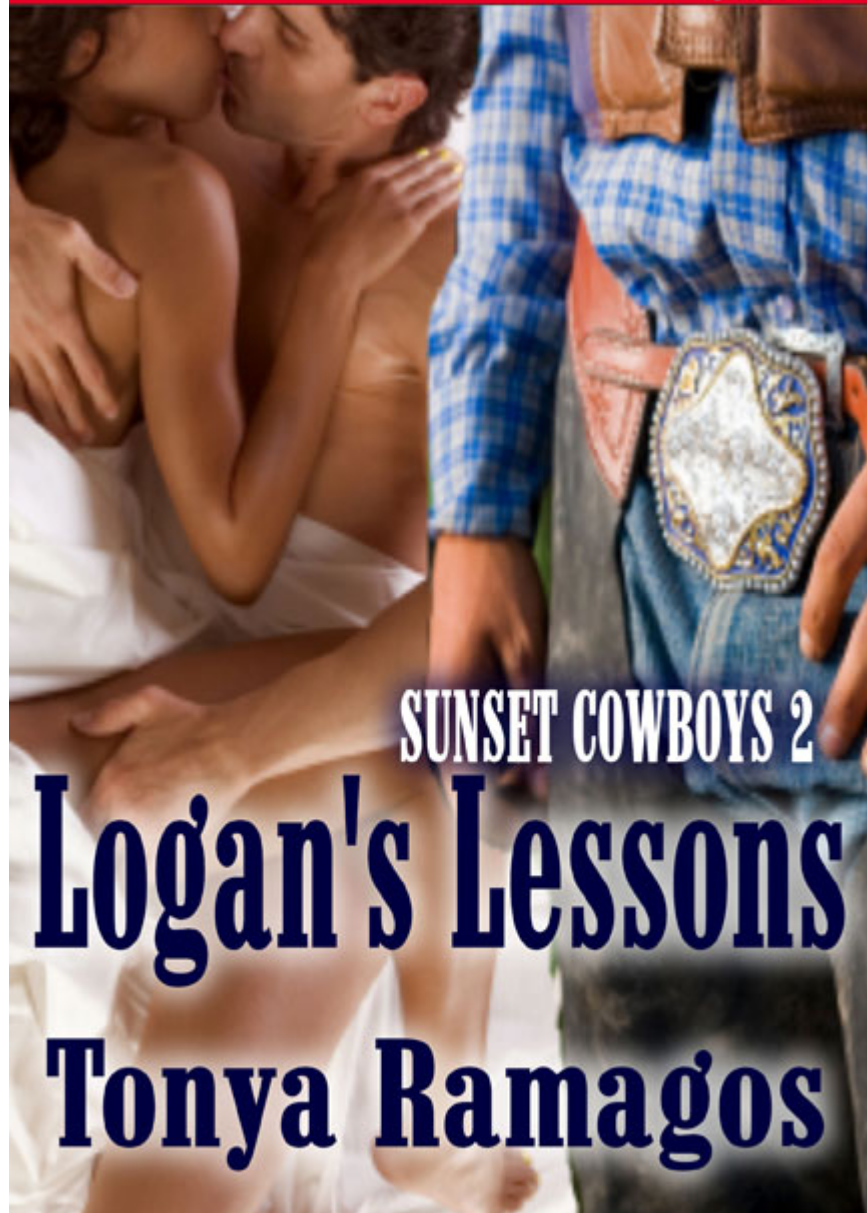


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LOGAN'S LESSONS

Sunset Cowboys 2

Tonya Ramagos

EROTIC ROMANCE



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DEDICATION

To Wendi Darlin, thanks for pointing me in the right line dancing direction.

LOGAN'S LESSONS

Sunset Cowboys 2

TONYA RAMAGOS

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Chapter 1

Jaelynn-Sue Murphy caught sight of long legs clad in faded Wranglers, a truly delectable ass, narrow hips, and a set of broad shoulders perfect for gripping. Awareness moved through her, tightening her nipples and wetting her panties. She turned on her barstool for a better look and, *oh, my*. Handsome cowboys were a dime a dozen in the rodeo business, but sometimes a girl lucked up and found one beyond the extraordinary. Cowboy Grip and Ride, she aptly nicknamed him, as he did a lone bump and grind on the dance floor that put her in mind of a bale of hay and a horse whip, definitely topped the superb o-meter.

Logan Cartwright, she presumed, given the name on the flyer taped outside the entrance to this run-of-the-mill honky-tonk in Sunset, Tennessee, otherwise known as the Double Horn Saloon. The flyer announced couples line dancing lessons given nightly from 5pm to 7pm by Logan Cartwright.

Jaelynn picked up her citrus vodka and tonic and sipped, letting her gaze drink in the drool-worthy package that filled out the front of those tight-fitting Wranglers. Jumpin' jellybeans, the man was exquisitely packed. She didn't have much use for line dancing, but she bet that wasn't the only lessons a man like Logan could teach.

She could go for a lesson or two tonight, anything to help her relax and take her mind off the unequivocal changes about to wreak havoc with her lifestyle. She could go for a quick solution to stop the inevitable upset to her entire world too, but she didn't figure she'd find that in either Logan Cartwright or the bottle of citrus Absolute behind the bar.

But she could sure as hell try.

"Want another?"

Jaelynn turned back to the bar, shooting a surprised glance into her glass. Well, hell, she'd downed that one fast. "Do you have the time?"

The bartender, a little slip of a thing in a pair of daisy dukes, a belly button ring revealed by a cut off t-shirt that sported the logo for the Double Horn Saloon on the left breast, and a riot of golden-red curls, checked her leather-banded wristwatch. "Quarter past six."

"Thank you and, yes, I'll have another one." Jaelynn pushed her glass to the bartender and grabbed a handful of beer nuts from a basket to her left. She popped one in her mouth, gave a slight nod to the two men at the opposite end of the bar, and returned her attention to the dance floor.

Couples line dancing, she mused, and scanned the half dozen pairs of bodies swinging their hips and shuffling their feet over the polished oak floor. The way each couple moved in perfect tandem, pressed so closely together oxygen likely had a difficult time getting between them, groins grinding and bodies rubbing, was unlike any line dancing she'd ever seen, couples or otherwise. Holy moly, she felt herself getting turned on just watching them!

"Here ya go." The bartender returned with her drink.

Jaelynn turned back and slid a ten across the bar. "Thanks, keep the change."

The bartender shook her head, leaving the ten on the bar. "That one's on Hank's tab."

Jaelynn lifted the glass, toasted the air in the direction of the two men on the other end of the bar, figuring one of them had to be Hank. The gesture earned her a crooked smile and a tip of a Stetson from the stockier of the men.

"What's your name?" Jaelynn asked the bartender.

"Misty." Her eyes were a bright blue, easy to distinguish even in the dim light of the barroom, and a direct contrast to her red locks.

Red hair dye or blue contacts, Jaelynn decided one of them must be fake. "Give Hank a big thanks for me, Misty, but don't let anyone else buy my drinks. I pay my own way."

"Whatever you say." Misty shrugged.

"Thanks." Jaelynn gave the girl a quick, pasted on smile and turned her back on the bar. Logan Cartwright had moved from his position at the front of the group of couples to a boom box poised on a chair at the side of the dance floor.

"How 'bout we try that with some music?" he asked his students.

Jaelynn's body responded to the rich baritone of his voice as if he'd physically touched her. A ripple of heat started on the side of her neck just below her earlobe and drifted down, teasing her already hardened nipples, fluttering through her belly, and igniting in her pussy. The man was potent beyond anything Absolute could dream up and, boy, howdy, she could go for a good drunk tonight.

* * * *

Logan felt her gaze on him and fought not to adjust his aching cock. Jesus, the woman's attention had given him a hard-on to make a bull jealous. He'd seen her when she'd entered the bar, recognized her on sight. Jaelynn-Sue Murphy. Currently ranked number four in the professional rodeo circuit for bulldogging even against her male counterparts, she was one of the few females to ever make a name for herself in steer wrestling and the only African American woman to pull it off. Though admittedly she was only part African American.

Born to a man of color and a Caucasian mother, Jaelynn-Sue Murphy possessed the perfect mix of mocha-tinted skin, satiny dark hair with natural highlights, and a pair of eyes so green a man could become mesmerized by simply gazing into them.

He should know. He'd stared into those eyes enough while flipping through the latest issue of *Pro Rodeo Sports*. A single man had to have a hobby, and lately his had been fantasizing about the truly wicked temptation of Jaelynn-Sue Murphy.

What would it be like to have her on top of him, her warm pussy sheathing his cock as she rode him with all the exuberance that she rode a bareback horse? He'd seen her rodeo clippings that followed her career from barrel racing to bareback riding to bulldogging, and he'd fallen asleep on more than one occasion in past months wondering that very question. Not that he'd ever expected to stand a chance with the reputed hard-assed bitch. Yeah, Jaelynn-Sue Murphy earned the reputation of being a woman who took what she wanted from a man and left everything else. What she wanted in terms of sex, he assumed. He figured her to be of the single-minded variety that went for self-satisfaction and walked away with a smile on her lovely bow-shaped lips.

Not that he'd have any objections to such behavior. At thirty-five he'd prefer a woman up for falling in love, marriage, and starting a family but, hey, he could go either way. Especially with a woman who possessed a body offering pure, unadulterated testosterone-pleasuring bliss.

"Alright, mares and stallions, that's it for today." Logan flicked off the music, hooked his thumbs in his pockets and shuffled his feet to the middle of the dance floor. "Billy, practice that modified two step I showed you. Maria, work on grinding those hips, babe."

"I'll give her some practice tonight." Hugh Rowell lassoed his wife's waist with a curved arm and yanked the laughing Maria against him.

"I just bet you will." Maria planted a kiss on her husband's lips that started the air to smoking.

"There now." Logan grinned. "Get that kind of friction going on the dance floor and you'll have no problems doing the bump and grind." He moved back to the chair that held his boom box and hat and settled his Stetson on his head. "Same time tomorrow night." He touched the brim of his hat, gave the group a slight nod and meandered to the bar.

A glass of water sat waiting for him on the bar behind the beer taps. It was his usual spot to stop for a quick drink before heading out the door. He snagged the glass, drank deep and then, catching Misty's attention out of the corner of his eye, toasted the air.

