bridle hook, shoving saddle racks out of the way. Looping the reins over the hook, he hauled on the rope and raised her arms over her head. He held it snug so she almost stood on tip toes then tied the reins.

She swayed slightly, feeling woozy from lust and anticipation and fear. Levi unzipped her jeans and pulled them down her legs.

He regarded her for a minute. "Damn, and I did like that sweatshirt." He grabbed a pair of scissors from the counter and waved them in front of her face.

"You could untie me and let me take it off."

"Hell, no. What would be the fun in that? Besides, this is the way I did it in the movie." He cut ribbing at the bottom of the sweatshirt. She shivered as the cold metal touched her bare skin. Methodically, he snipped away until she stood horny and quaking in her underwear. The room, though heated, was only about 60 degrees. It sure beat the below-zero temps outside.

Levi tipped his hat back and met her uncertain gaze. "You okay?"

She nodded, her throat suddenly too dry to speak.

"Are you turned on?"

"Uh huh."

He rubbed a finger across the crotch of her panties. "You're wet. How'd that happen?"

"You did it to me. Just like I did that to you." She knew how it happened. In anticipation of what he'd do to her for punishment.

"Natalie, I'm so hard I could hit a hardball with my cock. That's how turned on I am."

"It's long enough."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome. It's the truth you know." There was something odd about carrying on a conversation like this while she hung half-naked from a tack hook.

"The guys in the locker room used to call me Clyde."

"As in Clydesdale."

"Yup, hung like a draft horse." He stared at his feet in a rare moment of embarrassment.

"You're my Cowboy Clyde."

"Works for me." He stroked her crotch and watched her squirm helplessly. "Do you want me to turn you loose?" He reached for the ropes around her hands.

“No. I’m so hot my insides feel like molten lava. I think you need to punish me for swatting you with that whip.”

“I think you’re right.”

Chapter Eight

Natalie pressed her crotch against Levi's hand and rubbed back and forth. His gray eyes darkened like welcome storm clouds moving in after a long drought. Being away from him had been a long drought for her.

Levi stroked her. His talented fingers slipped under the crotch of her panties. He touched all the right places with just the right pressure. Natalie opened her legs to grant him access.

"You like that?"

"A little to the right, please."

He chuckled. "Now don't get all demanding on me."

"Why not? I'm a princess, remember?"

"That you are. A princess all trussed up with no place to go."

"Why would I want to go anywhere when I have Clyde to do my bidding?"

"Honey, you got that backwards. You're going to be doing mine."

"I can't do anyone's bidding if you keep tying me up like this."

"I offered to let you go." He pushed his finger in deeper and brushed his thumb across her clit.

She drew in a breath. "No, I'll hang out here for a while. Could you touch me there again?"

He snorted. "You're pushing it."

"I thought you were," she shot back.

He withdrew his finger, and she whimpered in protest. Levi toyed with her belly button ring. He tipped his hat back, bent down, and kissed it. His tongue pressed into her navel and swirled around. She trembled from the gathering lust in her body.

“How about a little lower?”

“How about you shut up?”

She harrumphed but got her way. He moved lower. Picking up the scissors, he cut off her panties and laid his hat aside. Parting her pussy lips, he lapped up her juices. Pausing, he stuck his tongue inside. She ground her pussy against his face. He sucked and flicked his tongue in and out of her then ran it up her slit until he found that hard little nub of pleasure. His mouth encircled it, nibbling and sucking in alternate strokes. She whimpered like a dog begging for a bone, a big, fat, hard one.

On the brink of the first wave of pleasure, he withdrew. She squirmed and attempted to wriggle closer, but she couldn't. Sweat poured down her brow and moistened her quivering body.

“What the hell did you do that for? I was about to come.”

“Not yet. Not until I'm ready for you to come.”

“You bastard.”

“I love it when you whisper endearments. It turns me on.”

“Listen, Long Dong, I want it, and I want it now.”

He snorted and stood up, backing out of reach of her wicked feet.

“You don't look like you're in a position to demand anything.”

He walked behind her. “Face forward. Don't look.”

For once, she obeyed and waited. He ran the butt end of the quirt from her shoulders, down the small of her back, to her butt. He tickled her between the legs with it and slid it up and down her soaked slit. Her body trembled, sweat trickled between her breasts.

He slapped the quirt across her ass. It didn't hurt. Not at all. The man was a wuss. This was nothing.

“Is that all you got, Cowboy?”

“Shut up.” Smack. Again. A little harder this time, but nothing more than a pat on her butt.

