



SULLY'S HEART

...He rose up and looked down at Luke. He reached out to stroke the side of his face. "You're a pretty boy, that's for sure." His thick fingers brushed across Luke's lips. "Real fine mouth. I wouldn't mind having you suck my cock. I bet you know how to do that real fine. Have you sucked cock before, or are you the type who only gets head and doesn't give it?"

Luke felt the flush of embarrassment rise up his neck.

Silas smiled. "Red's a fine color on you, but I'm thinking I'd like to see it somewhere more interesting." His boots clicked against the floor as he walked over to the wall displaying the whips and other implements for punishment. He seemed to study the display for a long time. As Luke watched, he reached up and pulled down a thick paddle. Then he turned back to Luke.

"Discipline, boy, that's what you're here for. You didn't answer my question in the car, but you will answer it now. Unless you're a pussy and plan to hide for the rest of your life."

Luke's gaze shot up to his and he saw the challenge. He'd enjoyed the touch of Silas Johnson. There was something about it, that sense of dominance that Luke liked. Yes, he should be punished...

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AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

SULLY'S HEART
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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Copyright © 2007 by Dream Romantic Unlimited LLC
ISBN 978-1-60272-154-8
Cover Art © 2007 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: Elemental Alchemy

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*Thanks to my publisher and my editors
for allowing the muse to flourish.*

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CHAPTER 1

Luke leaned back against the black satin pillow and closed his eyes, waiting for the pills to take effect. He took another swig from the whiskey glass and felt the burn deep and low in his gut. He was soaring and it felt just like taking off across the river back home, buck naked and plunging into the crystal cool water. He wondered if the old rope still hung from the twisted branch. He could visualize it swaying in the summer breeze, the branch creaking under his weight as he grabbed onto the thick hemp and swung out.

And he remembered Sully, his best friend, flying free of that same rope, diving in after him, sending plumes of water shooting high into the air. Both of them laughing and

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shouting, trying to drown each other as they sped through the water, as the blinding Texas sun beat down on them.

Reality drifted away, as it always did when the pills took effect. He swallowed another stiff belt from the glass. Not enough to get him drunk, but enough to numb the pain of the memories. Yet, his body began to respond to his bittersweet recollections of Sully. His cock stiffened as he envisioned the wet, golden body of the young cowboy he remembered. Ah, those summers, when his hair bleached white from the sun and his blue eyes sizzled. When Luke wanted to kiss him with a passion that was considered taboo in their small corner of west Texas.

And then the ache swelled, as it always did, burrowing deep in his groin, tightening his balls. He'd left Texas for more than one reason. He'd never felt he belonged on his dad's small dirt farm. If he'd stayed around, eventually his good ole dad would have kicked him out anyway. Once he knew what he was. Stu Cantrell didn't put up with no sissy for a son, that's for sure.

And then there was Sully—Sullivan Vance—the boy next door. The golden heir to one of the biggest quarter horse ranches in his part of the country. Other than the fact that the two ranches shared a border, he'd never have thought he'd have much in common with a guy like Sully. But somehow, for some reason they'd bonded, and the years had made Luke realize he wanted so much more than simply friendship with his best friend.

They'd fished together, hunted together, doubled dated,

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and rodeoed hard. But for Luke it hadn't been enough. He dreamed about Sully, the one man he'd loved more than any other. And the second reason he'd left the dirt of Texas far behind.

Luke reached down beneath the sheet to stroke his hard cock with a tight hand. He'd taken his guitar and hotfooted it out of town before he embarrassed himself—and, of course, his father. The yearning hurt too much to go back.

And even though he made good, and the name Luke Cantrell made women swoon from one side of the country to the other, it still wasn't good enough for his pa. Nothing he did ever was.

He tried to stay away from news from that corner of Texas. He didn't want to see when Sully escorted some well-known society babe to this function or that. He didn't want to think about the day when he might read in the paper that Sully got married.

He looked up and fastened his blurry gaze onto the door of his suite as it slowly opened. His bodyguard, Drew, stepped inside.

"They're here," he said. His knowing gaze studied Luke, sprawled in the king-sized satin-sheet covered bed, and his dark brows drew together. "You sure you up to this tonight? That show took a lot out of you."

"Nooooo problem," Luke responded, picking up the vial of pills. He shook them at Drew. "Bring 'em on in." A couple of those babies would keep him plenty hard for the night. Certainly good enough to put on a decent show. After all,

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that's what it was all about, wasn't it? Making sure the world knew Luke Cantrell was one hot stallion in bed.

Luke stroked his stiff prick, thinking about the night ahead, a smile plastered on his lips as Drew shook his head, turned, and left. His bodyguard was a family man, had been with Luke a long time and knew exactly how to take care of him. But he'd never fucked him. Maybe that's what made him so good at his job. There was nothing personal between them to clutter their relationship.

When Luke told him what he wanted, Drew was the one to make sure it got done. And he did it with efficiency and diplomacy. The man had a rare sense of people, and if it weren't for him, Luke would have been in some mean hot water long before now. He trusted him like he trusted no other. Not even his manager.

Well, that wasn't quite right. Because he'd trust Sully with his life any day of the week.

The door opened again and two enthusiastic fans of Luke's quickly stepped inside the room, excitement spread across their faces. A man and a woman, both looking to be in their early twenties. But Luke knew Drew wouldn't assume anything and would have had them checked out thoroughly before bringing them up.

"Mr. Cantrell, this is so great to meet you. I have all your CDs." She was a sweet, young thing, with some nice curves. Not a bombshell with D tits, but nice enough.

Drew knew his type, slender and pretty. Luke wasn't really into the sex kitten sort.

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He turned a lazy eye to the young man with dark hair. Not so slender, not so sweet by the look of him. Just the way he liked them, with muscles rippling and even in the subdued lighting of the room, he could see the thick bulge in the front of his jeans. Now that was nice and it made his own prick stand up straighter and take notice.

He wasn't Sully, but he damned well would do for tonight.

Luke leaned up on his knees, the sheet fisted in his hand just enough to cover his cock and balls.

He liked what he saw. But then Drew did have an excellent knack for knowing his tastes. He tilted his head and slitted his gaze as he studied them.

"You liked the show?" A little conversation to put them at ease was the least he could do, even though his blood was already running hot.

They both nodded enthusiastically. The man had dark, burning eyes. The strong, silent type. Not bad at all.

"It was great, Mr. Cantrell. I can't wait till your next one."

He swiveled his gaze at the young woman with the big smile. He nodded. "You gave my assistant your addresses, right? He'll see that you both have tickets for the next concert. Right up front."

"Thanks so much," the young lady gushed, then she dipped her head, as though suddenly shy.

"Did you come to the show together?" Luke asked.

He watched as the young man raised his hands to his hips and began to unbutton his jeans, his dark gaze on Luke. "No, we didn't." It was the first time he'd spoken.

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There was something in his eyes, something knowing. He'd done this before, Luke was certain of it. He turned to look at the girl, who seemed nervous and fidgety.

"You sure you want to be here, girl?" he asked her. "Both of you. You can leave. No one's forcing you to stay. I'll make sure you get those tickets you want, no matter what. You don't have to be here."

Her head shot up and she looked at him with wide-eyed surprise. "Do you want me to leave?"

Honestly, he didn't care. There was always someone who would take her place. Someone else who wanted to fuck the sexy rock star, Luke Cantrell and crow to all their friends about it afterward.

"I'd be more than happy to have you both stay with me tonight, but it's up to you. If it won't be fun for you, or you don't want to be here, I don't want you here. You understand me?"

"I wanted to be here," she whispered. "It's just...this is the first time...well, I mean...not for sex...but with someone as famous as you. And I've never...uhmmm...been with two men before."

Luke smiled. "You'll do just fine, sugar. Now why don't you both get naked and come on over here. I think we've done enough talking for now."

He didn't want to know their names, or anything about their personal life. That was Drew's job. They were here for one reason. For fucking. He needed to release some steam from the damned concert. And they wanted to fuck someone

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famous.

They were all going to get what they wanted this evening.
At least for tonight.

CHAPTER 2

He pretended he was somewhere else as he sank his cock into the willing, tight cunt beneath him. He'd made sure she was ready for him. She moaned with pleasure and arched up to meet his deep thrust. He reached up to cup her small breasts, kneading and tugging at her slender body.

Firm, hot lips trailed down the length of his spine and licked at his cheeks, then back up again, as hard hands cupped his ass, kneading and separating, driving his anticipation higher. The hands moved with his rhythm as he fucked the girl beneath him.

And then he felt what he was waiting for as the cold lube was squirted onto his rectum and two, thick fingers entered his

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anus. Yes! That was it. Preparing for the pleasure of having a man's cock rip him apart. Here in the darkness, in the nameless hotel room with nameless lovers.

He didn't want to know whose body he used, and who used him. He reached over and swallowed the last of the whiskey as the fingers plunged inside him, widening his entrance and easing the way for the passage of a steel-hard cock. He was definitely experienced, not the usual starry-eyed fan willing to do anything to meet the rock star. This guy knew what he was doing. Drew deserved a bonus for this one.

The girl undulated beneath him and he knew she was getting close. He planned to make sure she had a damned fine orgasm or three before she left his suite. It was all about appearance, as his manager said. She was a part of that appearance in being able to rave to all her friends about what a great lover Luke Cantrell was. She could care less about what satisfaction Luke got out of the deal. And that was fine with him. As long as she went away satisfied and kept his reputation up, he was good.

He groaned and pushed back against the fingers reaming him and felt the hot lust push through like a desert sandstorm, curling around him and edging him close to the rise.

He brought a hand down and fingered the girl's clit, hard and stiff like a small penis, ready for him. And then he felt the sheathed cock of the hard body behind him begin to enter. Felt him drive past the muscle and sink deep.

Oh, fuck, that was good. That's what he wanted. To be possessed by golden, hot sunlight, biting into him, claiming

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him.

The penetration was complete and then he started driving in and out, fast and hard, just the way Luke liked it. He matched his rhythm as he entered the pussy beneath him and felt her silky sheath surround him. Then he felt her orgasm, heard her cries as she came hard.

He leaned down and sucked at her small, pretty tits, drew one deep into his mouth as he pushed her toward the edge once more. She was a cute thing and he wished he were a different man. But tonight it didn't matter. It never did. Because she still could dream once she left.

And so could he. It just wouldn't be the same dream.

His balls tightened and his cock grew thicker, filling the woman beneath him. The walls of her narrow vagina grabbed at him as he rode, as the walls of his colon sucked greedily at the forceful cock fucking him.

Yes, just like that. Damn it was good. So good.

And then he tumbled over the edge as he exploded inside the condom sheathing his cock. Again and again. And he felt her orgasm a second time and then he felt the pulsing of the cock in his ass. He heard the deep, guttural groan of the man behind him.

All three of them stayed locked in the fierce embrace of lust, sweat, and need, until finally they shivered to a stuttering halt. The man behind slowly retreated, and Luke pulled out of the girl. They fell to the bed beside her. The only sounds in the room for a very long time were the quickened breaths of the three. He could smell the sweat and the sex that lingered.

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"That was great, even better than I imagined." She looked over at Luke, dreamy stars lurking at the edges of her expression. He leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips and then pulled away. For long moments they lay there stroking across glistening, sweat-drenched flesh.

"Mind if I use the shower?" the girl finally asked quietly. "I have to be to work early tomorrow." She said it apologetically.

"Go for it," Luke said as he leaned back against the pillows and stared at the ceiling. He should say something more, but he just wasn't up to it. He felt the bed shift slightly as she rose.

"Thanks. I'm sorry I can't stay longer. I hope it was okay."

Then he did shift his attention to her as she stood next to the bed. "You were great, babe. You good?"

A smile spread across her face. "You're fantastic, Luke. The absolute best." It didn't necessarily stroke his ego to hear the words. But if she thought he was fantastic, then she was satisfied and that was good. He heard the water running and he sat up to remove the condom and tossed it into the garbage. His ass felt slightly sore and well-used. But it felt like there was still something missing. He wished he knew what it was.