"Thank you, ma'am." The bartender gave him a narrow-eyed glare, and he bit the inside of his cheek. She hated it when he called her ma'am. He figured she should know by now he did it just to get under her craw. Bottled redhead or not, Misty Mathews had the temper to fit.

Misty turned to serve Hugh and Maria, and Logan reached over the bar to the mixer gun, stretched it to his glass and refilled his water. All the while, the hairs at his nape stood on end. Jaelynn-Sue Murphy was watching him, hadn't stopped since he'd left the dance floor. He straightened, brought the glass to his lips and slowly turned his head as he drank. He met her gaze. To his surprise and intense pleasure, she didn't look away.

Instead, she lifted her own glass, sipped and let her gaze trail pointedly down his side. He felt the look like a physical touch, slithering down his bicep, his hip, his leg and crawling back up in a leisurely appraisal that awoke every erogenous zone in his body, including ones he hadn't known existed. Christ Almighty, if the woman could send him teetering on the edge of ejaculation with a look, he could only imagine what she could do with her hands, or that incredible bow-shaped mouth glistening with moisture.

Those lips tilted in the faintest hint of a smile around the rim of her glass and one perfectly plucked brow arched over her amazing eyes. Logan's gut did a dance to rival a million choreographed line dances even as pinpricks of arousal stabbed at his nut sac. He needed no further invitation.

He moved down the bar, stopping so close to her that his hip brushed her thigh. The elevation of the barstool coupled with his six-one height put their bodies in perfect alignment for distinct gratification completely inappropriate for a barroom scattered with people. Still, that didn't stop his brain, the one in his head or the one between his legs, from taking a fast trip down fantasy lane.

Logan saw her turn on her barstool, her legs spreading only to close around his waist. He felt her booted ankles lock at his lower back, the warmth of her pussy pressed to his throbbing cock. Her arms came around his neck, drawing him closer. Her green eyes swirled with promises and temptation as her mouth brushed his in a kiss so light he barely felt it. Or would've barely felt it, if it were truly happening.

Logan blinked and downed the remaining water in his glass.

"Tough job, cowboy?" Her voice was a combination of whipped cream and dark chocolate syrup, smooth and sweet with a slight bite.

"You bet ya. My feet are killing me." He smirked and caught a slight twitch at the corner of her lips before she leaned over.

She looked between their bodies at his boots. The movement brought her so close he could smell her shampoo, a tangy scent of pomegranate and kiwi. He'd expected a more musky scent like leather and spice from a toughened rodeo woman like Jaelynn-Sue. Damn, discovering the girly fragrance instead drove him to the brink of insanity with a whiff.

"What are those, snake skin?" She straightened and met his gaze. "They don't look all that uncomfortable."

They were actually the most comfortable pair of boots he owned. Hell, they'd just gotten good and broken in. "They're not too bad but when you're dancing..." He ended the sentence with a shrug.

"What kind of dancing is that? I read the sign out front. Couples line dancing? That wasn't like any line dancing I've ever seen."

"It's my own modified version."

"Your own version," she repeated, her tone full of intrigue.

His and Emma's, but he took all the credit these days.

"Don't you need a partner to teach any form of *couples* dancing?"

"Need another drink?" Misty cut in before Logan could answer.

Jaelynn slid her glass toward the bartender, but her focus stayed on him.

Logan didn't miss the quick flash of that temper that sparked in Misty's eyes. Damn, but he enjoyed getting her back up. "I'll have a drink too, ma'am. Give me a draft. Whatever's the special on tap tonight." Misty's blue eyes blazed, and he barely covered a chuckle with a cough as she spun and stomped away.

"I think you pissed her off," Jaelynn-Sue said in a conspiratorial whisper.

"Maybe a little." Logan knew Misty had the hots for him. As women went, the red-headed fireball with the do-me bod ranked pretty high on his list of possible bedtime companionship, but as far as their families went back, no way would he ever go there. "I'd chalk it up more to surprise. I don't generally stick around after class is over."

"Yet you are tonight." That perfect brow rose again, and Logan fought the urge to outline it with the tip of his finger, to let the pad of his fingertip graze down her temple, her cheek, to the delicious curve of her lips.

"So I am."

"Any particular reason why?"

Misty returned with their drinks, setting his mug a bit harder on the bar than necessary. It seemed Jaelynn-Sue hit the preverbal nail on the head after all.

Logan battled a smirk at the devil-horned glare Misty shot him before moving on down the bar. Temper personified. Hell, he might have found it arousing enough to finally give in if he hadn't been standing next to the rodeo sex queen.

He picked up his beer and took a big gulp. "Ahhh." He dragged out the sound as he set down the mug. "Sure I've got a reason. I'm thirsty."

Jaelynn-Sue's green eyes twinkled. "Well, now, I can't think of any better reason than that. You've got, um, froth on your..." Her gaze dropped to his mouth, and damned if his breath didn't catch in his throat.

Logan saw her raise her hand, knew she meant to touch him, and couldn't have moved if he wanted to. Not that he wanted to. Hell no! In the fraction of an instant that it took for her finger to reach his upper lip, the anticipation of her touch built to such a mind-numbing, ball-seizing intensity that everything around him fizzled away in the rush.

He watched her, the powerful concentration that swirled in her eyes as her fingers came to rest on his cheek, as she lightly brushed the pad of her thumb across his upper lip. Electricity swamped him, a single bolt of lightning flashing from his upper lip straight to his cock. Slivers of white-hot passion sliced through his hardened shaft. He could have sworn he heard her suck in a quick breath at the contact. It couldn't have been him who made the sound because he hadn't managed to start breathing again yet.

* * * *

Touching him might not have been one of her best ideas. Flames, swift and red hot, bolted into Jaelynn's thumb, traveled through her

hand and up her arm, sending burning embers raining down her insides to settle in her pussy. Her mind screamed danger with a capital D and yet she couldn't stop herself from letting her thumb make a second pass across his upper lip. She lingered on the slight v-shaped dip and warred with the urge to replace her thumb with her tongue. She could imagine how he would taste, rough and warm with the faint lingering tartness of the draft beer. She swallowed, her stomach growling, and dropped her hand.

She met his gaze again, something else that proved not to be one of her best ideas. A shrieking bull horn replaced the screaming in her head as she stared into his milk chocolate eyes, now melted in a promised fervor of pure skill and malicious purpose. He shifted, turning his whole body toward her and, *hell's bells*, the hard cock that brushed her thigh made her pussy weep and her mouth flood with saliva.

He caught her wrist in a grip somehow equally soft and firm, his attention never deviating from her face. "I'll admit it's easier when I have a partner. Are you volunteering?"

Volunteering for...

Jaelynn's brain scrambled to catch up in the frenzy of wildly stimulating possibilities. Was she volunteering to be his partner in bed, against the wall, on top of the bar? Heavens to Betsy, they all sounded like winners to her.

To him too, if the tender caress of his thumb to the inner flesh of her wrist served as any indication. Could he feel how viciously her pulse pounded through her veins? Heat radiated from his groin through the material of both his jeans and hers as if to offer extra proof. But he'd been talking about dancing and not of the horizontal variety.

Jaelynn drew her bottom lip between her teeth and enjoyed the spark of desire that joined the meltdown in the chocolate. "Maybe." She purposely added a light purr to the word. "It looked like it could be fun. That couple over there seemed to be enjoying themselves."

She all but heard the gears in his head change from the bedroom shuffle to the nonchalant swing. He blinked, released her wrist, and picked up his mug, turning back to the bar as he looked in the direction she'd indicated.

"Hugh and Maria Rowell," he said. "Been married for over ten years and made it as far as divorce court about six months back before they realized all they lacked was a little spice in their marriage."

"Spice they found on the dance floor under your instruction," Jaelynn concluded.

Logan shrugged. "I give them a place to get the heat sparking. Where they take it from that point is their own rodeo."

"And those two?" Jaelynn tipped her chin at a couple of cowboys at a table at the edge of the dance floor. "I'll admit to being a bit surprised at seeing two guys out there dancing together. Women do it all the time. They want to boogie, their men won't dance with them so they partner with each other, but guys don't usually go that route."

"They do when they're gay." He chuckled at the surprised look Jaelynn knew must be on her face.

"Oh, well, then." She flushed. "Wow. I didn't see that one coming. Not that I have anything against gays. I mean, hello, I'm an Oreo cookie here."

That got a louder laugh out of him. "Darlin', there are so many creative places I could take that comment, but it wouldn't be appropriate words between two people who have yet to formally introduce themselves." He replaced his now empty mug on the bar and held out his hand. "I'm Logan Cartwright."

She took his hand, this time bracing herself for the skin-to-skin contact. His grip was warm, his skin calloused and no amount of preparation could've saved her from the riot of sensations that swamped her. Hunger grew in her core, juices flowed to coat her pussy lips, and the screaming clashed with the bull horn in a cacophony of warning sounds she chose to ignore. "Jaelynn-Sue Murphy but you can call me Jaelynn."

"So how 'bout it, Jaelynn, wanna be my partner tonight?"

Chapter 2

Jaelynn stood on the edge of the dance floor with Logan and watched as a dozen or more couples shuffled, stomped, and stepped their way across the varnished oak. A DJ had taken up post on a platform to the left of the dance floor shortly after Logan's classes ended and immediately began playing song after song of the most popular country and western music of the decades. Billy Ray Cyrus and his soothing twang blared through the speakers now, wondering where he would live when he got home.

Beside her, Logan squeezed her hand in one of his and slipped his free arm around her waist. He leaned close at her ear, his breath an intoxicating warmth on her flesh as he spoke. "Step to the right, slide the left foot over to touch, another step to the right, another slide, then turn and stomp."

"It's the C. C. Shuffle," she told him and delighted in the surprise that shifted through his eyes. "With the added turn and stomp at the end and all the..." She wiggled her hips and bit the inside of her cheek as the surprise morphed to a desire so instant and potent she felt it all the way to her booted toes. Christ, the man was danger incarnate; dangerous good looks, dangerous body, and an even more dangerous gleam of undiluted male guarantee in his eyes.

"Want to try that with a partner now?" he asked gruffly.