“Wuss.”

“Don't push it.” Again. It slapped her ass and almost stung.

“That the best you've got?”

“Natalie.” The next one did sting. She assumed he’d quit after that.

He didn’t. The next one definitely stung and felt like it left a welt.

“You ass. What the hell are you doing?” She struggled against the bindings and tried to move out of range.

“What you asked me to do.” His hand rubbed her butt. “So, you’ve had enough. Is that it?”

“No, I haven’t.” She’d regret that stubborn declaration.

“How many do you want?”

“Ten. Lay it on me if you’re man enough.”

Those were fighting words, and she knew it. He counted out loud as he brought the whip down on her ass ten more times. It hurt like hell, almost brought tears to her eyes. Yet, it almost brought something else, too. She was on the verge of coming again. The Cowboy seemed to sense that because he stopped. He reached between her legs, which were sopping from her excitement.

“You’re turned on. Admit it.”

“Oh, hell yes.”

“Do you want untied?”

“Are you done?”

“I don’t need to be.”

“Then don’t be.”

He moved in front of her, held her chin in his hands, and kissed her hard and possessively. She kissed him back, just as possessively, branding him as hers. He jerked back and studied her. She stared right back. She’d claimed him, and he knew it.

Levi stroked her nipples with the lashes of the whip. Natalie closed her eyes and moaned. It felt so good, so decadent, so forbidden. What would it feel like if he brought those lashes down on her breasts? How much would it hurt? How much would it turn her on? She had to know. After all, this was an experiment, her experiment as to what she liked when it came to sex. And her author research, of course.

Oh, yeah, sure, she'd gone crazy and fucked every man she'd met after she'd left Levi. It hadn't meant anything. There'd been nothing but fucking, mostly missionary position, but nothing off the beaten path. Every one of those men bored her. She couldn't wait until it was over. None of them had been Levi. Now that she had him, she wasn't letting him go without a fight.

"Strike me." She held her breath, afraid he'd say yes and afraid he'd say no.

"Huh?" His mouth dropped open as he digested her words.

"Strike me with the whip on my breasts."

He frowned. His reluctance was obvious. He held the quirt in one hand, and fingered her nipple chain with the other.

"Please. Not very hard."

"Okay." He raised the quirt and brought it down on her unpierced nipple. The lashes slid over her breast, barely more than a tickle.

"A little harder." She was wet, wet, wet. She could feel it between her legs and on her thighs. Her pussy throbbed with need.

He raised a blond eyebrow but complied. The lashes slapped across the swell of her breast with a soft sting. "Harder?"

She nodded.

This time he struck her reasonably hard. She winced and cried out. Looking down, a slight red line crossed her breast.

"I'm going to do it again." She didn't protest. He did, a little harder and raised a small welt. One more strike across her nipple, and he shifted to the pierced nipple and repeated the process. On the last strike, a sharp, stinging stroke to her nipple that tugged on her nipple chain, she came and came and came. Her body convulsed and jerked about as if she'd been shot with a thousand volts of electricity. Perhaps she had been, with sexual electricity.

She collapsed, held up by the ropes alone. Her arms ached and her wrists hurt from the leather reins digging into them. Levi untied her and pulled her into his arms.

"Are you sure that's what you wanted?"

She nodded and clung to him. “There’s one thing from *Whips and Spurs* that we haven’t tried yet.”

“Oh, fuck, baby. You don’t want that.”

“Please, just a little. This may be the only time I ever do this. I just want to try it once.”

Levi heaved a heavy sigh. It seemed to hurt him more than it hurt her. “Okay, but then we’re going back in the house and fucking the traditional way.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Lie down on the floor. Put your feet across the saddle in the saddle rack so that your cunt is pointed upward.” She did. “Spread your legs wider.” She did, even though her gut instinct was to lock her thighs together. She squeezed her eyes shut, gripped the saddle, and waited for the first blow on her already sore pussy.

Levi slapped the quirt against her pussy a few times, dragging it across her clit with agonizing slowness. She bit her lip, ready to come again.

“Harder.” She forced the words from her mouth.

The next blow shocked her with its power and intensity. Her pussy caught on fire with a mixture of pain and pleasure.

“Don’t stop.” She gasped and tried to breath. Hell, she was going to come again.

He struck three more times. Harder, sharper, each blow more painful than the last. Every nerve ending she possessed raged and throbbed, more hypersensitive with each sharp strike of the whip.