He felt the bed shift again and his other lover for the night moved around the bed and removed his condom and tossed it into the garbage. His dark eyes met Luke's as he looked down at him. There was something more in his eyes than the usual one-night stand. Something more dominant than usual. They just locked gazes for a long time.

Luke was distracted as the girl came bouncing out of the

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bathroom fully dressed. She rushed over to Luke and offered him a quick kiss.

"Thanks so much for inviting me, Luke. It was great. I'll never forget it." And then she was gone.

He watched the door shut behind her. He was shocked as a hand gripped his hair and yanked his head back. He gazed up into onyx black eyes.

"Now we can get down to business, don't you think, Luke?"

"What the hell do you mean?" Something dark and lusty was shimmering through his body as he looked up at the muscular man.

"You need more than what we just did. That little show was for the girl, and for your adoring public. But I know your type, Luke Cantrell. I know what you really need. And I think you do to."

Luke's breaths came in short gasps. *Sonofabitch!* Who was this guy? And why all of a sudden was his dick hard as rock once again?

In some ways this guy reminded him of Sully—Sully had always been a man in control of everything around him. Luke had always loved that about him. This man sure wasn't acting like an adoring fan.

He released Luke's hair, turned around and grabbed a couple of black silk bandannas lying on the dresser. "These will do," he said as he whirled back around. He looked down at Luke. "Get up on the fucking bed and spread."

Luke knew Drew was just outside the door and all he had

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to do was yell and he'd be here. He looked up at the dark-eyed stranger. Then he found himself sliding back onto the bed and spread his arms and legs wide. His steel-hard cock pointed toward the ceiling.

He watched as the young god grabbed his arm and tied it to the bed, then walked around to the other side and did the same with that one.

"You're self-destructive, Luke. I think you're missing the point of these fuck sessions of yours. I'm going to show you another way to get what you really want."

Luke had no idea what he had in mind, and he was intrigued by the insight this guy had in just a matter of hours. He wanted to find out more.

When Luke was tied spread-eagle on the bed, he ran his hands across Luke's chest and down to grasp his rigid cock.

"You're mine for the rest of the night, boy."

Luke hissed sharply at the authoritative tone of voice. He had never liked being called "boy," but with this man it caused a strange yet pleasurable tightening in his groin that was unexpected.

Sully. It was his last thought before he was dragged down into the sensations of demanding surrender.

How far he was removed from the naïve young man who had left west Texas seven years ago.

CHAPTER 3

Luke opened his eyes and stared at the mirrored ceiling. Even with his mind as hazy as it was, he wasn't sure he liked what he saw reflected back. Pills were scattered all over the place, empty beer bottles, and the stink of stale sex filled his nostrils. It wasn't pleasant.

And it wasn't Texas. He wished he could remember, could go back to the point where he'd lost his way and ended up...here. Sluggishly he rose up from the bed and wove toward the bathroom, bent over like an old man, shuffling feet, feeling the bruises left from the night before.

When he turned on the light, it hurt his eyes, practically blinding him. He squinted and stared at the closer reflection in

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the mirror, saw the slashes of red lining his chest, and the bite marks around his nipples. He reached up to touch one particularly red spot and winced. He tried to summon up the events of the night before, but the pills and booze blurred his brain from recalling too much.

He recollected the girl leaving and then it was just him and...Joe...that's what he'd said to call him. Luke remembered the sensations, the needy cries Joe had pulled out of him. The begging for more and more and more until he'd had nothing left. He remembered superimposing Sully's face over Joe's as he pounded into him.

And he remembered calling out Sully's name time and time again as Joe took him to heights, and depths, he'd never experienced with a man before. Then he remembered something else.

He whirled around and practically ran back into the bedroom and tracked over to the night table. There was a white business card lying there amongst the pills and other paraphernalia scattered about. He picked it up and tried to focus on it. Damn, how much had he had last night?

The curtains were closed, darkening the room to midnight. He leaned over and turned on the bedside light and tried to focus again.

If you call the number, you better not be high. He won't have anything to do with you if you are. No drugs, no booze. All I'm doing is giving you a taste of what you could have.

He just vaguely remembered those words. A taste? If that was just a taste, he couldn't begin to imagine what more was

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in store. There was only a name on the card and nothing else. But Joe had said the person on the card could give him exactly what he wanted, if he followed the rules.

Silas Johnson.

That was the name on the card. Luke turned it over and found a phone number scrawled on the back.

He can give you what you need, boy. What you want. You're too drunk to appreciate it tonight, but tomorrow...

How could "Joe" possibly know what Luke wanted? What he needed. What Joe had done was given him a glimpse of something he'd never had before, a way to let go and give into feelings he'd always been afraid to acknowledge. Even this morning, he felt like some of the edge he'd been riding was smoothed away somehow.

But not enough. Not nearly enough.

He looked back down at the card. He knew he was a fool if he made the call to some stranger.

He ain't cheap and he's no whore. But you might finally find some of the answers you're killing yourself over. You might finally get to know who you really are.

But did he want to know all those answers he kept locked inside? Did he really want to face who he was? Could he accept it?

He looked down at the table, at the rumpled, sex-stained sheets on the bed, and around the expensive suite. And he felt nothing. The stale smell in the air made him want to throw up. If he kept on like this, Joe was right, he was going to end up on the front of some rag—dead from an overdose. But what

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did this Silas Johnson do? What could he possibly show him?

There was a knock at the door. He turned around as it opened and Drew stepped into the darkened room.

Luke leaned down, picked up a cigarette from the pack, and lit it, inhaling deeply. "What time is it?" he asked him in a hoarse voice. He cleared his throat and asked again.

"It's six o'clock, almost time for you to get ready."

Fuck. He'd slept the whole day away and it was almost time for him to go on stage and he felt like shit. He fingered the card he was holding.

"Give me a couple of minutes to shower and dress."

"What the hell are those marks all over your chest?" Drew asked, the timber of his voice, telling Luke he was on full alert to any harm having been done to his boss.

Luke sucked in the nicotine and then blew it out. The bite of it helped to steady him. "Nothing for you to worry about."

"They were okay, then?"

"Yeah, they were fine." He stubbed out the cigarette, having barely taken a couple of drags. What he really wanted was a drink and maybe a couple of pills to get him going. He looked back down at the card. If he really planned to go through with it and give this guy a call, then he couldn't fall back on them to numb him like he usually did.

For some reason, that scared him, more than making the call to some unknown guy for some rough sex. He rubbed his hand across his bruised chest and hissed sharply. But there was something about the pain, the memory of the previous night, that wasn't all bad.

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Even with the drugs and the booze, something had happened last night that had changed him, and left him wanting more. Something he needed.

He turned back to look at Drew who was waiting for his orders.

"I'm okay, man, just let me get myself together here for a minute. I'll be right out." He looked around the room. "And make sure somebody gets their ass in here and cleans this place up while I'm gone. It's a pigsty."

Drew nodded, his expression telling Luke nothing. He never did know where he stood with his bodyguard, but things always got done the way they should. "I'll see to it, boss." And then he left.

It was a funny thing about having a clear head. It was scary. Luke didn't want to remember, to think with such clarity. He picked up the card, and then the phone, and dialed the number. What the hell. What did he have to lose? For that matter, did he really care?

* * *

When he walked into the bar, he didn't know what he expected. It was late—after midnight when he entered the gay bar on the other side of town. This is where Silas said to meet him. Luke really had no idea what the man looked like, but his voice on the phone commanded authority. And it had that slight southern twang Luke missed hearing so much, making him wonder if ole Silas might be from Texas himself.

That thought comforted him somewhat. That probably

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wasn't a good idea, but he couldn't help the feeling. It also reminded him how homesick he was right now.

Silas had been clear in his directions. First there was a shopping list. He was required to do the shopping himself and every item must be obtained. As though he would want anyone else to know what he was up to. He found a shop on the edge of town, a little out of the way of the main drag. Luckily it had been a twenty-four hour sort of place, and he now carried the plain plastic bag gripped tightly in his hand as he entered The Glow.

He was to go up to the bartender and ask for Silas. The bartender would then direct him from there. Apparently Silas was taking no chances. Luke should be worried about that, but instead he found it titillating. His cock was already hard in anticipation, even though he didn't know exactly what to expect from this arrangement with the devil he'd made tonight. And he hadn't even taken any pills to help pump him up.

He walked up to the bar and waited for the leather-vested, bare-chested, brawny bartender to saunter over to him.

"What'll you have?" he asked him.

Luke licked his lips. "Do you know a man named Silas Johnson? I was told to ask for him."

The burly bartender looked Luke over. He felt like a bug under a microscope; it wasn't a feeling he was used to.

"You got an appointment?"

Luke nodded. "Yeah, I do."

"Head toward the back end of the bar. I'll meet you there."

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Luke guessed he didn't have any other choice, and he wound his way around the bar, gazing at the other patrons. He'd never actually been in a place like this. Drew had been miffed when he'd told him he couldn't come, but Luke had been firm about that. For some reason he felt he needed to do this—needed to meet with Silas like a drowning man clutching for a life preserver. Surprisingly, Silas had taken his credit card number over the phone to pay for whatever this session would bring.

The bartender moved to a door at the back of the room, took out a set of keys and unlocked it, shoving it open. He stood aside for Luke to enter before him. He moved past the bartender slowly, looked around and found it was some kind of storage room, dimly lit by a naked bulb hanging from the ceiling.

The bartender pointed to the bag he was carrying. "Is that your stuff?"

Luke felt the hot color rise up along his neck. "Umm, yeah, I guess."

"Give it to me and I'll get it to Silas. You wait here."

Luke hesitantly handed over the bag and the bartender left the room, closing the door behind him.

Luke's heart thundered in his chest as he waited, wondering what would happen next. Afraid and exhilarated all at the same time. He'd never been in a position like this before. He'd never gone out and purchased several of the items contained in that bag—never even used them before. Except for the condoms, of course. But the butt plug and the

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handcuffs? They'd never really been his kind of game.

So what made him do it this time? What moved him toward the darker side of sex all of a sudden? Had the sex with nameless fans begun to bore him as being too easy?

No one like Joe had ever come up to his room before. There'd never been quite that kind of rough sex, where he'd wanted to spill his guts out to a man who was spanking him and making him come so powerfully, like he never had before. Yet, even then, it hadn't been enough. Maybe that's why Joe left the card—because he knew it, too.

There was something inside Luke that needed the pain, and he hadn't realized it until last night. In one sense that scared him, yet in another it excited him.

Suddenly the door opened behind him with a squeak and Luke whirled around.

The man turned and closed the door behind him, muffling the sounds from the bar. Then he turned toward Luke.

"Hello, Luke. I'm Silas Johnson, the man you're here to meet."

CHAPTER 4

Silas Johnson was not what he'd expected. He was an older man with a look of hard sophistication. His eyes were silver gray—the color of a new bullet, and just as tough. He was clean shaven with a thick head of salt and pepper hair, neatly trimmed.

He wasn't exactly someone who'd stand out in a crowd, but in here, up close he had an air about him that Luke couldn't miss. He wore skin tight black leather pants that showed every firm bulge of muscle in the man's athletic build. The black silk shirt stretched across his broad chest, the leather vest, dotted with silver rivets emphasized the tapered waist. He carried a long black leather coat slung over one arm.

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Luke's gaze moved further down and encountered the polished black leather boots and then widened when he saw the silver spurs that gleamed in the light. Only then did his gaze return to meet Silas's.

"So, you want a little rough play, that right, boy?" Silas held up the plastic bag containing the items he had told Luke to buy and then dropped it at Luke's feet.

For some reason, Luke had lost his voice. All he could do was nod. That word "boy" made his gut tighten as it always seemed to do. It had done the same thing the other night with Joe.

"When I ask you a question, I expect an answer," Silas barked out.

"Y-yes, I think so."