"Only if you promise not to laugh. I've been told I have two left feet. The expression doesn't only apply to men, you know?" She let him lead her to the center of the dance floor and let out an undignified squeak when he caught her hand, spun her around and yanked her back, her front slamming into his.

He buried his face in the side of her neck, his lips brushing her ear lobe. "I teach dance, remember. Believe me, I run across my share of women with two left feet." He started to move, a step to the right, a slide of his left foot, and a repeat of the same. "Just follow my lead."

It seemed awkward at first, doing a dance originally choreographed to be done solo in a single file line. Her steps were actually backward to coincide with his, but the way his body moved against hers, the way he'd bent his knees to bring their groins in perfect alignment for grinding drove her to near orgasm.

"You're doing good." His hands traveled from her hips to her behind, molding to her ass and drawing her closer still.

Her arms were around his shoulders, and she delved her fingers into the hairs at his nape, reveling in the feel of the silky strands. He moaned in her ear, a low grumbling sound that vibrated straight to her center and herded her one gallop closer to release.

Good. He thought she was doing good? He wanted good? She'd give him great. Her feet might have trouble keeping step but she'd never been told her hips possessed a problem.

Jaelynn arched her lower body into him, extending a leg around his as they started the next sequences and grinding her pussy against his thigh.

"Sweet Jesus," he growled, his hands squeezing her ass as he swayed with her, as the heat between them built to boiling.

"Am I doing better now?" Jaelynn teased and added an extra gyration to the turn that rubbed his cock into her heated core at such a perfect moment he would've been inside her sopping channel if not for the barrier of their jeans.

He lifted his head and looked down at her. His eyes grew heavy-lidded, their once milky brown now the color of a Dove double dark chocolate bar. "Sweet thang, you get any better at this and I'm going to want to have my way with you tonight."

"What? You don't want to yet?" She flattened her hands on his broad shoulders and let them travel down his biceps. He was solid

muscle beneath her palms. All she could think about in that moment was getting the blasted shirt off of him. She wanted to be skin-to-skin with this man tonight. *Now*. Forget that she'd just met him. Forget that every fiber of her being screamed at her not to give into the purely carnal urge to fuck. Forget that she'd held herself in check for so very long. She wanted, and nothing had ever stopped her from taking what she wanted in the past. Why let anything start now?

"Oh, I want, babe. I want to take you somewhere and change this vertical dance we're doing to the horizontal mambo."

Jaelynn laughed. "Can you mambo?"

Amusement swam into his gaze. "I can. I bet I can even adapt it to suit."

"You mean you haven't yet?"

"Not that particular one. You'd be a first."

"Then what are you waiting for?"

He sighed, and there was so much agony in the sound her heart actually ached for him. "My place isn't exactly private right now. Unless you're into exhibitionism, then it might be right up your alley. I'm all for kinky now and then, but an audience of family members won't make it easy to get my rocks off." He winced. "Crudely speaking."

"I'll take privacy," Jaelynn stopped dancing. She'd let her hands move between them, her palms skimming over his chest, down his abdomen, his stomach. Christ on a pogo stick, there wasn't an ounce of fat on this man. She licked her lips, her mouth watering, her tongue aching to follow the same path as her hands only lower to feast on his impressive cock. "Like the kind we'll find at my trailer on the rodeo grounds."

He stepped back, his hands moving once again to her hips and holding her at arm's length. The song ended and another began, but he didn't seem to notice. His gaze remained totally focused on her and full of intense concentration. "Are you sure?"

Jaelynn took his hands in hers, all but prying them from her hips and closed the distance he'd put between them. She rose to her toes and leaned in at his ear. "Positive." She licked his lobe and delighted in the tremor that caused his body to slither against her. "Come have your way with me, Mr. Cartwright. I need a few," she sucked his lobe between her teeth, "private lessons."

* * * *

Logan spent a great deal of time over the years wondering what it would be like to live the rodeo life. He'd envisioned himself competing in the professional circuit, living out of a two room camper trailer and waking at sunrise each day to a new town and a new crowd of folks. New women, too, he mused now as he walked with Jaelynn across the seemingly deserted grounds behind the arena. Then he'd fallen in love and revised the women part to a single woman. He'd revised the rest not long after, when his father became ill and it all became a distant hopeful memory.

"I'm not going to get plugged by a double barrel shot gun for following you to your trailer at this time of night or anything, am I?" He was only half kidding. Jaelynn might not be any one cowboy's claim, but Logan knew how protective rodeo riders could be of any woman in their circuit.

She gave a soft laugh and shushed him with a finger to her lips. "Naw. The cowboys around here carry pistols instead of shot guns. Easier to transport and conceal. And they tend to shoot into the air first, or maybe the ground at your feet. You know, to give you time to run. A warning shot. They're nice like that." She said it all on a whisper that barely masked her laughter.

Logan let her get a full step ahead of him and then moved behind her, catching her by the waist and enveloping her in his arms. She let out a quiet yelp, and he shushed her this time, bending over her to speak softly in her ear. "You're a real laugh riot, Miss Murphy." He

breathed deep, taking in her amazing scent and letting it sooth the edge of his craving for her even as it tormented his crazed desires.

"This is me." She clasped her hands on his forearms still curled around her waist and steered him to a trailer on their right. Four steps led to the door, and she stopped on the third one to fish her key from her front pocket.

Logan considered offering to help, but decided he'd rather wait until he could plunge his hand inside the waistband rather than settling for a pocket.

"Do you share this place with anyone?" He hadn't thought to ask before. She'd been the one to suggest they come here and made it clear they would have privacy. Still, she could've meant only in her room rather than the whole trailer. His quick fantasy that started back at the bar involving whipped cream and a variety of other edibles took a hard stumble.

She shoved her key in the lock, teetered on the edge of the step as she swung the door open, and then tipped her head back, a wide grin unfolding on her truly delectable lips. The extra step put her high enough that her head rested on his shoulder. "Nope, it's all mine, cowboy. Let's dance." She wagged her brows suggestively, and Logan chuckled, forgetting to be quiet. She shushed him again, this time catching him by reaching a hand behind his neck to cup his nape and pull his mouth down to hers.

Logan's knees went weak. Her lips felt like precious strips of satin grazing over his in a hint of icy hot temptation. They parted on a sigh filled with contentment and pure exotic pleasure, and he delved his tongue between them, licking first her teeth, then the roof of her mouth, and finally meeting her tongue.

He heard himself growl, knew the sound was too loud, too beastly, but his control seemed lost in the dark recesses of her mouth right along with his tongue. Jesus, she tasted as amazing as she smelled, exotic, a heady mix of sweet and spice combined with a potent desire that had his balls quivering in his sac.

"Are you trying to get me shot?" he pulled back to ask, his voice gruff and shaky even to his own ears.

Her fingers danced along his nape sending icy slivers of hunger raining through his back. "I wanted to taste you."

"Do you always get what you want?" His arms were still around her, and he flattened his palms on the flatness of her belly. He slowly grazed one hand up her abdomen, stopping a breath from her breasts.

"Sure do, if I want it bad enough." She nipped his bottom lip, trailed her tongue over his jaw. "Tonight I want you. I want to taste you everywhere. I want to feel you everywhere."

"Care to know what I want?" He brought his hand that last miniscule inch to her breast and covered it with his palm. "I want you to take that last step into this trailer so we can get started on taking care of your wants."

"Mmm," she purred as he started to massage her breast, gently pressured squeezes that made her eyes go glassy with the heightening arousal. "Spoken like a cowboy who knows how to please."

Still, she didn't move, instead capturing his mouth in another kiss that brought him careening to the edge of insanity. Her tongue tangled with his, dancing, demanding, and he couldn't wait anymore.

Logan released her breast, returning his arm to her waist. He lifted her, never once breaking the delicious kiss that continued to numb his brain and all sense of reason or control, and carried her up that last step. Somehow she managed to reach for the knob, closing the door behind them as they stepped inside, and then he had the privacy he'd wanted with the very woman he'd sought after in his fantasies.

She turned in his arms, melding her body to his as securely as she had her mouth. He felt mindless, his body on a rapid rush to Hormonal Happy Land, his cock aching with the perverse need to be inside her, *anywhere* inside her. He dropped his hands to her ass, filling his palms with fantastically firm butt cheeks, and wondered if she'd ever been pleased there. He held her against his rigid erection, his cock whimpering with the desire to plunge into the sweet heat of

her pussy. He licked the inside of her mouth, catching her tongue lightly between his teeth, and his balls vibrated with the anticipation of having that tongue, those lips sucking his testicles inside her mouth.

"Jesus, baby, you feel incredible." She gyrated against him, grinding their sexes in a friction sparking madness that surely would've made him come on the spot back at the bar had she done it on the dance floor. His cock felt strangled behind the restraint of his zipper. He felt the release building in his balls, burning a path through his shaft. If she did much more of that, she'd have him coming in his jeans. He couldn't have that.

Logan gripped her hips and gently pushed her away. Their mouths parted on gasping breaths that lingered in the air between them, heated rushes of carnal need waiting to be sated. "Undress for me, Jaelynn. Will you do that, darlin'? I want to see you undress for me."

He'd fantasized about it. Lying in his bed late at night after a hard day's work on the ranch and an arousing evening of teaching dance, he'd put his hands behind his head, stared at the ceiling and pictured Jaelynn-Sue Murphy stripping for him to the beat of a slow country tune. No music played now, but he didn't figure she would need any.

He was right. Her gaze transfixed on his, she stepped back and, starting a sensuous ripple of her body that began at her feet and traveled up, she hooked her fingers in the hem of her pullover t-shirt and guided it up and over her head, inch by torturously dick-frustrating inch.

"Glory be to God," Logan heard himself whisper as his gaze met with the creamy mocha flesh of her muscular bare shoulders, her firm breasts barely contained in a lacy white bra, her rippling abs and navel sporting a tiny silver barbell ring. His mouth watered, and for a moment, he thought he might drown in his own drool. Then she reached behind her back, unfastened the clasp of her bra and let the shoulder straps descend in a slow slide down her arms.

Logan was completely riveted, watching the lace as, bit by bit, it exposed more mocha flesh. Her breasts weren't large by any stretch of the imagination, but they were full and perfect, her nipples large and beaded and fully erect. She must've known where his attention had fixated because she brought a hand to each breast, clamping her thumbs and forefingers on her nipples and rolling them, drawing a low moan of pleasure from her own lips.