She came with an earth-shattering roar. Waves of pleasure so powerful they were painful rushed through her over and over until she thought she’d die from the intensity of it. The orgasm lasted forever. It swallowed her up into a sexual abyss, sucked her down deep, crushed the breath out of her. She sank to the floor in a limp heap, nothing left to give or take.

Chapter Nine

Natalie writhed on the floor. Her hot little body overloaded on sex. Shit, he was going to cream his pants. He unzipped his jeans and shucked out of them and his underwear.

He straddled Natalie's body. She looked up at him, still woozy from her mega-orgasm. Furiously pumping his cock, he started to come.

"Open up, darlin.'"

She did and his cum spurted into her mouth, across her lips and face and dribbled down her chin. He moved back a step and finished on her breasts and nipples.

He wished he had a camera because this was the sexiest sight he'd ever seen, and he'd seen a lot. Natalie licked his cum off her lips with her pink tongue.

He dropped to his knees and kissed her with all the emotion he'd kept locked inside.

Damn it all, he loved this woman. *Damn it. Damn it. Damn it.* Now what the fuck was he going to do?

She laced her fingers in his hair and kissed him back with just as much feeling. Standing, he offered her his hand and pulled her to her feet. He yanked on his jeans, wrapped her coat around her naked body, and picked her up. He carried her as quickly as he could through the cold and snow to the house and deposited her on the bed.

He licked and kissed her reddened nipples and stroked the welts on her breasts. His hand caressed her pussy, easing the pain, and prolonging the pleasure.

She lay back against the pillows, eyes closed, lips slightly parted

and gave herself up to his ministrations.

“How are you feeling?”

Her deep blue eyes fluttered open. “Like I’ve never felt in my life.”

“Did you like it?”

“Yes. It’s not something I’d do everyday, but I’d do it again.”

He lifted his head to smile at her. She smiled back, and his heart sped up, ready to forgive her anything. Sliding up beside her, he pulled her into his arms and held her. Then he made slow, easy love to her, after which they both napped for a long while.

He woke up to find it late afternoon. Natalie sat up in bed, watching him.

“Nat? Is something wrong?”

“I love you, Levi.”

“Please, Nat. Let’s not go there.”

“We need to go there.”

“No, we don’t.”

“You still love me, admit it.”

“I’m admitting to nothing. We’re a sexually combustible combination, even when it comes to traditional sex. That’s all there is to it. Don’t go reading more into it.”

“I’m not. I’m reading what’s really there. How much longer are you going to deny this?”

“As long as it takes.” Except to himself. He knew the truth.

“I’m sorry, Levi. I know I hurt you.”

“You chose your father’s wishes over my feelings. You left me when I needed you most. What’s changed?”

“I’ve changed. I’m not going to let Daddy dictate my life to me anymore. I want another chance.”

“I’m not sure I can do that.”

“Will you consider it?”

“Okay.” Cold chance in hell, but he found it hard to tell her no.

* * * *

“Do you hear something?” Natalie walked to the window. The snow had stopped falling several hours ago. Now, as dusk settled, she heard the sound of a truck. Levi stood beside her.

“It’s my neighbor with his snow plow.” Levi pulled on his boots and walked out to meet the old man. Natalie watched. Her heart sank. He’d send her on her way. She needed one more day to convince him.

Levi opened the door and stomped the snow off his boots. He grinned for all he was worth. “We can get out now, and I’m starved. Let’s head into town.”

“I should go home then.” She swallowed the hard lump in her throat.

“How about dinner, first?”

“I’d like that.” Maybe there was hope.

“And Nat?”

“Yes?”

“Don’t wear a bra.”

* * * *

Levi drove them into town. They ate dinner in a small bar, nestled together in a booth in a dark corner. Country music blared on the jukebox. The place was packed. Obviously, all the locals were tired of being snowed in the last few days.

“I like that sweater.” What man wouldn’t? It clung to every curve she had. Her nipples stood out proudly. It was so tight he could see the outline of her nipple ring and chain. Levi moved closer to her and slipped his hand under her shirt.

“Levi, what are you doing?”

“Feeling you up.”

“Oh, okay, then.”

“Let’s dance.”

Holding her lush body to his, he buried his face in her hair as they shuffled about the dance floor. Levi tweaked her nipples through her sweater and nuzzled her neck.

"I'm getting horny, darlin. I don't think I can make it home before I explode."

"My house isn't far."

"I had something else in mind."