Silas got up in his face. They were almost the same height except Silas was probably a few inches taller. "You think so?" he grit out. "Joe says you like it rough. Is he wrong?"

"N-no. I want it rough."

"Why?"

How the hell did he know? "I liked it with Joe last night. I want more. He said to come to you. That you were the expert and I wouldn't get hurt with you. That I'd get what I want."

"But you don't know what you want, do you?"

Luke finally looked away. This was so far from west Texas, he couldn't believe it. Something inside screamed he was on the wrong path, and yet the right one. He just didn't know why.

"No, I don't. I need to find out."

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"Well, boy, at least that's a start. Let's find out just what you're made of...and how far you'll go. Strip."

Luke's gaze widened in shock.

"Strip. Here?"

"You don't take orders very well do you? I said strip and I mean right now. We start as we mean to go. If you can't follow even the simplest direction, then we stop right now. What's it going to be?"

There was a long, heavy silence as Luke stared into Silas's hard, silvery gaze. And then he began to unbutton his shirt. He dropped it, then leaned down to pull off his boots and socks, and then shucked out of his jeans and underwear. He finally stood before Silas, naked as the day he was born.

As he waited there, praying no one walked in on them, Silas took his time circling around him. As he completed the circuit he stopped in front of him, grabbed his cock, and ran his hand expertly up and down the rigid shaft.

"You're hot for this, aren't you, boy?"

Pleasure buzzed throughout his body and he felt his balls tighten painfully at the grip of the warm, sure hand. Suddenly, Silas grabbed his balls and pulled downward. "Kneel," he said as he continued the pressure.

Luke could do nothing else but fall to his knees before the man yanked off his testicles.

"Get the handcuffs and black scarf out of the bag."

Luke reached inside and pulled out the items Silas wanted and handed them to him. He had no idea why he was doing this, why he was acceding to what the man wanted, but he

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couldn't seem to help himself. He was intrigued. He wondered if he'd have him suck his cock right here in this supply room.

"Put your hands together behind your back."

Luke did as he demanded and then he felt the cold metal grip his wrists, binding him.

"Too tight?" Silas asked. Luke found it interesting that he should be concerned about that, but he shook his head.

"No, they're fine."

And then the room was blacked out as he was blindfolded with the scarf, and he stiffened, feeling totally out of control of the situation.

"Wait a minute."

"You got a problem?"

"I-I don't know. What are you planning to do?"

"That's something you'll have to wait to find out. If you don't plan to trust me tonight, then you shouldn't have made that phone call, should you?"

Luke took a deep breath. He needed to do this. He still wasn't quite certain why, but he needed to yield and he needed it with this man.

"It's okay, I just panicked for a minute."

"So I see. You ready now?"

"I guess."

"You guess?"

"All right. I'm ready." The blindfold was secured, just as the cuffs were. He was under the complete control of this man. Naked, handcuffed, and blindfolded. He could do anything to him and Luke was helpless to stop it.

SULLY'S HEART

Complete silence stretched out around him almost beyond Luke's capacity for patience. But he waited, wondering if Silas was even still in the same room. He could hear his own breaths. As the time lengthened, he began to relax. He could see the creek. He could see Sully, swinging from the rope, bare-assed and gleaming as he dropped into the water, his blue eyes sparkling. He sucked in air as desire built inside him.

"What are you thinking about, boy?" He jumped at the whispered words so close to his ear.

"What am I thinking about?" He didn't want to tell this man about his secret desires. It would scrape him raw to talk about Sully. It would destroy everything and open doors that should be kept locked. If he talked about it, the ache would just be worse.

That's why he was here, to drown that ache, that never-ending pain with something more forceful in the here and now. With a new pain, a new wanting, so the other would go away, be suffocated in the now.

"Yes, right now. What's in your mind?"

Luke hesitated. "Probably about what you're planning to do next," he managed to mumble.

"I don't think so, boy. There's something else going on in that head of yours and you're going to have to be punished for lying to me. But that's what you want, isn't it? To be punished...for anything."

This was something Luke wouldn't lie about. "Yes," he answered firmly. "Punish me."

He waited. He wanted the pain. Needed it. And somehow

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he knew this was the man to administer it. Joe was right, Silas Johnson could give him exactly what he needed.

"Not yet," Silas said and his voice drew further away. Luke felt the waves of disappointment drop over him.

"Get up."

Luke haltingly rose to his feet, surprised he actually made it without falling face first onto the cold concrete floor. He then felt something flung over his shoulders. He could smell leather and felt the sleek lining brush against his skin. It must be the coat Silas was carrying. He then felt the buttons being done in front.

"You and I are going for a ride."

"Like this?" Luke felt panic suck at his insides.

"Don't worry. My car is right out back. And there's an exit directly from this room. You don't have to worry about being seen by too many people, especially this late at night."

He felt himself whirled around and then guided forward. He felt the cool night air whip across him as he stepped outside. He felt the cold, wet ground beneath his bare feet.

He heard a door open.

"All right. Lean down, we're at the car. I'll guide you in."

Silas did just as he said and then buckled the seatbelt. Luke had a feeling he wasn't meant to be comfortable, but he tried to relax. The door swung shut. He heard the back door open and the rustle of plastic told him his bag landed on the seat. And then Silas got in and started the engine.

He felt the car pull away and he wondered where they were headed.

SULLY'S HEART

“Now, we’ve got a short drive before we get to my place and we’re going to talk. Get to know each other a little better. Still ready to continue?”

Luke felt a warm hand slip inside the coat and encircle his cock, stroking up and down. He couldn’t help a soft moan escaping his lips. And then the touch vanished.

“Yes, it looks like you’re still...up....for it, I’d say.”

* * *

They had arranged this, for the most part. He hadn’t expected to have to remove his clothing at the bar, but he knew at some point that would happen. Drew hadn’t been comfortable about him doing this, but he also had the safety measures in place and Drew had the address of where he was being taken, as well as Silas Johnson’s phone number. And he could end the whole thing at any time, just by saying “Show’s Over.” That was the safe word he and Silas had agreed on when they spoke on the phone. Luke had to wonder where all this was going to lead.

“What do you expect from tonight?”

Silas’s question caught him off guard. He hadn’t really thought about it a whole lot. He just wanted to stop thinking about Sully and for a time, Joe had made that ache go away, replacing it with something else.

Luke shrugged. “I don’t know exactly. I guess just sex.”

“But you want it rough.”

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“Where’re you from?”

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Again, Silas threw him. It wasn't quite the question he'd expected. His arms were starting to ache from the enforced position with the handcuffs in place.

"I asked you a question."

"West Texas."

"That surprises me. I didn't expect you to be from real cowboy country. You don't seem the type."

And that was just the problem. He never had fit in. The only time he'd felt even close was when he'd been with Sully. But even then, he'd always felt he had to hide a piece of himself. The part that loved Sully more than simply as a guy friend.

"What's your family and friends think of you being gay?"

His heart pounded in his chest. It was the first time anyone had spoken it out loud. Had challenged him with the word.

"I-I—" What could he say? *I don't even say the word to myself? I'm not gay?* "How'd you know?"

Silas laughed. "You're joking, right? Do you think Joe didn't know? Or wouldn't tell me? Or make me wonder why you're here tonight?"

The car swerved to the left and then came to a stop.

"We're here. You remember your safe words?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And you haven't had anything to drink? No pills? No drugs?"

"No. Nothing." But, damn, he sure wish he had because he was beginning to think this was going to be damn hard to do without some sort of help.

SULLY'S HEART

“All right then. I had to ask before we go inside.”

Luke heard a car door open and close and then felt a breeze as the passenger door was opened. A firm hand reached out to help him up and led him along a sidewalk.

“Step up,” Silas said. And then Luke found himself inside.

The coat was removed and he could only hope to hell they were in a private dwelling and he wasn't going to be totally exposed in a public place. Silas then led him down some steps and he heard the creak of a door. Then Silas led him forward.

“Kneel down,” he said.

Luke's drop to his knees was about as inelegant as it possibly could be, but finally he made it without falling on his face. Silas removed the blindfold and Luke blinked rapidly for a minute and then tried to adjust his sight after the darkness of the blindfold.

He looked around and was shocked by what he saw and started to get a little concerned. But he had the safe words; he could always use them if it got too heavy.

“This is my playroom, where I bring all my...clients. Lots of toys to play with here.” He walked in front of Luke, across the room and set down Luke's bag and lay his clothing over what looked like a horse used in athletics class back in high school. Across from that was something like a cross, and there were rings embedded into the walls at various levels around the room. He gazed down at the floor and found there were rings embedded there as well.

Turning to the left he saw an array of whips and ropes displayed. He had no idea what he'd find if he looked behind

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him. And he wasn't exactly certain he wanted to know.

Silas drew up a backless, wooden stool in front of him and sat down. His eyes bored into Luke as he leaned forward, coming almost nose to nose with him.

"You aren't telling me the truth. You think I can't see it, but I can. And I don't think you're telling yourself the truth. And I think that's why you're here. Now I'm going to ask you some questions, and you aren't going to lie—not anymore."

He rose up and looked down at Luke. He reached out to stroke the side of his face. "You're a pretty boy, that's for sure." His thick fingers brushed across Luke's lips. "Real fine mouth. I wouldn't mind having you suck my cock. I bet you know how to do that real fine. Have you sucked cock before, or are you the type who only gets head and doesn't give it?"

Luke felt the flush of embarrassment rise up his neck.

Silas smiled. "Red's a fine color on you, but I'm thinking I'd like to see it somewhere more interesting." His boots clicked against the floor as he walked over to the wall displaying the whips and other implements for punishment. He seemed to study the display for a long time. As Luke watched, he reached up and pulled down a thick paddle. Then he turned back to Luke.

"Discipline, boy, that's what you're here for. You didn't answer my question in the car, but you will answer it now. Unless you're a pussy and plan to hide for the rest of your life."

Luke's gaze shot up to his and he saw the challenge. He'd enjoyed the touch of Silas Johnson. There was something

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about it, that sense of dominance that Luke liked. Yes, he should be punished.

Silas strode back over to him. He grabbed Luke's hair and pulled his head back, arching his neck painfully. "Now, first question. Does your family know you're gay?"

Luke hesitated just a fraction. And then he gasped as the paddle connected with his ass and the sting shot through him. Two swift hits and then Silas stopped. He looked into Luke's eyes.

"Well?"

"No one knows I'm gay."

"You sure about that?"

Luke licked his lips. Again, he was a second too long and the paddle struck again. And again.

"Yes," he yelled, feeling the throbbing sting. What he wasn't prepared for was the painful hard-on and how much he wanted this man to fuck him. To make him do anything he wanted.

To make him suck his cock.

"I've checked on you, boy. You're on the road to ruin, fast and hard. You want someone to either finish it for you or make you face it. Isn't that right? You've gone and dug yourself a grave and you're just waiting for someone to throw you in so you don't have to face the truth. Ain't that right?"

No one had ever seen inside Luke that fast or that deep. And then the paddle struck again. And again.

"All right. I can't tell anyone. It could ruin my career."

Silas let his hair go and placed a hand beneath his jaw,

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forcing him to look him in the face. "But you're here," he said softly, "because you want someone to pull you out into the open." He narrowed his eyes and Luke held his breath. He reached down and pinched his nipples. Luke gasped at the sensation. Then he leaned down and kissed him on the mouth, driving his tongue inside, and Luke felt himself fold beneath the hot, demanding mouth.

Then Silas lifted away and reached down to enclose his cock. "I think you've reached a point where you have to turn around and face what you are and the rest of the world be damned. Because it seems to me you're trying to commit suicide, slowly and painfully. What are you trying to forget? Or maybe it's who?"

Too many sensations struck him all at once. Pleasure. Pain. The ache of wanting someone he couldn't have. Coming here wasn't going to make him forget, not the way he had wanted. Instead, it was wedging a knife of need deep inside him.

This man claiming his mouth, possessing his dick with an expertise that was more like a tornado racing across the land and sucking him up with it. But still it was Sully he saw before him. Naked with the sun glinting off his sun-bleached hair.