The sound Logan made was louder, more animalistic. "Christ, baby, you *are* trying to kill me."

"Not kill you," she corrected in a breathy purr. "Just get you really, *really* hot." Her fingers released her nipples on the second really, and she let her palms graze down her front to the waistband of her jeans.

He let out a sound that might have been a laugh but held more torment than he thought he'd ever felt in his life. "You're doing a good job at that."

"I don't know, Mr. Cartwright." The button of her jeans released in her fingers with a practiced ease. The sound of metal scraping metal as she lowered her zipper seemed to echo through the trailer. "It looks to me like you aren't quite hot enough yet."

She worked her jeans down over trim hips that his hands screamed to hold as she positioned herself on his cock. She wore white lace. Very revealing thin strips of it that hardly covered the essentials and, thank you sweet baby Jesus, they were thong. She turned her back to him as she pushed her jeans down her lovely thighs. Her back arched, her ass jutting out to give him a needy heart attack of a different dimension as her pants fell to her calves and caught around her boots.

The little two-step she did as she turned to face him once more topped any move he'd ever seen or done on the dance floor. Her hips swung with it, her hands splayed on either side, fingers hooked in the thin strips of white lace. Thumbs and forefingers tugged at the lace, pulling it away from her mocha skin to ease down a fraction of an inch before letting go.

Logan whimpered. Christ, when was the last time a woman did that to him? He didn't know and frankly didn't care. His attention was riveted on her body, her fingers, and that damned lace still covering what he wanted most. The jeans and boots were no longer his concern. He could easily take what he wanted without ever stripping them the rest of the way.

Jaelynn tossed her head back and laughed, a heated and thoroughly amused sound that brought a smile to his own tingling lips. Her hands smoothed up the front of her body, a finger dipping inside her belly button and then moving up her abdomen to the valley between her breasts as her body slithered and moved to the beat of a song only she could hear.

There was something he should say, something he should do. It niggled at Logan's mind but couldn't make it through the sexual fog hampering his very soul. He could only watch and want as her hands glided down her front to the white lace still awaiting her attention. His cock pulsed and his balls cried out from the sheer torture of the fantastic sight of her touching herself.

"I've never stripped for anyone like this before." Her voice took on the tone of smooth Southern honey, and he felt himself drowning in the sticky sweet essence. "I thought you should know that."

Logan gulped, his gaze following her fingers as they dipped inside the lace, traveled along the front edge and then eased it down to reveal more wickedly tempting flesh. "I'm honored to be the first."

Her head came up, and she met his gaze, a world of emotions swirling in the depths of her eyes. "You know, Mr. Cartwright, I'm inclined to believe you mean that."

"Oh, baby, I do."

She peeled her panties down her hips and thighs.

Logan's breath came out on a whoosh. "Sweet Heaven." He actually felt faint as his gaze landed on the smooth bare flesh of her pussy. Not a single hair covered her pouty lips. His concerns shifted

as did what he wanted. "Kick off those boots and jeans and come to me, darlin'."

He moved to the padded bench seat sofa but didn't sit down. Instead, he waited for her to join him and then yanked her into his arms.

He took her mouth in a kiss that was savage and hungry, a primal demand that poured from his body without any thought of holding back. He needed to taste her, had to, or he would go mad from the desire. But her mouth wasn't the only thing he needed to feed from. His hands moved to her sides, guiding her down to sit on the edge of the sofa. He kneeled in front of her.

"Spread your legs for me, sugar. It's my turn to taste."

The sounds she made, soft little whimpering sounds of unadulterated pleasure, as his mouth closed over the tender flesh of her pussy went straight to his head...both of them. His mind scrambled, and his cock gave a spasm just this side of pain. He ignored both in favor of the best delicacy he'd ever tasted. "So warm," he whispered against her folds. "So wet. Jesus, sweetheart, you're nearly dripping with it. I have to taste it. I have to drink."

* * * *

Like she had any intentions of stopping him. Hell, no. Jaelynn's head fell back on the sofa, her hands finding purchase in his hair as his tongue slipped between her sodden folds. It felt like a feather gliding over the most sensitive flesh of her body, his tongue a silky strip of warmth to her already flaming need.

Her hips came off the sofa at the first plunge of his tongue into her aching channel. "Logan!" His name felt wrenched from her throat as the onslaught of rapturous pleasure swamped her. Her legs attempted to close around his face of their own accord, but he put his palms on her inner thighs and held them spread as he worked the tender flesh of her inner channel. His tongue thrust inside her, circling, lapping, and

drinking at her juices even as his actions caused her body to produce more.

He angled his shoulders between her thighs, using them to hold her legs open as his hands joined his tongue. He found the swollen bud of her clit with the pad of his thumb, circling it in a pressured massage that nearly made her come. She was close, so very close, but she didn't want it to end yet.

"Please." Her shameless plea came on breathless cry.

He drew back only enough to catch one of her pussy lips between his lips, the delicate nip an erotic slice of ecstasy. "You taste so good, so thick and sweet. Come for me, Jaelynn."

"No," she gasped as he drove his tongue inside her opening. "I want you inside me when I come."

"Oh, baby, I will be." He leaned back, his lips set in a cocky smirk even as he replaced his tongue in her channel with two fingers. She writhed against his hand. "Do you think I'm only good for one time, one orgasm?"

Jaelynn didn't say anything to that. He wouldn't be the first man she'd had sex with who'd only shown her one release. Hell, sometimes if she achieved even that she considered herself lucky.

She would be lucky with Logan Cartwright. She'd known it almost the moment he first touched her. The way her body responded to the simplest brush of his cock against her thigh back at the bar had barely fallen short of full-blown orgasmic bliss. Pleasure stood now only a lick away, and the foggy gleam of sexual awareness in his eyes promised it wouldn't be the last.

"You better not be," she finally told him and watched his too sexy glistening lips curve into an amused grin. He stole what remained of her breath with a movement of the two fingers still inside her and sent her galloping through the surf of a vicious orgasmic ocean. She came in a blinding rush, her hands balling into fists, one in the sofa cover and the other in his hair. The release ruled her body, the pleasure tearing out of her in spasm after spasm of white-hot relief.

"That's it, darlin'. Jesus, that's amazing."

Somewhere among the ringing in her ears, Jaelynn heard his quiet voice, caught the amazement mixing with the desire in his tone. Then she felt his lips on her once more, closing over her pussy, his tongue dipping between her pulsing folds to join his fingers in a drinking dance that gave her insurmountable ecstasy. Slurping sounds permeated the air, mingling with the cries slipping from her throat, drawing low guttural groans of male appreciation from him as he devoured her, drank her dry.

Dimly, Jaelynn registered when he pulled away, when his tongue and fingers left her still convulsing channel. She closed her eyes, her heart racing, and her breath erratic. The feeling of absence came slower than she would've expected, her body so used and sated from that single act of his oral expertise. Had she thought to accuse him of only being good for one orgasm? Damn if he hadn't made her eat that thought even as he dined on her. As satiated as she felt, she'd be lucky if she could go another round.

He shifted in front of her, and she opened her eyes to find him looking at her. Not her face, though he did focus there too, but her entire body. His gaze danced over her flesh with the same sensuality of his moves on the dance floor and, despite the explosive release he'd given her, despite the exhaustion that swept through her a mere half second before, she felt her body awaken anew.

She reached for him, needing to feel, wanting to be close, dying for that skin-to-skin contact she'd desired to start. "You're full of surprises, aren't you, cowboy."

Though she made it more statement than question, he answered her with a grin that reached all the way to his stunning melted eyes. "I'm just getting started, sweet thang. Consider that lesson number one if you like."

"Hmm, that works for me." Jaelynn laced her fingers together at his nape and pulled his mouth to hers. He tasted of sinful promise,

anticipation, and the juices he'd consumed from her body. "It really works for me."

His hands found her breasts, molding the tender orbs with his palms. She arched into that touch, moaning as his tongue did the same truly delicious things to her mouth that it had to her throbbing channel.

"This doesn't work for me." She plucked at the collar of his shirt with her teeth, tugging it out of the way so she could reach the warm, hard flesh of his neck and throat with her tongue. She alternated kisses and licks, loving the sounds that rumbled from him as she explored. "You still have on all your clothes," she complained when her travels became hampered by the buttons of his shirt. "I'm up for lesson number two, Mr. Cartwright." She dropped a hand between them and covered his stiff cock with her hand. The mere feel of his impressive bulge drew a moan of anticipation from her that sounded just this side of begging. "And I don't want to have to fight with clothes to get it."

* * * *

Logan chuckled and pulled back, albeit reluctantly. Putting any amount of distance between himself and this incredible woman proved to be a test of his resolve. She looked, he decided as he got to his feet, like a very sexy, beyond gorgeous, wicked offering leaning back on the sofa, every delicious inch of her creamy mocha flesh bare for his appraisal. And she was delicious. Oh, man, the taste of her essence as he'd lapped it up like a man encountering his first stream after far too many days and nights stranded in the Sahara had been nothing short of delectable.

"Undress for me, Logan." She chose her words purposely, taking him in with a leisurely heavy lidded gaze. He'd used those same words on her, likely looked at her that same way too as she'd started to strip for him, as she'd driven him mad exposing each smooth and

tempting morsel of her body at a pace slower than a country love song. "Will you do that, darlin'?"

His words again, but said in her sweetly sinful voice, they squeezed at his cock and kicked his blood pressure high enough for him to orbit the moon. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, if words had hands his clothes would've been ripped from his body without his ever lifting a finger to help.

"I will, but it won't be slow, and there won't be a show involved." God save him, if he had to strip for her as she'd done for him there would be a show alright. A very embarrassing one where the highlight of the event would be him coming like a crazed bull before he ever made it inside her succulent pussy. He was that goddamned turned-on.

Logan kept good on that promise, as he intended to do every other one he'd made to her tonight. He made quick work of kicking off his boots, shucking his jeans and boxers down and off his legs, and removing his shirt until he stood before her as naked as the day he'd been born.