He grabbed her hand and led her off the dance floor. Hustling her to the back of the bar and through a door, he slammed it behind him. He didn't give a shit that the storage room didn't have a lock. He pulled down her jeans, unzipped his, and lifted her onto his cock. She wrapped her arms around his neck and legs around his waist. He pushed her back against the wall. Lifting her up and down, he fucked her standing up. They went at it like two crazed animals. Even when the door opened and the bartender poked his head in, Levi didn't stop. The waves overtook them at the same time, roaring through them like a truck on the freeway. When they both finished, their one-man audience clapped then shut the door behind him.

Natalie scrambled to yank on her jeans. Levi followed suit, not in as much of a hurry.

"Let's get the hell out of here." Levi grinned at her. They slipped out the back door, laughing like kids caught in a prank.

"I still need to go back to your place for my truck." She searched his face. "Can I stay the night?"

"Natalie, I..." He wanted her to stay. One more night. Just one more night.

"We still have chocolate sauce to use."

He laughed. "We do, don't we."

"I promise I'll go easy on you."

"That makes me feel better."

"First, we have to stop by the grocery store so I can cook you a real breakfast."

"Works for me."

“Did you hear from your friends?”

“Yeah, they left messages. Looks like I’m on my own for the Super Bowl tomorrow.”

“I make great nachos.”

“You’re on.” Yeah, and he was falling right back to the place he’d been a year ago.

* * * *

“It’s my turn tonight, Cowboy.” Tonight they’d act out a scene in one of her books, *Chocolate or Die*.

Levi’s eyes lit up. “Your turn for what?”

“You’ve had your way, now I get mine.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Hand over the chocolate sauce and get naked.”

“And if I don’t?”

“I’ll teach you a lesson.”

He threw back his head and roared. “Honey, I was one of the toughest linebackers ever to walk onto a football field.”

“So? What’s your point?”

“You and what army is going to teach me a lesson?”

“Just me and my friends here.” She squeezed her breasts together through her tight sweater. Levi swallowed as his eyes fixated on her nipples, visible through the sweater.

“Okay, where do you want me?”

“I knew they’d make you cooperate.”

“Whatever you want, babe.” Levi stripped down to skin in record time and stood before her, not the least bit embarrassed by his naked body.

Natalie gestured toward the bathroom. “Lie down on the tile, this could get messy.”

“Since when doesn’t it get messy if it involves my body and yours?” Levi dropped to the tile and waited expectantly. He was being

entirely too cooperative. *The brat.*

Natalie opened the chocolate sauce and waved it in his face. "Where should I put this?"

"Somewhere that you have to lick it off. Feel free to make a banana split."

"I need a banana."

"I have one." Levi grinned.

"Wrong color. Right size. I guess it'll have to do."

"Shouldn't you get naked? This could get messy." He grinned. She grinned back and stripped off her clothes.

Natalie dribbled the sauce on the head of his penis. The thick liquid spread in slow rivulets down the shaft and to his balls. She poured some more and watched in lurid satisfaction as his big cock turned into every woman's chocolate fantasy.

"That's what I like, a woman who can make do."

Natalie knelt next to him. She licked the chocolate off the head of his cock then proceeded to lick her way down one side and up the other. Levi shut his eyes and let her work her magic.

She sucked and licked his balls until she was about to have her own chocolate orgasm. Levi uttered a guttural sound and clenched his fists. Picking up the chocolate jar, Natalie drizzled it up his body, past his hips, in his navel, and over his nipples. Then she bent to the task of cleaning it off. A messy job, but someone had to do it.

"Okay, buster, on your hands and knees."

"Huh?" Levi lifted his head, his eyes glazed with lust. He stared at her, uncomprehending.

"On your hands and knees. Now."

Levi lazily rolled over onto his hands and knees. Grabbing the chocolate jar, Natalie plunged his cock into it, immersing it in chocolate sauce. She swirled it around in the jar like it was a stirring spoon.

"Oh, fuck." Levi hung his head. His body tensed as he attempted to control it.

Setting the jar aside, Natalie lay on her back and slid under him. She placed her mouth under his chocolate-dipped cock and the sauce dripped into her open mouth.

“Open wide, baby. Let me feed you some of that banana.”

She was supposed to be calling the shots, but with the smoothness of the sex professional he’d once been he reversed their roles. What was a girl to do but have her chocolate and eat it, too?

Maneuvering her into a classic sixty-nine position, Levi lowered his cock to her waiting mouth. It touched her lips. She opened her mouth wide to take his huge instrument of pleasure past her lips. He pushed deeper into her mouth. She tried to remember what he’d told her and stuck out her tongue to keep it from obstructing her throat. Natalie took him deeper. When the tip of his penis tickled the back of her throat, she gagged, even as she groaned.