And he came hard and fast, sudden tears spurting from beneath his lashes. God, where was the pain he needed to wipe out the memories? He needed a drink. He needed the pills. He needed something to blur the desire he'd buried for so many years.

It was the thought of Sully and his hands on Luke's body that send him over the edge, spurting his cum onto the floor of

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this strange place, leaving him gasping.

Silas raised up and looked down at him. Suddenly Luke knew he'd come to the end of the road and he was going to have to face his demons. If he didn't face his past once and for all, he would never be free.

Silas brushed a thumb across his wet cheek. "I think you've got some work to do, boy. This is just the beginning. And if you don't do it, you're probably going to be dead before the year's out, from what I see."

Luke looked up at Silas as more tears poured down his face and he felt something inside him crack open. Silas was right and he knew it. But he'd wound himself up so tight, built the walls high and solid to keep himself from bleeding where anyone could see, that it had come to this. And now he had to do something or he was going to wither up and die.

CHAPTER 5

A week later Luke woke up at the crack of dawn. He didn't reach for a drink, as much as he wanted to, nor the bottle of pills. For the first time in his life he felt at peace with his decision, thanks to Silas Johnson, someone who was a complete stranger.

He was still a little sore from his session with Silas, but the marks had faded. He was content with the decisions he had made over the course of the last days. He was going home and he was ready to face what he'd put off for so damn long. He needed to get away. Silas had been right, he was well on the road to destroying himself and his career completely if he didn't get his act together and stop running.

SULLY'S HEART

Reaching over to the phone, he called his manager first. Chuck wasn't going to like it, but Luke needed time away. He hadn't wanted to give Chuck too much advance warning, afraid it would be too easy to change his mind. He needed to do this and he couldn't let anything stand in his way. Who'd have thought that one night with a BDSM master, could change the course of his life and wake him up like it had? He didn't plan on another one of those sessions in the near future, but it had accomplished more than he'd thought it could have. It wasn't sex he'd needed, it was someone experienced to more or less beat the truth out of him. But Silas Johnson had done it in such a way that he'd almost felt a sense of love and understanding attached to it.

That emotion of love had never been there when his father had beat the crap out of him. But he was going to have to go back to face him and those particular demons as well. He straightened his shoulders. He was a man and he needed to face things like a man, not keep running and hope he could eventually numb himself right out of existence. If he didn't tug out the damn thorn that was buried under his skin and lance the infection that had set in, he was a goner for sure.

Silas had helped him see the painful truth. He'd helped to rip away the facade that was Luke Cantrell, rock star. It was time to go home. It was a place he hadn't been in a lot of years.

After the call to Chuck, he got out of bed and padded into the bathroom. His manager had not taken his decision well, but in the end it was his life and he had to do this.

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After he dressed and had stuffed some clothes into a duffle bag, he went to the door, where Drew waited.

"I'm leaving town for a while. I'm going home."

Shock registered on Drew's face. "Does Chuck know about this?"

"Yes, I just called him. I have to get a way for a while."

"I'll get the car."

"No, Drew. Take some time off. This is something I need to do on my own. A little time out of Vegas, some space to dry out, away from all of this. I'll call you when I get back to town."

"But, boss—"

Luke held up his hand. "No. No arguments. I expect you could do with spending some time with your own family. So take it and I'll be in touch."

"This really isn't a good idea. I should go with you."

"Don't sweat it. I'll be back before you know it."

He pushed down the hall toward the elevator. He really had done about as much talking as he wanted to do on the subject. At least until he got to Texas.

When he reached the underground garage, he pulled out his car keys. Suddenly, it felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders. As he reached the sleek black Jaguar, he smiled with satisfaction. This baby was his first purchase after his first song hit the top ten on the charts.

Opening the door, he slung the bag into the backseat and slid into the soft leather seat behind the steering wheel. He ran

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his hand along the surface. He'd never thought to actually own a car like this one. He remembered the days in the fields back on his father's ranch, of eating dirt and little else. Remembered the long days in the hayfield with straw stuck in every uncomfortable crevice of his body. Dropping dog tired into bed and knowing the next day wasn't going to be any different from the last. The tedium had just about buried him.

His life now was so different from what it had been back then. But there'd been days when it was okay. The rodeos and spending time with Sully. Lazy, stolen Sundays at the creek that ran between Sully's father's spread and Luke's father's ranch.

It was funny that Luke had never thought of the Cantrell Ranch as home.

He backed the car out of the parking space and screeched out of the garage into bright sunlight. He grabbed the sunglasses on the dash and shoved them onto his face.

Turning left, he veered toward the interstate that would take him out of town, heading in the right direction. For once.

When he'd left town after graduation from high school, he hadn't told anyone he was going. Not even Sully. He'd taken the coward's way out and left a note. Nothing more. He was afraid if he actually faced Sully that one more time, he'd blurt out how he really felt and beg him to go with him.

But he'd known Sully wouldn't, couldn't understand those kinds of feelings. At the time Luke wasn't even sure he understood them himself.

Luke's father would have bitched him out for leaving him

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high and dry on the ranch and called him a good for nothing, walking out, just like his mother had all those years ago. If he'd faced either one of them, he might not have had the strength to leave. In the end, he'd had to do it in the dead of night.

He'd sent postcards back periodically from places he'd traveled to. He sent his father money regularly once he'd been in a position to do so. But he'd never heard a word back from him. Sully sent him a postcard now and then. Nothing too deep, just a "how you doing, when you coming home," sort of thing. Luke never responded directly and never went back home, too afraid of what he'd find when he got there.

But now, that's exactly where he had to go. To finally finish what was needing to be faced. And then, just maybe he could move on. But he was going to have to tell both his father and Sully the truth about himself. No matter what the outcome. Not necessarily for them, but for himself. For once, he had to be honest with himself.

CHAPTER 6

Nothing had changed. That was his first thought as he turned down the road to his father's ranch. Or maybe it had. The ranch house looked smaller than he remembered.

The farther he'd gotten from Vegas, the more anchored to the real world he'd seemed to be. Knowing that, reaching out from that fantasy world, the more anxious he'd gotten as the Jaguar ate up the miles. Suddenly it had seemed like the night with Joe, then the night with Silas, had all been part of a weird dream he'd had and it caused him to wonder how he'd gotten here.

What did he think he was going to accomplish by coming back? Just the thought of facing his father had his guts

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twisting inside. The old man had never had a kind word to say about anyone in all the years he'd known him. No wonder Luke's mother had left.

He pulled up next to the rundown ranch house. He figured it was probably the perfect setting for a worn out life. Technically, that could describe both his father and him at this point. At twenty-five he felt like he was one hundred. He'd certainly set himself out to experience at least that much.

The majority of the last seven years he'd spent his time running from his feelings for Sully, burying himself in his work. He'd ended up being one of the lucky ones when his first song hit the charts, followed quickly by a second. Somehow he'd managed to pick up a manager who actually knew what he was doing without bleeding him completely dry.

But at the back of his mind had been the relationship with his father. Had he really run because he knew one day his father would discover the truth and kick him out anyway? Had he decided if he was going, he'd be doing it on his own terms and not his father's?

Sometimes it all seemed so screwed up and disjointed. He remembered good times, but he also remembered the bad times. He just barely remembered his mother. Once she left, that was it, they'd never heard from her again. Living on the ranch was a tough life and he didn't really blame her for leaving. He just wished she'd tried to stay in touch. Even he'd done at least that much.

He was putting off going into the house. His father's old,

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rusty, red Chevy pickup truck was sitting outside, so he knew the man was home. He shouldn't be surprised that it was the same truck he'd been driving all his life. At least for as long as Luke had been around.

Everything was the same, except more rundown than he remembered. But then the homestead itself had been low on Stu Cantrell's list of needs. There wasn't the least thing homey about this place. Maybe that was part of the reason it had been so easy to leave. It definitely reflected the man who was his father. There was no love in this house—there hadn't been for a very long time. And it showed.

Luke checked his watch. Almost noon. His father would be in the kitchen grabbing something to eat most likely. Then he'd take it into the living room and turn on the television. He spent a lot of time in front of the damn tube. Never had time for Luke, except to tell him to get to his chores, but he lived for CNN.

Okay, he couldn't put it off any longer. Might as well get it over with. Shoving open the door, he swung his long legs around and got out, then shut the door. He studied the car for a long moment. It sure as hell looked out of place here. But then he was out of place. The story of his life.

He circled around to the back of the house and opened the screen door. The back door was never closed or locked in the heat of summer, and it was damned hot today with the sun scorching down on his head and the thick air clinging to him. There was no one in the kitchen, but he heard the muffled, droning sounds of the television from the other room. Again, it

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all looked the same, almost as though he'd never left. His father had always been a creature of habit, never changing.

But Luke had changed. And everything was different now. He was different, even if everything else here had managed to stay in suspended animation. He had to wonder if Sully would be the same. Just like he remembered him.

Luke walked through the doorway and into the living room. His father was seated in the old frayed rocker, his favorite chair with the TV stand next to it, and a half eaten tuna sandwich resting on a plate. Looking at him in profile, he appeared older, weathered, dried up by the hot Texas sun. His dark hair was thinning and there was now more gray than black.

And he looked much frailer than Luke had expected. Not the same burly giant who'd kept Luke in line with a hard fist when he was younger—when they both were. Looking at him now, he had to wonder why he'd been so afraid of him back then.

But, again, they'd both been different. His father was obviously so intent on the television, he didn't hear Luke come in. Luke cleared his throat loudly, but his father still didn't turn around.

"Hello, Pa," he finally said in a louder voice.

He saw his father's shoulders stiffen, and then slowly he turned his head. His faded blue eyes showed just a bare hint of shock as he saw Luke standing in the doorway, then they turned hard and cold. Just the way Luke remembered them. That was something that hadn't changed about the old man,

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anyway.

“What the hell are you doing here?” he finally asked.

No big surprise. Luke walked into the room and sat on the old worn sofa. “Yeah, good to see you, too. You been getting the money I send?”

“From that whoring you call a profession?”

Honest to God. He shouldn't be shocked after all these years. Nothing Luke did had ever been good enough for Stu Cantrell. “I sing, Pa, and I write songs, that's what I do. And a lot of people seem to like it, so I make good money at it. Is that a crime? It sure beats what you make working this land.” He looked around the room. “It should be helping out more than what I'm seeing here.”

His father sat up straighter in his chair. “I use it where it's needed. In the stock, in the fields.”

“Well, the least you could have done is bought yourself a new truck. That old Chevy is about on its last leg, isn't it?”

“None of your business. I'm sure you're driving some fancy shmancy thing.”

Luke sighed. He would never change. He'd hoped after all these years there might be some softening, but he'd been wrong. Swear to God, Luke really did live in some fantasy world if he thought anything would change here in Texas.

“Fine, Dad, you do what you want with it.”

“I don't need your blood money, boy.”

Boy. Oh, yes, he remembered that word very well. Maybe that's why it had dug into him so deeply when Silas used it. Why he'd felt so helpless beneath the man's control. And,

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maybe just a speck, of why he'd wanted it to happen. Suddenly, he was suffocated by being here. Silas and his father were nothing alike, but it still shook him. Bad.

Luke stood up. "I just wanted to come to see how you were, Pa. You don't need to read anything into it."

"You in trouble? Don't think I don't read those papers and see what you're up to. All those women and the men." His father narrowed his gaze and seared Luke with that look. Luke's heart shuddered to a halt in his chest. "Sully Vance won't want nothing to do with you. Not after the dirt you've been up to. You think he doesn't know what you are? A faggot! That's it plain and simple. I don't care what those magazines say because I know the truth about you. I knew it before you left. You think I didn't see things? And I know that's why you left. What I don't know is why you're back. You don't belong here. You're no son of mine. If you'd wanted to do right, you'd have stayed away."

Luke felt the blood drain from his face. It wasn't the way he wanted this meeting to go. He'd hoped...well, he didn't know what he'd hoped. But he knew this had been a mistake. A bad one.