"Dear Lord," she gasped, her eyes no longer heavy lidded but widened slightly as her gaze landed between his legs. She licked her lips, the vixen, and his cock gave an involuntary leap at the sight. It made her grin. "You should probably know that all ability to formulate coherent thought has now left me. As a matter of fact, the only words springing to my mind at this moment are *damn* and will that fit and please, please, *please*."

Logan bit back a smile and reached for her, catching her hands in his and pulling her to stand upright in front of him. Finally, finally, he was skin-to-skin with her. No clothes remained between them, no late-night fantasies he had to worry about waking from. She melded against him, the hard wall of his body fitting like a glove to her soft curves and delicately firm angles. The sheer reality of it threatened to bring tears to his eyes.

She tipped her head back to look up at him, and he couldn't help himself. He nipped her bottom lip then soothed the bite with his tongue before delving inside her sweet mouth to lose himself in another kiss.

"Mmm, I could kiss you for hours," he said against her lips between nips, licks, and tonsil-touching dives that left them both breathless and writhing. "I would be happy with that. If that's all you decided you wanted from me, I would be okay with that." He would, too, he realized as her hand fisted in his hair and she pulled him back for another kiss, this one of her control that rocked him to his toes. Yes, his cock throbbed like a bitch. Yes, his balls screamed with the agony of a release he threatened to hold from them. Yes, he'd spent more nights than he wanted to admit dreaming of fucking this woman blind. But if she decided to pull back now and say no, if she elected to tell him she wanted nothing more than a few hours of depth exploring tongue dancing, he'd be okay with it. More than okay. He'd walk away a smiling man.

"I sure as hell wouldn't be happy with that." She broke the kiss long enough to say the words on a string of ragged breaths. Then she crushed her mouth to his again, hooked her arms around his neck and leapt into his arms, locking her legs around his waist.

Logan stumbled back a step before he caught his balance at the same time he enveloped her tight little ass in his arms to hold her. She'd very nearly impaled herself with that brazen move. He had only to shift her body a fraction of an inch, ease her back slightly and he'd be inside her.

Christ, he couldn't wait to be inside her. Forget being okay. Forget walking away smiling. He wanted to be superb. He wanted to walk away grinning like a fucking idiot come morning. Come being the operative word, because above all else that's what he wanted most...to make her come again and again and again.

"Whoa! Condom, sweetheart." He let out a surprised laugh when she dangled a foil wrapped package in front of his face. "Where did you? How did—?"

Jaelynn grinned at him, a wide mouthed smile that seeped through his skin and wound around his heart. "Looks like there are a few lessons I can teach you, too."

"I'm all for sharing in a relationship, darlin'." He saw the swirl of alarm move through her gaze, knew he'd sent up a red flag in her mind by using the word relationship, and thought quick before that single word ruined the mood. "Are you going to do the honors? Or shall I put you down so I can?"

She had the condom unwrapped and started sheathing his cock before he even had the word honors out of his mouth.

He drew a slow breath through his teeth as her hands, a devious mix of delicate and calloused, gripped his shaft at the same time unrolling the latex over his length. The act took longer than necessary, and he knew she was dragging it out for his pleasure. Hers too, he hoped as she explored his length, reaching farther down to fondle his balls until he growled and gave her bottom a little jerk.

"I'm good for more than one ejaculation too, but men do need a few minutes to recover. Unless you want to spend the next half hour with my face between your legs again, you should put those wicked hands of yours back on my shoulders."

She pursed her lips as if considering the options he'd given her, but finally splayed her hands on his front and grazed them over his pecs and chest to his shoulders. "There's a bed in the back if you prefer..."

"I don't think I can make it that far."

"Oh, am I too heavy?"

He'd gotten distracted by her breasts, her hardened nipples brushing enticingly against his chest, but his gaze snapped up to meet hers at that. "Not a chance, sweetheart. But I want to be inside you so

badly right now I might start to cry if I have to wait another second. It will surely embarrass us both."

She laughed, a truly musical sound that stopped on a note when he shifted her weight to one arm and reached between their bodies to guide his cock inside the sweet heat of her pussy. "Wait! Logan, there's umm, something I should tell you."

Logan stared at her, disbelief combining with the desire in his veins to create a mind-numbing denial of what he felt suddenly, fearfully certain would be her next words. When she simply stared back at him, he had to ask. "Jaelynn, sweetheart, don't tell me you're a virgin." She couldn't be. Not with her reputation. Except, how often did a woman gain the reputation of being sexually active when they were in fact as sexually inexperienced as they came? Lots.

"Not exactly." She blushed, her mocha skin gaining a hint of red, and Logan thought stupidly of sharing a box of chocolate-covered cherries with her naked under the tree at Christmas.

"How can you not exactly be a virgin, baby?"

"I'm not a virgin but, well, it's been, um, close to three years since I've, um..." She trailed off, her gaze searching his for what he wasn't sure.

"You haven't had sex in three years?" The astonishment in his question only succeeded in making her blush more. But damn, he was astonished. This woman had the reputation of being a hard ass, yes, but a sexy as hell hard ass that could get any cowboy in any state with barely a crook of her finger. Word had it she'd done them all too. And that's what he got for believing the word, as it were. He should've known better. His own experiences with reputations and rodeo grapevines should've been enough for him to dismiss everything he'd heard about Jaelynn-Sue Murphy.

"Almost three. Look, it's no big deal." She stiffened in his arms. "I only told you because, oh, hell, I don't know why I told you." Her spunk died, and her shoulders slumped.

Logan steadied her in his arms, holding all of her weight with his left arm as he reached up with his right hand to cup the side of her face. "The why doesn't matter, Jaelynn. I'm glad you told me." And he did see it as a big deal. He kept that part to himself as she met his gaze again, this time her eyes full of embarrassment and something very akin to shame, but beneath that he saw hope too and gratitude.

Christ, he didn't want her to thank him for fucking her. He wanted to know why she'd decided to end three years of celibacy tonight with him.

She nodded, a slow, almost imperceptible movement of her head. Then those incredible lips curved in another of her wicked siren smiles, and she found his cock with her hand. "Mmm. I was afraid I'd spoiled the moment. Doesn't feel like it to me, though."

Logan pushed all questions and concerns aside and focused on the woman in his arms, the one who currently had his cock in a grip of ball-bursting pleasure. "Honey, you didn't ruin anything at all." He released her face, caught her wrist and brought her hand back to his shoulder. He replaced her hand with his own, fisting his fingers around his cock as he guided the head to the eagerly awaiting opening of her pussy.

He entered her, only the head of his cock, stopping at the fold of skin, and closed his eyes as the pleasure ripped through him. Despite the orgasm he'd given her and the river of her essence he'd drank from her body, she was sopping wet again. The lubrication would help because she was tight. Three sexless years might not have returned her to virgin status, but it came damned close.

"Why did you stop?" Her question came on a whispered breath that penetrated the sensations spiraling in his mind and body.

"Because I don't want to come yet. Because you're so tight." Because he suddenly feared hurting her. He had a big cock. That wasn't male ego talking but a simple fact. She knew it, too, judging by her 'will it fit' response. And it would fit, of course. Woman had been made to mold to a man, to take him in and become one no matter

what the size. But that didn't stop the pain that sometimes came with the act. He never wanted to show her pain.

He didn't have to say the last. She read it in his expression, must have seen it in his eyes. "You aren't going to hurt me, Logan. The fact that you care is very gentlemanly of you, but stop worrying and give me what I want."

The hard-ass Jaelynn-Sue the rodeo circuit speaks of makes an appearance, Logan thought as he bit back a smile. Her dig at his honor was merely her way of hiding the truth, that his concern did touch her, that what was about to happen between them had suddenly gone from the prospect of a quick fuck for a night to the possibility of more come morning. A man didn't just fuck a woman like Jaelynn-Sue Murphy, a woman who'd chosen him after nearly three years of no sex, and then simply walk away smiling, grinning like a loon or otherwise.

Logan moved his hand to her ass, evenly distributing her weight on both his arms and, gaze locked with hers, drove his cock balls deep inside her pussy. Moans turned to cries of mind-blowing pleasure, breaths turned to ragged bursts of air as they struggled for what little oxygen seemed to remain in the room.

He barely registered the decision to move, the act of walking the few short steps around the edge of the sofa so that he could brace her weight against the wall of the trailer. Then he fucked her. He could think of no other word to describe the animalistic way he slammed his cock inside her tight pussy. Her nails dug into the flesh of his shoulders, possibly drawing blood, likely leaving a mark. She made a sound that might have been pain, definitely sounded of pleasure and he wanted to stop, tried to, couldn't.

Christ, he didn't want to hurt her, but his body had gone out of his control. He'd become a man possessed by his desires for her, his needs, and the frightening thing that happened in his chest the instant he'd plunged his cock into her fiery depth.

"Logan, ah, yes, faster, harder." Her ankles locked around his waist, her heels digging into his buttocks, pulling him against her, riding his cock despite the fact that he pinned her to the wall.

"Jaelynn, baby." He tried to warn her. He teetered on the edge, the release his body so craved clawing its way through his balls and up his shaft like a double-sided, razor sharp spear. "I can't. It's too good. Come for me, honey."

She did. As if all she needed was the order to fall from his lips, her body jerked with it. She convulsed in his arms, her nails biting into his neck and shoulder, her legs creating a death grip around his waist. Her channel started to spasm, milking his cock until his release burst from the engorged head, filling the condom with such a flood he feared it might bust.

Shaking, breathless, utterly spent, he held her to the wall until their breathing slowed and she slowly lifted her head. "The bed is straight down the hall. Think you can make it there now?"

He laughed, a quick burst of air. "Not a chance, darlin'."

She shrugged and laid her head on his shoulder. "Okay, then we'll just stay here till sunrise."

Sunrise, through the day, and into the night, Logan thought as he gathered his strength and slowly started walking them down the hall. If she thought he planned to leave at sunrise she had another thought coming.

Chapter 3

Logan left the rodeo grounds at sunrise. Dawn peeked over the horizon when he walked into the horses' stables on the Cartwright ranch to find Priscilla waiting for him. Despite the turmoil clambering in his head, he forced a smile and went to her.

"Good morning, and how's my favorite lady?"

Priscilla gave a whinny of excitement and angled her head, waiting for him to stroke her mane.