Levi spread her legs and buried his face in her crotch. His well-trained tongue proved again who was the real master. He parted her folds and speared her with his tongue, thrusting it in and out. She raised her hips and opened wider.

She held his cock in her hand and pumped while she tried to take him deeper again. Chocolate mingled with her saliva as he pushed past her throat, inching in a little further. She pulled back and licked the sauce from his cock.

Levi pulled her to her feet and into the glass walled shower. The warm water ran over their bodies. Natalie soaped his cock and chest while he reciprocated.

“Okay, we’re clean enough.” He turned off the water, grabbed her hand, and pulled her out of the shower. “I gotta have my cock inside you.”

Laying down on the bathroom rug, he grinned up at her. “Mount me, baby. I’ll take you for a ride.”

Natalie straddled his hips. His erection stood almost straight up, long, thick, and beautiful. She lowered herself down onto him. Levi watched as inch by inch his cock disappeared inside her pussy.

When she settled all the way on him, he filled her to bursting. He twitched inside her, pulsing, throbbing, hot, thick, and horny. Pretty much everything she felt.

Raising up, she plunged down on him again. He grunted and rolled his head around on the tiled floor. “Oh, shit. Fuck me, baby. Ride me, hard.”

She lifted up and plunged back down again. Then again. Then again. Levi egged her on, his voice hoarse from need and his body tense from holding back. Natalie pumped harder and rode his cock for all she was worth. Levi met her halfway and slammed into her with frenzied force. Together they climbed that mountain and reached the clouds.

Natalie collapsed on his heaving, sweaty chest. She held him, wishing she could stay there forever.

* * * *

Levi rolled away from her onto his side. He’d never look at chocolate sauce the same way again.

Natalie sat up, dazed and shaking her head. She stood on shaky feet, weaving a little.

“I need to go.”

“Now? I thought you were staying the night?”

“I can’t do this. You’ve made your position clear. There’s no reason for me to stay other than to torture myself. You don’t want me.”

Walking into the bedroom, she grabbed articles of clothing and pulled them on. Levi walked to the bed and slumped on the edge of it. He watched her with a sick feeling in his stomach. He loved this woman. He’d never stopped loving her. Once she’d gathered her clothes and dressed, she walked toward him.

“I have a confession to make.”

Oh, crap, now what? “Make it then.”

“I have a secret life, too.”

He didn’t buy that. “How so?”

“I write erotic romance novels.”

“You? No way? What’s your pen name?”

“Mia Lange.”

He choked, as if something stuck in his throat.

“Are you okay?”

“We just acted out *Chocolate or Die*.”

Her mouth dropped open. “You’ve read my books?”

He stood and grabbed her hand. “Come with me.” Together they entered his den. He opened a cabinet. Inside he’d stashed all her books. “They kept me company this past year.”

She threw back her head and laughed and laughed and laughed. “And your movies kept me company.”

They stared at each other for a long moment in time. Finally, Natalie backed up a few steps. “I’d better go.” She turned for the door.

A coward would take the easy way and let her walk out.

Levi wasn’t a coward.

“Natalie.”

She ignored him as she fumbled with the doorknob.

“Natalie!”

She snapped her head up to glare at him. “What?”

“Stay.”

“No, I can’t.”

“I mean *stay*.”

“I’m not staying the night.”

“How about more than a night?”

“What?”

“I want to try again. I can’t let you walk out this door. Not yet. Not now that I know you’re Mia Lange.” His teasing tone stopped her in her tracks.

“Well, we do have several more Cowboy movies we haven’t

recreated.” She turned back to face him.

“And several we probably never will.”

“Why not? Why not try it all?”

A slow smile spread across his face. “Do you know what you’re saying?”

“I want to do more than write about it. It’s time to be adventurous, as long as I can do it with you.”

“What about your parents?”

“They don’t get a vote. They’ve interfered in my life for too long.”

“So can you really cook?”

“You’ll have to stick around and see.”

He held open his arms. She crossed the room and launched herself at him. He caught her and spun her around, kissing her until they were both senseless.

Damn, the future was looking fucking good.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sofia loves to write hot romances with even hotter heroes. She prefers warm sun, warm sand, and views of bronzed, buff bodies on the beach. She lives on the west coast with assorted animals, including the human male variety. When she's not writing, she's shopping or socializing.



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