He rose to his feet. "I just wanted to see you, Pa, but I guess I shouldn't have come here. You can't go back, can you? I'm sorry you feel the way you do. I'll see you later."

He straightened his spine and moved toward the doorway.

"Don't come back here," his father said in a low voice.

Luke halted in the doorway. The pain of his father's rejection hit him harder than he'd thought it would. This

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separation, this chasm, would probably never be closed. Not if his father had anything to say about it.

“I won’t be back. If you want me, you know how to reach me.” Then he stalked out of that hated house for the last time.

When he walked out the door, he took several deep breaths, trying to stop the pain, to gather himself. He just wanted to run fast and far and never look back. He couldn’t brush the Texas dirt off his boots fast enough.

He quickly got back into his car and beat it off Cantrell land, huge dust clouds swirling like a tornado in his wake. He didn’t look back.

But he couldn’t leave Texas. Not just yet. He swerved toward the left and down another dirt road. This one took him to the river bank. If there was one place to get clean, where there was silence and peace in this hell awful place—the one place that held any type of good memories—it was the river that ran between the Cantrell place and the Vance ranch.

CHAPTER 7

He trotted down the grassy knoll and headed for the glimmer of light in the distance. Cool and refreshing. Clean. Right now it seemed like the only clean spot in his whole damn life. By the time he reached the bank, the sweat was pouring off him. The huge oak with its twisted branches hanging over the river offered some shade, but what he really wanted was to sink into the water in hopes it could baptize him clean.

Too much had occurred in his life for that to happen, but it sure would be nice to feel clean again. Just for a little while. Suddenly he came to a decision. Dropping to the ground, he tugged off his expensive boots, shucked out of his jeans and

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underwear and then tossed off his shirt. For that moment it felt good, damn good to just stand there and feel nothing but the air against his skin.

Soon he'd be free of this place, but just now he wanted to remember the good times. The joy of having the best friend in the world and the innocence of a different life. There was too much weighing on his shoulders at the moment and he didn't think he'd ever get past it.

He saw the rope still hanging from the branch, but decided it wouldn't be a good idea to test it out after all these years. Instead, he walked down the slope toward the water's edge and stuck a foot in. Shock rushed through him at the cold temperature.

Don't be a pussy. Get your ass in here.

Sully's voice called to him across the years. Slipping in one inch at a time was never the way either of them did things back then. Whether it was breaking a bronc or racing a car, it was always as though there wasn't enough time to get it all done.

And there wasn't, because he'd never known that special exhilaration again. That sense of oneness with another human being. Sure, he could get sex, as much as he wanted back in Vegas. There was never a shortage of warm bodies. And if he wanted a particular kind of sex, he now knew where to go for that as well.

It was more than that with Sully, so much more, and he wished he'd understood back then. But he'd also worried. What if Sully thought like his father? What if he hated Luke

SULLY'S HEART

for being gay? And that's why he'd never confronted Sully with his feelings up to this point in his life. Obviously, he hadn't hidden it well enough because his father had surmised something different about Luke. Had Sully as well?

He determined he could stand the separation better than the look of loathing in his best friend's eyes. He took a deep breath and then ran for the water, plunging into the crystalline depths.

God, yes, it was better this way and it always had been. He just wished he'd been brave enough to tell Sully the truth. Maybe then it wouldn't have taken seven years to come to terms with who he was and what he wanted. It wasn't his lifestyle that was killing him, it was the memories of this place. This river. And the man.

He struck out with long strokes and glided through the water as swiftly as he'd ever done. That was one of the things he hadn't given up. Most days he tried to get at least an hour of swimming in. Riding a horse was something he hadn't gone back to. And he'd tried to stay away from the rodeo. Too many memories there.

He flipped over onto his back, gazing up at the sky. This was good, but there was something missing and he guessed he'd always feel that void. He knew in his heart it was too late to go back. Sully had obviously made a life for himself. The postcards they'd exchanged never revealed anything personal, never an indication his friend wanted more than friendship with him. And he didn't think he could face him now. His best bet was to head back to Nevada and let the past be buried. It's

SULLY'S HEART

one thing that would always be an ache inside him. Unrequited love was a bitch, no two ways about it.

He turned over and headed toward shore. It was time to move on and get his life in order. But this time he was going to deal with the aches of the past without the liquor and the pills.

He stepped out of the water feeling more cleansed than he expected, and walked over to his clothes. It was time to close this chapter.

“Well, look what the coyote dragged in.”

He froze in the act of reaching for his shirt. He knew that voice, would know it anywhere, but it couldn't be. It had to be his imagination.

Slowly Luke straightened and turned toward the voice, afraid of what he'd find. What the years had wrought. What changes he'd discover.

He sat atop a heavy-muscled Palomino stallion. The broad-brimmed hat shaded his eyes and Luke couldn't tell what he was thinking. What he felt about discovering Luke here.

“Sully Vance. It's been a long time.”

Sully shoved the hat back on his forehead and then shifted to dismount, the sound of creaking leather loud to Luke's ears at just that moment. The branches of the tree shifted and creaked and the hiss of a breeze shuddered across his bare skin.

He was standing here naked in front of the one man he wanted more than any other. And the one he couldn't have, not if he wanted to keep his friendship.

SULLY'S HEART

Luke drank in the vision of Sully as he stepped down from his horse. The Western cut jeans cupped his tight ass perfectly. Long, muscled legs that carried him closer to Luke, wonderfully broad shoulders, and a chest that had obviously filled out nicely since the last time they'd been together.

He pushed off his hat and strode toward Luke. His thick, blond hair was just as Luke had remembered it, streaked by the sun, like a field of shimmering wheat, darkened at the moment with sweat. And his eyes, those deep blue eyes that seemed to take in everything, study it, and understand it. Calm, strong, and alert all at the same time.

He stopped right in front of Luke and looked at him intently. Luke saw things in those eyes, but it couldn't be what he thought. It wasn't possible.

His fingers curled into fists of impotence. He wanted to reach out to hug him close, but he didn't dare. It would ruin the moment.

Ruin everything.

They stared at each other for a long time, almost a gap of years spanned between them as they studied and tried to learn what the time apart had done to each of them.

"Why'd you come back?" Sully wanted to know.

For you, Luke wanted to answer. Instead he shrugged. "Unfinished business, I guess."

Sully kept staring at him intently and Luke could feel his cock beginning to tighten in response to that intensity. He was going to shame himself, he just knew it. He should just get dressed and hightail it out of there fast before something

SULLY'S HEART

happened that shouldn't.

"How's your old man? I haven't seen much of him lately, but I got the feeling he's turned harder over the years. I've asked him about you when I've seen him in town, but he just grumbles something about you being a druggie and he didn't talk to you. If you didn't send the postcards now and then, I'd have worried you were dead in a ditch someplace. But according to the newspapers, you're doing real fine. I've been wanting to come to see one of your concerts, but you know how it gets."

Luke still couldn't look away. He had to wonder what else his father had said to Sully.

He's a fancy faggot, Vance, not someone you should be associating with. Luke wouldn't put it past his father saying just that sort of thing.

"Yeah, I know. I've been wanting to come back for a visit, but, well, there just didn't seem to be time."

Another long silence dropped between them. Luke's gaze dropped to Sully lips. There were so many times when he'd wanted to taste them. He felt his heart hammering against his chest. His nipples tightened as cool air wafted over them.

"I've missed you, Luke," Sully said softly as he stepped closer. "I've missed you a lot."

Luke held his breath. What was he trying to say? He licked his lips, nervous as hell that he was going to say the wrong thing, make a misstep.

"I-I've missed you, too. More than you know." Something changed in Sully's eyes.

SULLY'S HEART

And then suddenly he swooped forward, taking Luke by surprise, and planted a searing kiss on Luke's lips. Nothing could have shocked him more. He felt Sully's tongue press between the seam of his lips and plunge deep into his mouth. Sully wrapped his arms around Luke and tugged him close.

Luke was too shocked to respond right away, but then he lifted his arms and wrapped them around the broad shoulders of this gorgeous man and pressed himself tightly into his embrace.

It had to be a dream. It couldn't be real.

CHAPTER 8

It was unexpected—deliciously so. What Luke wanted right now had little to do with friendship. If only he'd realized, so much heartache could have been avoided.

Finally, Sully pulled away and just stared down at him, his breaths coming quick and uneven. He stepped back and Luke felt an awkwardness stretch between them.

"I need a swim," Sully said as he started to remove his clothes, turning away from Luke.

They'd gone past the point of shyness and indecision as far as Luke was concerned. He walked up behind Sully and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Wait." Then he stepped around to face him. They were

SULLY'S HEART

almost eye-to-eye—Sully was about half a head taller. “Let me.” Luke undid the first button of his blue and white striped shirt. Sully’s hands dropped to his sides. Luke could feel his tension in the stillness of his body as he waited for Luke to undress him.

“You took me by surprise, Luke. I wanted to come after you so many times. I wanted to tell you how I felt, but I was afraid.”

Luke pushed the shirt over his broad shoulders and it fell to the ground. He slipped his fingers into the waistband of Sully’s jeans and yanked forward, just as he dipped his head to draw a hard nipple into his mouth.

He relished Sully’s hands in his hair, just the way he’d always wanted. “Jesus, Luke, how could I not have known? Why didn’t I talk to you? Why the hell did I let you go?”

Luke felt the moist heat of Sully’s desire and he began to undo the belt, then his jeans. He pushed Sully to the ground, forcing him to lie back.

Luke dropped to his knees, urgent to have his friend naked, hungry to see all of him. It wasn’t that he hadn’t seen him buck naked before, but this time...this time was different. First, he yanked off Sully’s boots. Then he removed the jeans and underwear and tossed them aside and finally gazed down at Sully, drinking in the rugged perfection he’d missed so much.

He straddled Sully’s hips, knelt above him, pressed his dick to Sully’s. There was so much pleasure in that simple connection he thought he might come right there and then as

SULLY'S HEART

he rubbed up and down against him.

“God, Luke, I’ve missed you. I’ve wanted this, dreamed about it. I can’t believe you finally came back,” Sully gasped out, his voice deep and guttural.

“I just need to touch you, Sully. You have no idea how often I dreamed about that. Just touching you, learning you. I never dared to do it before. I thought you’d find it repulsive, me repulsive, and I couldn’t take a chance on losing your friendship. It meant more to me than anything. Still does.”

Sully’s hips arched upward, pressing closer. Luke ran his hands from Sully’s groin, up along his abdomen, and over his broad chest. He tweaked his nipples and slowly mapped back down over the expanse of firm, strong flesh.

Sully reached up and encircled Luke’s upper arms, yanking him down onto his chest. He fastened his mouth over Luke’s and Luke stretched out over him, feeling every inch of his hard body. There would never be a more magnificent moment than this one.

As they kissed, he slid a hand down over his shoulder, along his spine, over his hip and stroked over the curve of his perfect ass. He pulled him onto his side so they were facing each other.

He wanted to fuck so badly he could almost taste it, but he was afraid of rushing things. He didn’t want to ruin even one moment of this time.

And he didn’t think either of them were really prepared for the love sessions he wanted.

He brushed a hand along the curve of his jaw and down his

SULLY'S HEART

neck. "When did you know?"

Sully looked down at him and smiled. "That I was in love with you?"

"Well, yes, I guess."

His expression grew serious and he stroked along Luke's jaw with his fingertips. "Back in high school. I was so freaking envious of the girls you dated. You remember when we double dated? I could never concentrate on the girl I was with because I was too busy fantasizing about you. I guess I was too young to know what to do about it. And besides, it wouldn't have been accepted by either of our fathers, you know?"

"That's no lie." He was silent for a long time, just enjoying the sensation of flesh on flesh. He nudged a thigh in between Sully's legs and pressed against his balls. Sully groaned.

"You know this isn't going to last much longer. I want to fuck you in the worst way. I just didn't come prepared for this. I didn't know you'd be here."