"Is that right?" Logan obliged her, smoothing his palm over her silken ebony locks. "And the youngin? Is he feeling ready to make an appearance yet?" The thoroughbred made another sound remarkably close to almost, and Logan chuckled softly. "Another week or so, huh? Yeah, that sounds about right to me too."

"That horse could just as easily be telling you she plans to stomp a mud hole in your ass in a week or so as have that damned colt."

Logan shot a glance over his shoulder. He hadn't heard his father come into the stables, but saw him now, leaning against the railing by the doorway. "Awe, come on, Pop. You know I'm a regular Doctor Doolittle on this ranch. Wait until next week and see if I'm not right."

"I know you are, but I'd chalk it up more to that education of yours than your ability to talk to that horse."

Yeah, Logan would too, but it didn't hurt to kid around about it. He could stand a little humor this morning, something to take the edge off the irritation and bubbling anxiety that slapped him in the face when Jaelynn woke him before dawn and told him he had to get out.

"You didn't come home last night." His father's words held more curiosity than accusation.

"Sure I did." Logan patted Priscilla on the head and turned to lean against the wall outside the stall. He tipped his chin toward the stable door. "Sun's barely out yet. Most figure it's still night even though the clock reads AM, I'm home, therefore I came home last night."

"Smart ass," Jessup Cartwright muttered and shook his head.

Logan grinned. "And that I learned from you."

"Didn't learn much from yourself though, did you?"

Logan straightened. "What do you mean?"

"You shacked up with that rodeo female last night. What's her name? Jaelynn-Sue Mosley."

"Murphy, and how do you know I spent last night with her?"

"Well, you left the bar with her, didn't you?"

Logan sighed. He had and no doubt all of Jamison County and probably the next two counties over knew it too.

"Heard she picked you up."

"Well, your hearing is just fine, Pop. No need to worry about that hearing aid Ma's been trying to push on you."

"Been telling her that for the past five years. You used protection, didn't you, boy?"

Logan gave his father a withering look. "I'm thirty-five years old, Pop."

"And what, they make an age now where condoms don't need to be used anymore?"

"No, but they made an age on how old a man has to be before talking with his father about sex is taboo. I reached that age about decade or more ago."

"Hogwash. You just don't want to talk about it 'cause you got yourself into some shit with her last night."

"I had sex with her. There wasn't any shit involved."

Jamison nodded. "Except the shit around your heart. Boy, I'm not stupid. You've got pictures of that woman everywhere like a goddamn teenager. Trouble is, you think like a man. Hell, even when you were a teenager you didn't think like one."

No, he hadn't. He'd thought about the future, first planning his life to compete in the rodeo and then altering those plans to take care of the ranch, get married, and start a family.

"Fantasies are healthy. Hell, every man could stand dreaming about a sexy young woman now and then, but trying to make that into anything more is plain stupid."

"Maybe," Logan conceded. "Maybe not." He turned back to Priscilla's stall, opened the gated door, and stepped inside.

"Yeah, that's what I figured you'd say. I had a feeling you'd already let her in. Only happened once before but the signs are there again. I only had to walk through that door to see them." Jamison gestured toward the stable door.

"Am I that transparent?" Logan shot his father a glance and picked up a grooming brush.

"Only to me, son." His father sighed. "You gave up everything you wanted to be here for me."

"I gave up a boyhood dream to be here for the ranch that will take care of me when I'm old like you," Logan countered, but they both knew the truth. If Jamison hadn't had a heart attack, hadn't needed Logan around the farm, Logan would've gone on to follow that boyhood dream.

"Won't do me no good to try to talk you down from this girl. All's I'll say instead is be careful. You've been down that road before, and it was bumpy as all get out, full of pot holes too. No reason to think that road will be paved now just 'cause it's a different woman."

"Maybe." Logan slowly nodded and started brushing Priscilla. "But there's no reason to think a different woman can't lead me down a different road."

* * * *

Jaelynn pulled on Betsy's reins, coaxing the steer-wrestling horse to a stop near the area gate. "Good girl," she muttered soothingly, stroking the horse's mane.

"She's ready, Jae-Sue. You're ready. You got a helluva time with that one." Roscoe Pallin, her hazer, partner and horse handler, gave a nod back at the holding pen where the steer she'd just taken down now munched on slop. He hooked his arms over the top bar of the gate, his boots planted firmly on the dusty ground. He stood a good six-foot-four inches with a wiry build, ebony skin, hair reminiscent of a bale of hay, and eyes as cool as a winter day in Montana.

"Yeah, not bad," Jaelynn agreed. She'd taken the steer down in five point three seconds. Not her best time, but good enough to place in tonight's show. "Maybe we should do it again, though. We've still got thirty or more minutes until—" She broke off when she looked past Roscoe and spotted the man leaning against a fence post, his hat tipped down, covering his eyes, his arms and ankles crossed. Logan. Her heart sped even as butterflies kicked up a delighted dance in her belly. "On second thought, Roscoe, why don't you take Betsy into the stable? We'll all take the morning off."

Roscoe followed her gaze, tossing a glance behind his shoulder before turning back to face her. "Playin' with the locals? That's not like you, Jae-Sue."

"A girl deserves her fun now and then." Jaelynn dismounted and handed over the horse's reins. What was unlike her was the sudden, almost desperate need to be next to Logan Cartwright. Experiencing the longing that moved through her veins and tickled her in places that wept for his touch was not like her at all.

"Careful, girl, you know what your daddy always said about that kind of fun."

"Yeah, take it while you can get it because everybody's fun days are numbered." She stifled a laugh but couldn't hide the grin when Roscoe swore softly.

"That old man never was good for nothin'"

Jaelynn did laugh then, shaking her head as Roscoe continued to mutter about her father being a waste of good cowboy sperm as he led Betsy to the horse's stables. She knew the ornery old goat didn't mean a word he said. He would give her father the shirt off his back without a moment's hesitation. Her laughter turned to a near purr as she walked through the gate and out of the arena, each step leading her closer to Logan.

He pushed off the fence post as she neared, the smile on his lips curving into one of pure charm and tempting pleasure. He didn't walk to her, but hooked his thumbs in the pockets of his well-worn jeans and waited for her to come to him.

"Mr. Cartwright," she said by way of greeting, still several feet from him.

"Miss Murphy." He removed his cowboy hat, revealing hair matted in places, handsomely tousled in others. His gaze, the same penetrating eyes she'd awoken to just before sunrise, raked down her so slowly she actually felt the touch like a physical contact. Jesus save her, she wanted that contact, needed it, hungered for it.

"What are you doing back so soon?" *And what took you so long to get here?* She didn't put voice to the second question. He didn't need to know how badly she'd been dying to see him again, to feel him again, to have him again mere seconds after she'd sent him away. She hadn't wanted anyone to see him. That had been part of the truth, but the whole of it was the hours she spent with him last night scared her shitless. In one night, a few short hours, this man had touched something inside her, opened places so deep within her she hadn't known they existed and didn't have a clue now how to close again.

"I hoped you could give me a little tour behind the scenes. You know, show me around in the daylight where I won't get shot by your protectors and can get a real feel for the rodeo life."

I've got something you can get a feel of and it isn't rodeo life, cowboy.

The olive green t-shirt he wore fit like a second skin to his finely toned torso, the short sleeves rolled in cuffs over his biceps. He smelled of musk and testosterone, a heady combination that teased her senses and left her wanting him even more.

"That is, if you have some free time this morning," he added.

He didn't touch her. Why didn't he touch her? He kept one hand on his hat at his thigh, the other with the thumb hooked in his pocket, the friendly stance of a man talking with a woman. But when she stared into his eyes she realized there wasn't anything friendly in the glimmering depths of his gaze. No, what she saw there was hot, starved, and ready.

She made a little show of glancing at her watch. "I think I can spare a few minutes, and I know just the place to start." She took his hand, lacing her fingers with his as she pulled him away from the fence.

He gave a low chuckle and slapped his hat back on his head as he stumbled the first few steps to catch up with her. "I was trying to be discreet. You know that, right? There are other riders out here watching."

"Does that worry you, Logan?" She didn't slow her step, but continued on a direct course for the tack room.

"Only if they are among the many you spoke of who carry a gun and aren't afraid to use it."

"They all carry guns, and none of them are afraid to use it."

"Well, then, that eases my mind a bit."

Jaelynn laughed and yanked him inside the deserted tack, closing and barring the door behind him. "You worry too much, Logan." She braced her hands on his shoulders, rose to her tiptoes and kissed him.

To his credit, he didn't miss a beat. His mouth opened on contact and his tongue dove inside her mouth, tangling with her tongue in a kiss so crazed one might have thought they hadn't seen one another in decades. His hands found her buttocks, cupping them in his palms. He pulled her closer, at the same time bending his knees to put their

bodies in perfect alignment for the grinding that drove her to the brink of insanity.

It was utter madness, the way her body responded to that contact. Spasms permeated her nerve endings. Needs pulsed through her core until she wanted to weep from the building desire. His body felt like a rock of solid muscles gyrating against her soft curves, his cock a rod of unyielding flesh pressing at the apex of her thighs.

His kiss turned from one of surprise to a savage pairing in a matter of heartbeats. He consumed her, devoured her until her head felt clouded with the pure sensuality of it and her knees went weak.

"Please," she gasped, tearing her mouth from his to trail her kisses down his jaw and throat. She pushed her hands between their bodies, finding the buckle of his belt and quickly working it free before he realized her attentions.

"Whoa, baby." His laugh sounded of part amusement and part heady hunger. "Jaelynn, are you forgetting where we are?"

"I don't care where we are. I need you now." In the next breath, she had his pants unfastened, the zipper down, and her hand dove inside. She found his cock, impossibly long and gloriously thick, and wrapped her fingers around the shaft even as she pulled it free from the confines of his jeans.

"Ah, God." He sucked a breath through his teeth as she started to stroke his dick, long and measured squeezes of her hand to his steel-like rod.

"Unless you have a problem with that," she teased and nipped the muscle that jumped in his jaw.

"I can't think of a single one."

He released his hold on her ass in favor of unfastening her jeans and shucking them and her panties to her knees. Then his hands gripped her waist. He spun her in his arms so fast it drew a quietly surprised shriek from her lips, and he yanked her against him, her back to his front even as he turned them both until she faced the wall of the tack room. His hands glided up her sides, framing her curves on

their rise to her arms where he guided them up to brace her palms on the wall. His hands traveled down once more to her hips, one reaching around her body to find her clit, aching and swollen for his touch.