"I know. After seeing my dad and the disgust in his voice when he called me a fag, I was having second thoughts about coming to see you. Pa's rejection hurt, but if I saw the same revulsion in your eyes as I saw in his, it would have been a whole lot worse. I didn't want to lose what little contact we had. I was about to leave when you rode up."

Finally, he couldn't stand it any longer. He lifted up and pulled Sully to his feet. "I think we need that swim, don't you?"

They both ran toward the river and, with whoops like

SULLY'S HEART

they'd yelled in high school, plunged into the water. When they finally surfaced, it was like some unseen magnet drew them together once again.

Bare feet hit sandy, pebbled bottom, the water rising above their waists, lapping against their bodies. Luke clasped Sully's slick erection, sliding his hand up and down its length, curling over the thick head and back down once again.

"You keep that up," Sully growled. "I will come right now."

He curled his own hand around Luke's cock, and Luke thought he'd die from the heady sensation.

They stroked each other slowly and smoothly, gripping and sliding, then suddenly they were over the top, thrusting against each other, groaning in release and collapsing into each other's arms.

"I know a place," Sully finally whispered. "How long are you here?"

"As long as it takes, man. As long as it takes."

"Come on," Sully said as they pushed toward the shore. "I want you some place a lot more private than this. I want to take my time with you, and I don't want to take a chance on us being interrupted. I've waited too long for this."

Luke had no problem with that whatsoever.

In fact, the sooner the better.

CHAPTER 9

He remembered the line shack vaguely. He'd used it a few times when he'd helped the Vances with their cattle and mending fence on occasion. It was small and pretty sparse, but it worked fine for him. And it was secluded.

Sully gave him directions and then rode his horse back to the ranch. He told Luke he'd meet him up at the shack—there were a few things he needed to get at the house and then he'd drive his pickup to the cabin and join him there.

Luke was so nervous when he arrived. What if Sully'd changed his mind? What if all this had been a dream, his fantasy that had somehow come to life just because he was back in Texas? Was he losing his mind? He paced the small

SULLY'S HEART

cabin as he waited for Sully to arrive.

He'd never asked him about his own family. What did his father think? Did he know that Sully was gay? Just like him? Did he blame Luke? God, just thinking about the wasted years made him crazy. He wore a path back and forth for what seemed like forever until he finally heard a pickup come to a halt outside. He eased open the cabin door and breathed a sigh of relief. It was Sully. He was already out of the truck and striding toward the cabin, a black duffel bag slung over his shoulder. Their eyes connected and Luke saw Sully smile. His expression eased. Had he experienced the same misgivings Luke had? Was he worried Luke wouldn't show up?

He stepped back from the door and Sully walked inside. He set the bag onto the old, scarred pine table and then turned back to Luke.

"I wasn't sure you'd come. I thought maybe you weren't real. That you'd disappear like you did seven years ago."

Luke smiled. "I thought the same thing. I guess we both want this too much. I just hadn't realized you wanted it as much as I did."

Sully turned away and barred the door. As he turned back, he ripped the tails of his shirt out of his pants and then started to unbutton it. "I can't wait another minute."

Luke mirrored his actions. "Me neither."

"Just so you know, I'm clean. I get tested regularly."

Sully's eyes dilated, the searing heat of his expression reaching across to Luke. "Me, too. I haven't been a saint, but I have taken precautions."

SULLY'S HEART

Luke's heartbeat thundered in his chest. "I want you, skin on skin. If you aren't ready for that, I understand."

They stared at each other and then in a flash, they were barreling across the room, closing the space, coming together like two stallions racing toward each other across the plain. The need was savage, locked away for far too long.

At that moment, there was nothing in Luke's mind but the elemental need to take or be taken as fast and as thoroughly as possible. To lay claim and to be claimed. Their mouths and bodies locked together, sucking and biting, hands groping, demanding, digging. It was a consuming, fierce drive, two rutting bucks with a powerful instinct driving them, too long denied.

Sully shoved Luke onto the bed. This time it was he who pinned Luke beneath a demanding stare, spread his legs and slowly lowered his head toward Luke's pulsing organ.

Luke arched his hips, needing to feel Sully's mouth on his cock and, for the first time, he wanted to go down on him. His mouth watered to taste him, to engulf him, to lick and suck and savor him.

"Turn around," he managed to gasp out. "You don't get to have all the fun."

Sully obliged him and then he found his friend's thick, stiff erection dangling over his face. He inhaled the musky scent, enjoying the heat and anticipation and then, just as he felt a wet mouth suck him in, he did the same. What an amazing feeling it was. He forced himself not to come quickly. He wanted to enjoy the sensation, to draw it out for as long as

SULLY'S HEART

possible.

“Yes,” he breathed around Sully’s prick.

His flesh was searing hot as he traced along the pulsing veins riddled over the flesh. It was a strong cock, just like the man, long and heavy, the head plumed, feeling like it was ready to burst. Skin stretched tight. He flicked his tongue along the slit, tasting his pre-cum, savoring it. Reaching around, he cupped Sully’s ass cheeks, kneading them as he suckled at his burgeoning cock. He stroked a finger along the crack, then brought the finger back to his mouth and sucked at it, covering it with his saliva, and returned to engulfing Sully’s cock with his mouth as he pressed the wet finger to his puckered opening.

He heard Sully moan as he slowly entered him for the first time. He felt Sully mirror his actions. It was so hot, so fucking fantastic, he wanted it to go on forever. Just like this.

They built into a rhythm and he knew it wasn’t going to be much longer as he felt himself rising higher and higher, and then he was flying and crying and groaning, all at the same time. His sounds and movements were echoed by Sully.

His cum spurted into his mouth and down his throat and Luke swallowed every drop. This was a moment of ecstasy like he’d never experienced before.

When it was over, Sully shifted back on the bed and lay next to Luke, gasping for breath. He cupped Luke’s face. “It’s never been like that before. Not ever.”

Luke looked at him as they lay there entwined in each other’s arms. “What did you do? How have you handled

SULLY'S HEART

things?"

"There was a particular night when I was missing you so much after you left and before I got that first postcard, that I went down to Dallas. I got so drunk and then I met up with this cowboy. I woke up the next morning and found myself in bed with him. I missed you, I ached for you, but I had to get some comfort from someplace, because I didn't think I'd ever get to be with you. Not like this."

"I know what you mean. I thought about you all the time. I used alcohol and drugs and bodies. But I still couldn't get you out of my head. I had to come back. I needed to find out." He wasn't quite ready to tell him about Silas Johnson yet. He wanted to take this new level of their relationship one step at a time.

"I'm not sure what we do next."

Luke pushed him onto his back and smiled down at him. "I can tell you exactly what we do. You don't have any lube in that little black bag of yours, do you?"

Sully offered him a slow smile and there was a twinkle in his eye. "Well," he drawled, "I'm thinking you might just find a tube or two in there."

Luke vaulted from the bed and lunged toward the table. Sully was right after him and they wrestled each other to the floor. Sully dug his hand into the bag and triumphantly pulled out the lube.

Luke laughed and dropped back onto the floor. Sully uncapped the tube, his eyes, now heavy with lust, as he captured Luke's gaze. He reached down and squirted some of

SULLY'S HEART

the greasy substance onto Luke's rectum. It was cold, but Sully's thick, hot finger penetrating him quickly had him boiling hot. One finger was joined by a second, slow and deep, until he was gasping.

"Fuck me, Sully. Now."

Sully smiled, pulled out and pushed him to his hands and knees. He forced his legs wider. Luke held his breath as he felt the tip of Sully's broad penis at his opening, pressing, demanding entrance. Sully's hand was on Luke's cock, claiming him, as he pushed deeper, until Luke felt Sully's balls hugging close against his testicles. Oh, God, it was good, so damn good.

And then Sully began to buck and sway, push hard and deep, pull out slow and easy, time and time again. Luke felt like he was possessed in the same way the mares were when they came for stud. Complete control was out of his hands as Sully fucked him again and again, his hand on his cock. He arched and rutted beneath him, meeting his demands again and again, until they both came powerfully once more, his cum slicking Sully's hand and his ass filled with Sully's seed.

They both collapsed onto the floor, exhausted and replete. Sully slid his softening prick from Luke and pulled him into his arms. Luke wrapped his arms around Sully's waist.

"I'm not letting you go again," Sully growled.

"I know," Luke responded as he stroked his back. "I know."

CHAPTER 10

Luke didn't think he'd ever had a moment in his life when he was more content. More perfect. He stroked his fingers along Sully's hip as they lay facing each other. Soon he was going to have to return to Vegas.

They'd stayed at the cabin for four blissful weeks as they learned each other, loved each other, and tried to decide where this was all going to lead. They'd spent time down at the river. Sully had brought up an extra horse and they took long rides together. They'd even driven into the city for dinner and a movie on a couple of occasions. Luke dreaded the thought of leaving, but he had to go back. He'd built a life for himself and he had to see if there was anything left to the career he'd

SULLY'S HEART

walked out on.

“Do your parents know?”

Sully leaned forward and sucked at Luke's neck, then licked along the column. “I haven't said anything specifically, but I have no doubt they know you're here. And where I've been.”

Luke leaned back to look up at him. “Are you going to tell them?”

Sully returned the gaze unflinchingly. “Yes, I'm going to tell them. But before I do, we have to decide where this is going to take us. You and I live totally different lives.”

Luke pulled him close. “You could move to Vegas to be with me. I make enough to take care of both of us.”

Sully reached up to cup his jaw. “I'm not going to be a kept man, Luke.” He rolled over onto his back and heaved a loud sigh. “This isn't going to be easy. I've got responsibilities and so do you. But there's got to be some meeting ground.”

Stretching up, Luke covered Sully's body with his own, rubbing against him skin to skin. He leaned down to kiss him, pressing his tongue deeply inside. Then he raised his head. “This is only going to work if we both want it bad enough and are willing to make concessions.”

“It's a tough road. I think my father's known for a long time that I'm gay, but it's just something we've never confronted head on.”

“Sully, I don't want to force you to do anything you don't want to do. If you can't come out to them, I'll understand that. I've had my own set of issues, especially with public image

SULLY'S HEART

and all that. My manager thinks it's better for my image to remain 'available' to the female population as he puts it. But it's gotten harder and harder over the years. I think I've reached a point where I have to be honest, not only to me, but to the rest of the world."

He'd do whatever it took to keep Sully in his life, even if it meant traveling back and forth between Nevada and Texas for the time being. And if he needed their relationship to remain a secret, he'd do his best to respect that. But he couldn't give him up.

"This isn't something we're going to be able to decide just like that. Let's take it one step at a time." Sully rose and claimed Luke's lips, his fingers splayed over his spine in a possessive grip. He reached with one hand to cup his ass, then ran a thick finger along his crack.

He deepened the kiss as he pressed the tip into his hole. Strictly a tease as he circled his anus, driving him crazy. Sully removed his hand and rising up, his mouth still fastened to Luke's, he pushed him back onto the bed, pressing him deep into the old, lumpy mattress.

When he finally raised his head and looked down at Luke, there was something dark and delicious in his eyes. As Luke watched and waited, his gaze fastened onto his glistening, engorged lips, Sully reached down under the bed and Luke's eyes widened in surprise.

"Ever been tied down?" Sully asked him as he held up the leather strips to show him.

Luke licked his lips, his heart pounding in his chest. "Yes,"

SULLY'S HEART

he whispered.

Sully reached up to bind one arm to the wooden bedpost above his head. "Did you like it?"

His cock was getting so hard, he wasn't sure he was going to last. "Yes," he finally managed to rasp out.

Sully smiled as he tied his other arm. "Good. I want to be sure you don't go back to Vegas and forget all about me."

"Damn you, Sully, you know that's not going to happen."

Sully moved down the bed to tie his ankles and then rose up and looked down at his lover. He trailed a hand down along one inner thigh, cupped Luke's muscled calf and pressed down to the sole of his foot. Then he did the same to the other leg.