"Yes." Jaelynn rested her forehead on the wall as he worked her sensitive nub with the pad of his thumb, rolling her clit in a pressured massage that brought the claws of orgasmic bliss climbing up the walls of her pussy.

"Are you wet enough for me, Jaelynn?" His question came on husky breath of equal pain and anticipated pleasure. The tip of his cock grazed the sensitized flesh of her pouty lips, and her back arched in response, writhing in search of the penetration her body sought.

"Yes, now. I want you inside me now, Logan."

He didn't make her beg, thank you sweet baby Jesus. His hands left her for the split moment it took him to roll on a condom. Then he obliged her with a single vicious thrust of his cock into her awaiting channel that made them both cry out from the absolute ecstasy of the intrusion. He remembered just how to take her, slamming his erection into her aching wetness until the sounds of bodies slapping and breaths panting filled the tack room. It was a vicious mating, a primal exchange of needs and harmony. Jaelynn's fingers attempted to dig into the wall, seeking purchase, and when that didn't work, she reached an arm behind her to his ass, her nails finding smooth, warm flesh to sink into.

Logan buried his face in the curve of her neck, his teeth grazing the tender skin. His thumb continued its assault on her clit and all the while his cock rammed into her channel, urging her closer and closer to release with each brutal plunge. When it came, the release tore through her with such force that she screamed from the brutality of it. Her body convulsed, shattering around his cock, milking his shaft until she heard his low animalistic growl of his own ejaculation.

Spent, breathless, weak, Jaelynn let her head fall to rest on the wall once more. She closed her eyes, unable to concentrate on anything but controlling her breathing before she started to

hyperventilate. She felt Logan's forehead come to rest on the back of her shoulder, his own breathing as ragged as hers. Slowly, his cock slipped free of her pussy, and she felt the absence instantly, her body wanting to seek it again even as it struggled to regain the strength it already stole from her.

"This is crazy," he finally whispered, and her heart stilled.

He was right, of course. This wanting him, the way she'd all but jumped him on sight, it was beyond foolish. Worse, this tingling feeling that swirled in her chest, the fluttering in her belly, the monopolization of her thoughts could be nothing more than idiotic.

"Should I apologize?" She didn't attempt to look at him, wasn't sure she could find the strength just yet to move. She remained with her head against the wall, her eyes closed, and every pulse point in her body registering every minute contact of his skin to hers.

"You do and I'll have to spank this pretty ass of yours."

His threat sent shards of excited glass exploding through her sated body. What the hell was wrong with her? She didn't go for kinky shit like that. The response that left her lips shocked her to her booted toes. "Promises, promises."

He chuckled, his breath a hot wash of ecstasy to the side of her neck. "This wasn't exactly why I came to see you this morning. Not that I'm complaining, but I'm wondering are you making up for lost time, Miss Murphy?"

Jaelynn managed both a shrug and what she prayed would be the truth. "Nope, I just wanted you. I've gotta take it while I can so I can get you out of my system before the rodeo pulls out of Sunset next week."

* * * *

You don't have to leave.

Logan tasted the words on the tip of his tongue, but he swallowed them, knowing them to be false. She did have to go. Traveling with

the rodeo was what she did, what had brought her here to start. But she didn't have to get him out of her system before she left. That much he wanted to tell her, and very nearly did, before he realized it would likely scare her.

Hell, he was scaring himself with the desperation flowing through him to find a way to keep her in his life. He'd had her for less than twenty-four hours and already he couldn't fathom losing her.

He swallowed those words too and stepped back, slipping out of the comforting warmth of her body. He pulled off the condom, tossed it in a nearby trashcan, and shoved his sated cock back in his jeans while she straightened her own clothes.

She didn't turn to face him until she'd set to rights her jeans and blouse, but her disheveled hair and the satisfaction gleaming in her eyes screamed of a woman who'd just had amazing mid-morning sex in the tack room. At least, he hoped it had been amazing for her because, boy howdy, it had been bronco-bucking fantabulous for him.

Logan reached out, hooking an arm around her waist and yanking her to him. She let out a breathless chuckle that turned to a moan as he silenced her with a kiss. By the time he let her go his balls ached and his cock flexed for another round.

"We better get out of this room, cowboy." Jaelynn stepped around him, putting more distance between them as she shoved a hand through her wavy locks. "If we don't, we'll end up staying in here all day having sex."

"I can think of far worse ways to spend a day, cowgirl." Logan bent to pick up his hat where he'd dropped it on the ground at his feet in favor of holding her. He grinned as he straightened, meeting her gaze and catching the amusement dancing in her eyes. At his cowgirl reference or his agreement to a day of sex, he wasn't sure. They both sounded like winners to him.

She shook her head, a little giggle escaping as she walked to the door and opened it. "Out." She gestured for him to exit first.

He did, passing so close to her on his way that his arm brushed her breasts. In that fraction of an instant, he heard her quick intake of breath and felt her nipples bead beneath the material of her shirt. Christ, the woman was insatiable!

She followed him out, pointing toward a horse trailer to the right of the tack room. "That's Betsy's trailer, the horse you saw me riding when you got here. She's in the stables now with Roscoe. He'll take care of her until I get back."

"What time do you have to ride tonight?" He wanted to be there, wanted to see her perform, to root for her from the crowd, but he had to be at the bar by five.

"The rodeo starts tonight at seven. Betsy, Rosco and I will go on at seven-thirty. Why? Are you planning to watch?"

Logan hoped he wasn't misreading the hope he saw in her eyes as she glanced at him. "I am." He nodded. "And since you have until seven-thirty, I'd hoped you would come back to the bar. I've got a class from five to seven again." He leaned in closer, lowered his voice. "I could use some help if you might be so obliged."

Her eyebrows shot up. "You want me to help you teach a dance class?"

"You said I needed a partner," he reminded her.

She stopped, planting her fisted hands on her hips and studying him with a long, leisurely gaze that made his skin crawl with renewed hunger. "So I did. Alright, Mr. Cartwright. I'll help you with your class tonight. Who knows, maybe I'll even teach you a few lessons."

Logan felt the heat of that promise settle in his groin. "Oh, baby, I can't wait to start learning."

Chapter 4

Jaelynn had always been a fast learner, but when a woman had a good teacher, she could catch on to anything. Logan Cartwright was a phenomenal teacher. She'd never seen a man dance like him, all fluid moves and easy grace. Each step, grind and turn exhibited a calculated measure of skill and talent with enough sexuality to drive her wild.

The same students were back for another night of bumping and grinding their way over the dance floor. They began with the dance she'd seen Logan teaching last night, his own adaption to the C. C. Shuffle. Tonight's difference? He had a partner and, boy, did his students get a kick out of it.

Jaelynn blushed to the roots of her hair as whistles and whoops drowned out Billy Ray Cyrus's country twang. The gay couple proved to be the loudest, rooting them on as Logan gyrated Jaelynn to near orgasm in the first verse of the song. Hugh and Maria Rowell joined in the fun, attempting to copy the seductive grind with hip action of their own that made Jaelynn chuckle even as it warmed her heart. Logan, she decided, knew his stuff when he told her he provided a place for the married couple to get the heat started.

He certainly didn't fail to start a fire within her. By the time Billy Ray's voice faded, her body hummed a rhythm of its own. Her panties grew so wet she considered a trip to the ladies room to wring them dry, and her nipples, whew, lord, they ached something fierce, pulsating for his touch, his tongue, to simply brush against his naked skin.

"By George, I think you've got that one." Logan's arms wound around her, and he tightened his hold, rasping his groin against her buttocks as his lips brushed featherlike caresses to the side of her neck.

"Hey, Logan, have you taught her your dance yet?" Bobby and his partner exchanged winks and knowing glances that had Jaelynn wondering.

She tipped her head back and looked up at Logan. "Isn't what happens in my private lessons privileged information?"

Logan grinned, all mischief and invigorating promises. "You bet your sweet ass, but the dance our little gay friend is referring to happens to be a line dance of my own choreography. Fitting, I assure you, for a crowd."

"I'm not sure many crowds would see the dances you've adapted as being fit," Jaelynn teased. She covered his hand on her waist with hers and took the lead, twirling out from his embrace only to have him snatch her back. She slammed against his rock-hard body, and her breath caught in her throat.

"I suppose I can let you be the judge."

"Lead on, teacher."

Logan stepped around her in a move worthy of Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey as Kenny Chesney's "Out Last Night" started to play. Jaelynn stood still, letting the beat move through her, feeling the building rhythm of music and arousal as Logan's hands glided over her body. He stopped with the hard wall of his body pressed to her back and covered her hands with his on her hips, lacing his fingers through hers.

"Right first, then front, then left." His instructions would've been drowned out by the song had his lips not been moving at her ear. The warmth of his breath, the featherlike caress of his lips to her flesh sparked memories of last night, of his mouth on her most sensitive parts. "Follow my lead." He nipped her lobe in a tender but pressured bite that sent her insides trembling with pure, carnal lust.

She could only nod as he started to dance. His hands guided her own up her front as he did a sexual glide to the right that was more shift than step. Their bodies rubbed, his groin snuggled firmly in the crack of her ass. If not for the barrier of his jeans, of hers, he would've been inside her throbbing pussy. The way his body led hers to slither and pump, anyone watching might have thought he was.

The song had a faster than Billy Ray, the choreography brisker and headier even than Logan's adaption of the C. C. Shuffle. His hands moved all over her. Or rather her hands moved all over her as his grip on hers didn't change. He controlled the movement of her hands, her hips, her steps and her hormones. Glory be to God, his command over her very essence felt unswerving and masterful.

Jaelynn dimly registered the other couples joining them to complete the line dance. Her intent and focus locked on Logan, on the ridged muscles that held her tight, on the permeating heat that left her light-headed with desire.

His skill on the dance floor as both dancer and teacher could not go unnoticed. Neither could his huskily spoken words in her ears as the song drew to a close.

"You won't get me out of your system, Jaelynn. I won't let you." He released one of her hands, changing his clasp on the other and whirling her around as the final note of the song played.