Luke's cock bobbed hard and stiff, engorged to the point of bursting. The tip leaked pre-cum down onto his belly. This was something he hadn't anticipated.

"Do you like it hard, lover?" Sully asked, watching Luke's expression intently.

Luke arched up, his body quivering with anticipation. What was Sully up to?

"Yes, damn you. Fuck me." The rawhide bonds weren't going to budge. He'd have to wait for Sully's pleasure.

"Not yet. I learned a lot in those years since you've been gone. You and me, we learned how to handle pain pretty damn well on the rodeo circuit, don't you think? It was pain, but it felt damn good after a ride, didn't it?"

All Luke could do was nod his head, unable to look away from this more dominant lover. Sully turned away, leaned

SULLY'S HEART

down and rummaged for something in his bag. It gave Luke a real nice view of his fine, muscled ass. If only his hands were free, he knew exactly what he'd do, but instead he had to lay here and wait, his cock getting harder with each second, his balls tightening painfully.

Sully turned around and held up something for Luke to see. "You remember this?"

Well, I'll be damned.

"I haven't thought about that for years. Where'd you find it?"

"Down by the river shortly after you left. I've kept it all this time."

It was a memento from Luke's first successful ride. It was a shank of the horse's mane that he'd ridden. It wasn't uncommon to wear a bit of the hair that bit you for good luck. It had been woven into his belt.

Now, it was held together at one end with silver wire and he had to wonder what Sully planned to do with it now.

He held it up. "You know what I used to do with this?" He brushed it across his nipples and closed his eyes. "I would lie in bed at night and think about you. What you might be doing." He brushed lower, across his abdomen and feathered it along his cock which rose tall, the veins bulging along its length. "I'd fantasize about you in bed with me." He lifted it to his nose and inhaled as he wrapped his hand around his cock, stroking up and down, over the broad dusky head. Pre-cum oozed from the slit, slicking his fingers. "I'd think about you," he whispered and then suddenly white cream spewed from his

SULLY'S HEART

pulsing cock and Luke wanted to lick up every drop of the spurting cum.

He couldn't take his eyes off of Sully in the throes of passion. When it was over Sully opened his eyes slowly, a smile on his lips, his softening cock and his fingers glistening enticingly with his spent seed. "I love you, Luke. More than I thought it was possible to love anyone."

"I love you, too, Sully." He felt the tears clogging his throat, his chest tight with suppressed emotion.

Sully wiped his hands on a wet paper towel and then moved toward the bed. He brushed across Luke's tits with the horsehair, making for a line down his ribs and across his abdomen, but he didn't touch Luke's cock. He swirled around it, beneath it, along his thighs. He swept over his balls tightly drawn to his body.

Luke's fingers were curled into fists as he fought the rising desire that spread through him. He didn't want to come, not just yet, it was all too delicious, having Sully torture him this way.

"You left me wanting, Luke. Aching for you. If only you'd come back to me." He stopped touching him and Luke arched up from the bed, his body heavy with the lust that Luke had instilled, fire raging through his blood. "What do you think I should do about the fact that you stayed away so long?"

"I guess you better punish me, Sully. Obviously, I've been real bad."

"Think so? Hmmm. Maybe you do need a reminder."

Luke's breath stuttered in his chest. Just what did Sully

SULLY'S HEART

have in mind?

Sully released the rawhide bindings and helped Luke to sit up and then stand. "Bend over the table. I want that sexy ass of yours."

No way Luke was going to hesitate one instant. His body already pulsed to feel the punishment Luke would administer.

Sully bound his hands to the corner legs of the small table. He ran a hand over Luke's buttocks and Luke envisioned those same hands stroking the flanks of a prized stallion. He'd watched him do it many times when they were younger.

"Do it," he bit out, feeling every one of his nerve endings reaching out to Sully. Wanting this.

"When I'm ready," Sully said as his hands moved over Luke's ass cheeks, plumping and separating.

Luke thought he was going over the edge as Sully's wet tongue dove into his hole and his hands circled around to grip his dick. But then his eyes widened as Sully wound a leather strip around Luke's balls and bound him up at the base of his cock. He knew that now he wasn't going to be able to come until Sully allowed it. That thought made him so fucking hot, he thought he might just burn up right here.

His whole body quivered in anticipation as Sully moved away. His cock felt painfully engorged all ready, bigger than it had ever felt in his life.

Sully moved around the table to stand in front of Luke, showing him what he now held in his hand. It was a crop that he flexed between his hands, a meaningful glint in his eyes. Luke licked his lips.

SULLY'S HEART

"Now, we'll see how much punishment you need so you understand what's at stake here. And you don't ever forget."

He moved around the table and Luke felt the tip of the crop stroke down his spine and circle over his buttocks.

And then he sucked in as Sully hit him across his flanks. The sting seared through him. "Say it, Lucas Cantrell. Why did you come back?" He hit him again, and his ass began to throb.

"Because I love you, Sullivan Vance."

He hit him again and again. "What was that? I don't think I quite heard you."

"I love you...I love you."

Another strike. "And you won't disappear again. You won't make me ache for wanting you. For seven damn years." Another hit and his ass cheeks were burning.

The tears started to stream down Luke's face and he gulped to fight down the burgeoning emotions that were about to overwhelm him. His fingers curled into fists, his cock was practically bursting with the need to come, and felt about as inflated as a hot air balloon that was ready to fly, to release all the pent up fire inside him. He needed to soar like he'd never flown before.

Suddenly, Sully stopped and Luke felt cool, soothing cream being rubbed into his burning backside. A finger penetrated him.

"Oh, God, Sully, please."

The wet finger went deeper, in and out. A second was added, widening him, preparing him. It retreated and he felt

SULLY'S HEART

the tip of Sully's dick at his entrance. He pressed and it passed the tight anal ring. He felt the heat of Sully's body against his back, the prick preparing to possess him and he trembled, needing to feel that final thrust.

"What do you want, lover?" Sully whispered against his ear.

If he'd been able to, he would have come right then and there. "Fuck me," he screamed. "I love you, dammit, now fuck me hard."

And that's exactly what Sully did as he rammed into him, his thick, slippery prick filling him completely. Like a wild mustang, he fucked him fast and deep, long and slow.

Luke couldn't breath, it was too much. He had to come. Sully's arms finally wound around him and reached for his cock, untying the rawhide. Luke screamed as he came and came and came, powerful bursts of his seed that didn't seem to want to end.

He saw never-ending falling stars and fireworks burst before his eyes. He heard Sully scream as he came, two souls locked together that would never, ever be parted again.

CHAPTER 11

Luke stood under the shower, hands braced against the wall, for as long as he could stand it and then switched it off. He'd been back in Vegas for just under four weeks and the separation from Sully was starting to take a toll. Phone sex was simply not the same thing as feeling Sully's cock inside him or going down on him, tasting and savoring his bare flesh.

They talked every night, right after his show. He no longer required the pills or the booze to get from one moment to the next without hurting—all he required was Sully's voice. That's probably all he'd ever needed, but he'd forced himself to find alternatives for the man he'd never thought he could have. And now that he knew he could, there would never be a

SULLY'S HEART

substitute good enough for that. Everything paled in comparison to Sully's love.

He stepped out of the shower, towed himself off and pulled on a pair of black jeans and royal blue shirt. The blue reminded him of the color of Sully's eyes, that's why he'd bought it down in the hotel shop. He picked up the leather hand-tooled belt and as he buckled it, he stroked across the pale twist of horsehair that looped through it. It was from Sully's Palomino. His fingers slid over the rough braid of hair and his eyes closed, remembering and aching to feel his body against his once again.

Drew had been relieved to see him and surprised when Luke turned down the eager fans that wanted to visit him after the show. It was a first as far as Drew knew and Luke saw the questioning look in his eyes when he shrugged and left his dressing room. After the first week, he stopped asking and just took to turning the young men and women who were eager to grace his bed away without questioning.

Even his regular supplier for the pills was tossed out the back. Luke had never felt so good in his life. His head was clear, his body toned, his heart full. Now, if he could just figure out how to get his lover out here to Nevada, his world would be just about damn well perfect. He was afraid that was going to take some doing. Sully was firmly rooted in west Texas dirt and it was going to take a lot to dig him out.

Pulling on his boots and picking up his black leather jacket, Dallas baseball cap, and dark sunglasses, he headed toward the door. Tonight he was going to The Glow. He

SULLY'S HEART

wanted to see Silas Johnson. He needed to thank him.

Drew looked up as he exited his room, laid the newspaper aside and stood up. "Where to, boss?"

Luke shook his head. "You don't need to come with me. I'm just headed to a bar across town. I won't be long. I don't think you'd be comfortable."

"You sure about this?" Drew looked at him with a worried expression. It must have been the word bar that caught him by surprise. Luke hadn't had a drink since he'd come back from Texas.

He smiled and clapped Drew on the shoulder. "Don't worry, I'll be fine. I'm just meeting a friend for a bit and then I'll be back."

"You've changed, Luke. What happened in Texas?"

"Let's just say I finally met up with the love of my life and it's changed everything."

"Why didn't she come back with you?"

Luke laughed and looked Drew straight in the eye. "It's a 'he,' my friend. I'm gay." It was the first time he'd said it to another living person besides Sully. "I hope knowing that doesn't change anything. You're a great bodyguard and I'd hate to lose you."

Drew's jaw had dropped as he stared at Luke. "B-but then why..."

"Did I always ask for a woman, too? Because Chuckie didn't want anyone to know my preferences. He thought it might ruin my image. But as far as I'm concerned, Chuck can go fuck himself, because I'm not hiding any more."

SULLY'S HEART

The expression on Drew's face eased. "Luke, I'm glad you've found what you were looking for. I'm not gay, but I know what my life would be like if I couldn't be with my wife. Love makes all the difference. And knowing about you doesn't change a thing as far as I'm concerned. I've got your back, just like always."

"Thanks, man. I won't be gone long."

One at a time. He wanted everyone to know, but he was going to take it one step at a time, sort of ease them into it. If Sully had come back with him, it would have been different, but he didn't want to shock anyone into a heart attack with his apparent about-face. There was no hurry, not just yet.

As soon as he'd gotten back into town, he'd informed his manager of his position. Chuck had gone all red in the face and Luke had thought he was going to keel over. Shit, he was gay himself, so he didn't know why he was so shocked at Luke's decision. He guessed it probably had to do with greed.

Too fucking bad.

Luke took the freight elevator down to the main floor and then followed the weaving corridors out through the laundry room and into the alley. It was a roundabout circuit, but one pretty much guaranteeing he wouldn't be followed by eager fans or lingering paparazzi. He didn't go out all that often anyway, so there was no real reason for them to suspect he'd leave his suite tonight.

Coming out of the alley, he hailed a cab and gave him the address. When they arrived, he gave the driver a generous tip and got out. He looked up at the bright neon sign. The Glow.

SULLY'S HEART

Well, he certainly felt like he had a glow burning bright inside him. He wasn't even sure Silas would be here tonight, but he thought he'd give it a try. He didn't want to just leave a message on his answering machine...he wanted to see the man face-to-face.

After he paid the cover charge, he stepped into the packed room. Narrowing his gaze, he searched the bar, and then he saw him seated at the far end. Slowly he made his way across the room. He was sitting, facing the bar, his arm slung over the shoulders of a young man wearing tight, black leather pants and a spikey black leather collar. The collar matched his hair which was black with purple highlights, sort of punk style. For a moment, Luke wondered if he was a client of Silas's or a lover? He saw Silas give him a quick kiss, a slap on the ass, and then the young man turned and walked off.

"Hello, Silas."

The silvery-haired older man turned slowly to see who had addressed him. The expression in his eyes told Luke he recognized him. His gaze slowly surveyed Luke and then his cool gray eyes centered on Luke's face

"Hello, boy, back for more?"

The word "boy" had his guts twisting inside. Echoes of his father haunted him, but he'd closed that door, once and for all. And he wasn't going to look back.

Silas didn't offer him a seat and he didn't plan on staying long anyway.

He shook his head at Silas's question. "No, not this time. I just wanted to stop by to thank you."

SULLY'S HEART

Silas's eyebrows shot up. "Thank me? You hardly got your buns warmed. Thank me for what?"

"It was enough to set me thinking and I took care of some things that needed doing."

"I have to say, you look a lot better than you did the last time I saw you. Back then you looked a bit rough around the edges." He narrowed his gaze. "In fact, I'd say you've got the blush of love on you."

Luke felt hot color creep up into his face. "Well, as a matter of fact, you could say that. But if you hadn't egged me on, I might not have found it."

"That's what I'm here for." Silas looked past him. "Is your man here?"

"No. Right now it's a bit of a long distance relationship. But we're working on it."

Again, Silas's eyes surveyed him coolly. "Well, you know where I am if you ever need me. You and your new man for that matter. Always did have a special place in my heart for tandems."

Luke was caught by surprise when he realized his body was reacting to Silas's suggestion. But he'd have to talk about it with Sully first.

Silas was an attractive man, mesmerizing, in fact. Sully might just enjoy an evening's entertainment with Silas.

"I'll get back to you on that."

Just then the spikey-haired young man came back to Silas's side. Silas wound a possessive arm around his shoulders and drew him closer. He licked up the side of his

SULLY'S HEART

face and then pushed him down and the young man dropped to his knees, lowering his head forward and staring at the ground.

Silas looked over at Luke. "One of the advantages of my profession. I can choose the best and brightest to be my slaves. Beautiful and well-behaved, don't you agree? Just like those show horses back in Texas."

Luke swallowed hard. He could almost see himself yielding to Sully in that same manner. His cock was growing harder by the second.

"Yeah. Well, I better be going."

"My boy here could help you with that hard-on you've got right now, if you have the inclination."

"No, I—no thanks."

Luke pivoted around and quickly exited the bar. Too much damn temptation in this place. Whatever he chose to do, he wasn't doing it behind Sully's back. They'd made a commitment to each other and he wasn't breaking it. But now if Sully should have a mind to engage Silas for an evening, that was a whole different thing. But that was for another time.

CHAPTER 12

The last show before the holidays was over. Luke ran the white towel that his assistant handed him around his neck and over his face. Once he reached the dressing room, he flopped into a chair and pulled his soaking T-shirt over his head and tossed it to the floor. Leaning back, he closed his eyes. That last encore had been particularly exhausting. Maybe he was just ready for a break.

Six months and still no end in sight to the distance from his lover. He'd managed to eke out a day here and there to make a quick trip back to Texas, but no more than that, and it was getting old. Something was up with Sully, he could tell. He'd closed up and didn't talk much about his family any

SULLY'S HEART

more at all, and that began to worry Luke.

He couldn't lose Sully, not after all this. But he knew what kind of pressure could be brought to bear from family. And Sullivan Vance didn't come from just any family in Texas. His family's ranch was one of the biggest and his name carried a lot of weight. For Sully to come out into the open about his relationship with Luke would take a lot of courage, especially in that part of Texas, and particularly to admit to being in a gay relationship with bad boy rock star, Luke Cantrell, which would bring a lot of publicity.

Too many roadblocks in this relationship and Luke was starting to worry that it might be more than Sully was prepared to admit to right now. Look how long it had taken Luke to hightail it back to Texas and admit who he was. This relationship wasn't going to be easy for either of them.

He rubbed his thumb over the braid of horsehair attached to his belt. His talisman, his good luck charm. He again saw Sully sitting on his Palomino beneath the burning rays of the sun. It was probably the moment that changed everything. Did either of them begin to realize what sort of commitment it was going to take to make this work?

All he had known at the time was the longing and the driving need to end the pain of wanting and being afraid he would never have what he really yearned for more than life itself.

Sully's heart.

He knew now that whatever the price was, he'd pay it. Willingly. If only he could be certain that Sully wanted it as

SULLY'S HEART

badly as he did. Time and distance had a way of eroding his confidence. Would Sully break under the pressures? God, he hoped he was wrong and that the distance when they spoke was created by something else, and not the idea that he wanted to break things off with Luke, because he didn't think he could handle it if he did. Not after everything they'd gone through. Not after finally acknowledging that their friendship went so much deeper than either could have imagined. He couldn't even think about that prospect.

There was a knock at the door and Luke opened his eyes. Drew stuck his head in.

"There's someone out here that's asking to see you."

Drew knew by now Luke wasn't bedding any of his eager fans, so he was a little surprised that he was even asking. "Is it someone I should see? I sure don't need any bed mates tonight."

"This one's different." Drew stepped inside, an odd expression on his face. "He said to give you this." He held out his hand, and Luke's eyes widened, his heartbeat jumping as he reached out to accept the white owl feather in Drew's grasp. He knew where that feather had come from. He and Sully had climbed all the way to the top of the rocky peak behind the Vance homestead. Right there resting on a rock at the top was a white feather. They'd taken it as a sign of reaching their manhood by making it to the top without mishap.

Sully had taken out his brand new jackknife and sliced a shallow line down his forearm and blood had started to slowly

SULLY'S HEART

drip from the cut. Luke remembered doing the same and they had pressed their arms together, gripping hands tightly. For them, at ten years old, it had been the most solemn and important ceremony that made them blood brothers, that they would ever take part in. So they had thought at the time.

Luke gazed down at the white feather whose tip had been dipped in their mingled blood. It had faded to a brownish tinge. Emotion overwhelmed him, but he tamped it back down and looked up at Drew.

He remembered something he'd read about owls and totems and the like. When the way was lost the spirit of the owl would guide you back to the proper path. Hadn't he been lost for years? At the time they'd taken it as a reward for their courage in actually getting to the top. But holding that feather now, looking at it through different eyes, it felt like it went far deeper in meaning, binding the two together for a lifetime and drawing them back to the path they were meant to travel. He carefully set the feather on the dressing table.

"Big, blond-haired guy? Mouth-watering Texas handsome?"

Drew laughed. "Well, he's good looking, I'll give you that, but not really my type. He is wearing a big ole cowboy hat, if that helps."

"God yes, get him in here."

"You bet, boss. Kind of thought you might want to see this guy."

Luke stood up when Drew left and brushed his sweaty palms down over his thighs.

SULLY'S HEART

Sully was here. In Vegas. After all these months. It didn't seem possible. He looked at the feather he'd set down. It was real.

The door opened once more and filling the passageway was the man of his dreams. Big and rugged, and oh-so fine.

"Sully." One word and quickly shoving the door shut behind him, his lover was across the room, his mouth possessing Luke's with a passion that spread to every corner.

Luke ripped his shirt open and shoved it off his shoulders, needed to feel him skin to skin. Mouths sucked, teeth nipped, hands roved, pushing and gripping. Sully's hands were at Luke's belt, moving faster than a Kentucky Derby winner across the finish line. Luke blindly reached for one of the drawers of the dressing table and yanked out the first thing that came to hand which happened to be a jar of Vaseline and he shoved it into Sully's hands.

Sully pushed his pants and underwear down and whirled Luke around toward the wall. He kicked his feet as far apart as they would go, considering his jeans were tangled around his feet, imprisoning him. He felt Sully's hands at his hole, greasing him quickly. He looked over his shoulder and saw him spreading the lube over his stiff cock.

Sully caught his gaze and smiled, though his eyes were heavy with lust. "Do you have any idea how long I've been dreaming about this moment?"

And then Sully pushed his shoulders against the wall and pulled his hips back as he centered his prick at Luke hot, tight entrance. He was inside Luke faster than a rattler's strike, deep

SULLY'S HEART

into Luke's heart, touching and retreating again and again.

He reached for Luke's cock, gripping it with his well-lubed hands, stroking and masturbating him, creating the hard rhythm of possession that Luke loved from this man. And it was possession in every sense of the word.

The orgasm gripped and threw him through the air, higher than a bronc unseating a cowboy, as he spurted his cum into Sully's ready hands. He bucked back against his lover, driving him deeper, hearing his groan as he climaxed inside Luke's rectum, his muscles gripping him for all he was worth.

When it was over, Sully pulled from Luke, both of them gasping for breath. Slowly, they helped each other clean up and then cuddled on the loveseat against the wall.

Luke stroked a hand over Sully's broad, shirtless chest, playing with the wealth of pale curls pelting his chest. "I can't believe you're here. I was preparing to head back to Texas, but I didn't know if you wanted to be with me over the holidays."

Sully leaned down to give him a quick, punishing kiss. "Idiot. How could you think I wouldn't want to be with you?"

Luke looked away. "I don't know...there's been something in your voice lately when we talk. I wasn't sure... Well, there's your family to consider and everything."

Sully gripped his jaw and forced him to look up. His blue eyes blazed as he looked into Luke's eyes. "I love you, Luke. That's never going to change. But you're right, I was tending to business and I guess I got a little sidetracked. I wanted to be able to get out here so badly."

"How long are you here for?"

SULLY'S HEART

Sully gave him a mysterious yet tentative smile he wasn't quite sure he understood. "I'm here for good. I did what I had to do. My sister and her husband will deal with the ranch. My parents know about us. They took it better than I thought they would. My sister says she always knew. The little brat." He grinned.

Luke blinked, and then blinked again. "Are you serious? This isn't the time to joke about a thing like this."

"What, about my sister?"

"Dammit, no. You know what I mean."

Sully's expression grew more serious and he cupped Luke's face. "I couldn't be more serious. I have some money saved up and I figure I could stake a small spread here in Nevada." His expression grew concerned. "I couldn't be with you every minute. I can't be a kept man, but it would be a home for us. A place where you could relax away from all this. I know you won't always be working here in Vegas, but it will be a place for us—when you need it. When you're ready to come home."

"Jesus! I should have thought of that before. I guess I just didn't think you'd be willing to give up the Vance spread. I can't believe you want to do this." He reached up and kissed Sully hard, driving his tongue deep, wanting to meld them together and willing his desires into Sully. He pulled back and looked into his eyes. "I love you, Sully. You've given up so much."

"I should have done it before. If you hadn't come back, I don't know what I would have done. Obviously, you had more

SULLY'S HEART

guts than me, and I'm thankful every day that you did."

"We'll make this work, lover. I know we will. Whatever comes, we'll face it together this time."

Sully held out his arm and Luke saw the faded scar still there. Then he held his own out with a matching scar. They pressed not just their forearms together, but Sully leaned back and stretched out, and Luke stretched over him, pressing his body to Sully's.

He was home at last.

ADRIANNA DANE

Theresa Gallup uses the pen names of Tess Maynard and Adrianna Dane. Theresa has been writing since the age of 10. A legal secretary for 30 years, she is currently working on another erotic romance, as well as a full-length romantic mystery/suspense. She has been married for 30 years and has three grown children (a daughter and twin sons), and is a new grandmother.

Writing as Tess Maynard, her first published short story appeared in the ezine, *The Whispering Forest*, in January of 2004. Writing as Adrianna Dane, where adding sensual heat to romance is her motto, *Esmerelda's Secret* was her first foray into the erotic romance genre.

Having traveled and lived from the East Coast to the West Coast, Theresa receives inspiration for her stories from a variety of sources, including music and poetry, and her tastes are eclectic.

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* * *

***Don't miss Mariposa Soul, by Adrianna Dane,
available at Amber-Allure.com!***

Investigative journalist Andre Cordaire spends the majority of his time globetrotting around the world and flitting from bed to bed, never tempted to stay in any of them. Always searching. It's a lonely existence, but he has never been able to find that special woman with whom to share his life. Soul-mates, however, can turn up in the most unusual places at unexpected times...

An encounter in a bar, a hiking trip up a mountain, and discovering a soul-mate in the person he never would have expected, who makes him want to share the love trapped inside him, was the last thing Andre was ready for. Finally, here is someone who understands more about him than he did himself. Once revealed, can he acknowledge what his heart and soul cries for? Or will he keep running, denying his need for the one person he knows could make him happy? Even if that person is a man?

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