She didn't have a chance to respond to his comment, didn't know what she would've said if she had. Applause and whistles ripped through the bar from both students and the scattering of onlookers who'd arrived for the evening's happy hour. She felt his possessive squeeze to her hand though and caught the intent spark in his eyes before he turned to his class.

"Whew we, Logan, you're the man." Bobby slapped Logan on the back of the shoulder even as he pretended to wipe sweat from his forehead with his free hand.

"No doubt now why you're the teacher," Bobby's life partner chimed in. "We bow to you, oh glorious cowboy."

"Cut it out, fools." Jaelynn could've sworn she saw the tips of his ears turning red before he snagged his Stetson from the nearby table and slapped it on his head.

"You added some new moves, Logan," Hugh observed. "When are you planning to teach us those?"

"I don't know. They're kind of hard to teach without a partner."

"You've got one now," Maria gestured to Jaelynn.

Logan pulled her into the crook of his arm. "It seems I do. Maybe she'll stick around and help me awhile."

Jaelynn's breath caught in her throat even as a wash of uneasiness mixed with the desire that flooded her mind and body. She didn't miss the underlying meaning to his words. The man was playing for keeps. He'd started a new dance sometime between walking into her trailer last night and out of the tack room that morning and he expected her to follow his lead. If only she could.

The thought had her swallowing her breath and nearly choking on it. What was she doing? She didn't want anything for keeps. She only wanted her beloved rodeo. A keeper, definitely, but one she already felt slipping from her grasp no matter how desperately she fought to hang on.

"We've got the dance-off next Wednesday," Bobby reminded Logan. "Sure would be cool if you had a partner for that for a change."

Logan looked at her, a world of hope, desire and possession in his expression. "Yeah, it sure would. Maybe I can manage to keep her around until then."

Jaelynn winced and looked up at him through apologetic eyes. "Sorry, darlin', no can do. I'll be gone by then. We pull out Monday morning."

A collective "Damnit" came from the couples that watched on, but the intense determination in the gaze staring back at her held her attention. He didn't say it, but she could see the "Not if I can help it"

etched in his expression as plain as the laughter lines around his eyes and the corner of his succulent lips.

He wouldn't make it easy for her. That much was becoming abundantly clear. She would be the one to have to walk away. How to do that would be one lesson she'd have to learn on her own pretty damned fast.

* * * *

Logan determined the last thing he intended to do was to let Jaelynn-Sue Murphy out of his sight. He wanted her, and by God, he meant to have her. She didn't mention the conversational exchange back at the bar and neither did he. Let her stew on it a while, he decided, and in the meantime he'd give her reason upon reason to stick around.

"I need to change clothes," she told him with a quick glance over her shoulder as she headed for her trailer. "Then we'll catch the show before I have to go on if you like."

"I'd rather help you change." He caught her waist as she stepped into the trailer and spun her around in his arms. God, he loved doing that and appreciated the way her lithe body collided with his much harder one in a fit beyond perfection.

She laughed up at him, her eyes twinkling with mischief and excitement. "Hmm, a better proposition than mine. Can you do it in twenty minutes?"

"Darlin', I can do it in ten if that's all the time I've got."

"It's all the time *I've* got."

"Then we better quit wasting it talking." He surprised a squeak out of her as he hoisted her into his arms and carried her down the short hall to the bedroom. He laid her on the bed, going down with her and silencing her laughter with his mouth. God, he loved making her laugh, loved more tasting that laughter, as sweet and smooth as warm honey. By the time he broke the kiss, she had his belt unfastened, his

jeans unbuttoned, and had already started working them and his boxers down around his hips.

"Clothes. Off. Now." She panted the words, making each a sentence of its own as he rolled them both over until they lay on their sides, each working feverously to shed the garments preventing them from being skin-to-skin. And then, "Oh, yeah," she sighed in pure bliss as he moved over her once more.

Logan settled his hips between her wide-spread legs and thrust inside her pussy. She was wet, soaking with an essence he already knew tasted better than paradise, the feel of it covering his cock as he pushed all the way inside her a decided slice of heaven. The realization made him freeze. He lifted his upper body, resting the bulk of his weight on his hands on either side of her shoulders and stared down at her.

Jaelynn's eyes slowly fluttered open, revealing a glassy glaze of pleasure even as confusion flittered through their depths. "I like the idea of going slow now and then. We'll have to try it sometime, but we're on a time limit here. Or did you forget?"

Logan gulped and tried to pull out, but she'd locked her legs around his waist, the strong muscles in her thighs holding him like a vise. "You've got to let me go, Jaelynn."

"Uh ah, not until Monday." She tightened her legs even more, pulling him deeper still inside her.

Logan groaned, closed his eyes and tried to breathe through the riot of ecstasy fogging his sanity. "What I forgot is a condom, Jae. Darlin', I'm inside you without protection."

Fear flittered across her expression, but disappeared just as instantly. She swallowed visibly, pursed her lips, but through it all never loosened her legs to let him pull free. "Well, now, I guess we have a dilemma, don't we? I can let you pull out and you can go for that condom, all of which will waste another precious minute, at least, or you can promise me on your dear sainted grandmother's grave that

you're clean and we can get on with this because I'm about two seconds from coming all over you."

"Jesus," he breathed and damn if his arms didn't wobble at that revelation.

"To make it fair, I'll tell you that I'm clean and on the pill."

Logan found it difficult to speak around his heart now lodged somewhere in his throat. She trusted him. He saw that plain as sunrise in her gaze, felt it even more in the easy hand that glided up and down his back. He finally found the wherewithal to nod, but when he opened his mouth to speak, nothing came out.

"That's close enough," she told him, her voice turning as soft as her touch. She loosened her leg lock enough to urge his hips back with the grip she now had on his sides, and pulled him back inside her pussy.

That measured thrust done completely by her control brought him back. The feel of being inside her, Christ, it had been incredible enough before, but without the barrier of latex between them there was no longer anything left to protect any part of him. He thrust inside her pussy, deep, long, a calculating move that brought her back arching off the bed, positioning her so that he went deeper in her heated channel than before. And in that move, in that moment, he knew she'd positioned herself securely deep within his heart.

Jaelynn came. She hadn't been kidding about how close she was to losing it. Her body jerked, her legs closing around him and holding him hostage as she broke apart beneath him. The convulsions of her inner muscles upon release milked him to his own climax, and his arms went limp. He collapsed on top of her, still moving his hips, still pumping his cock in her greedy pussy until all ability to move fled his body, and he lay breathless and torn apart on top of her.

* * * *

Jaelynn refused to think about what she'd done with Logan in her trailer beyond the fact that it had been one of the most incredible orgasms of her life. She knew she could trust him. If that had been an issue she would've bucked him out of her and off the bed so fast his head would've spun clean off his shoulders. She knew she wouldn't get pregnant from that time either. The fact that it only took one time, that any type of birth control short of abstinence could fail and she'd be pregnant didn't bother her either. She'd practiced the last for far too long and trusted her own intuition enough to feel confident she was in no danger there.

The danger came after. She'd laid beneath him panting for air, her mind scrambling for sanity, and felt an alien want curl inside her chest. So alien, in fact, that she'd never before felt it until that moment. She hadn't even been able to define it at first, but she didn't need old Webster to spell it out for her now. Somehow, in the course of twenty-four pathetically short hours, she'd developed the want to settle with a man. Not just any man. Logan Cartwright.

"How could it happen so fast?"

"It always happens fast, girl. The faster the better. Three seconds is the ultimate goal and anything over ten seconds is way too long."

Jaelynn started, realizing only as she looked over at Roscoe that she'd spoke aloud and he'd answered her even though he really hadn't a clue what she'd been talking about. Thank, God.

"Oh, no, that's not what I, never mind." She shook it off and adjusted her grip on Betsy's reins.

"Something botherin' you, Jae-Sue? You didn't hear something about your pa and you ain't telling me, did you?"

"No, no," Jaelynn rushed to reassure her father's best friend. "I haven't talked to him since this morning, and I told you then he seemed fine." As fine as a seventy-year-old man could be after suffering through his third and most debilitating stroke a mere month before. She closed her eyes, saying a silent prayer though she didn't really know what to pray for anymore. For her father to be well, of

course, and for her to find a way to keep what she had while taking care of him to boot. Suddenly the keeping what she had part had taken on a whole new view though.

No, the hell it hasn't, she thought firmly. You have the rodeo, you have Roscoe, and you have your father. The same as you've always had.

But, as her gaze flicked into the crowd and settled on Logan in the front row, she knew she had him too if only she would let herself keep him.

* * * *

Jaelynn's performance proved to be one of the best Logan ever witnessed. The woman knew how to handle a horse and how to take down a steer with pristine perfection. Not that he found that surprising. He might not be a horse or a steer, but he'd learned quickly enough she could handle him without fail. But the real entertainment came in watching her move. The way she swayed, leaned, and bounced with the horse's movements was a dance all its own. The way she hopped off at just the right moment, tackling the steer and taking it down with a strength that seemed impossible for a woman as slight as she to possess, merely added to the steps of the choreography. By the time she finished and joined him outside Betsy's stable, he felt horny enough to jump her right there. Who gave a shit how many of the townsfolk looked on?

He controlled himself, barely, and hooked an arm around her waist instead, pulling her into his embrace. "You looked amazing out there."

She tipped her head back, nearly catching him on the nose with the brim of her cowgirl hat. "Why, thank you. Now what do you intend to do to me?"

He chuckled. He had plans but hadn't been sure she'd go for them after all that transpired between them today. The gleam in her eye

accompanying her loaded question proved to be all the confirmation he needed. "Come on, I want to take you someplace special."

She laced her fingers with his and let him lead her to his truck. "Where is this special place?" she asked, once they both got belted in and on the road.

"Just a little spot on the family ranch." He supposed that didn't sound so special, but the strip of secluded pasture he had in mind had always been his spot. He'd gone there most of his life to think, fume, escape, or simply to relax. Tonight, he wanted to share it with her.

"This is a nice spread," she commented as he drove through the iron gates. "Does all this belong to the Cartwrights?"

"It does, and has for over fifty years now. My grandfather worked this land as a ranch hand, learned all there is to know about the cattle and such from the old man who owned it. When the old man died, granddad bought it from the surviving family."

"No one wanted to carry on the business, huh?"

"They looked to get the hell out Dodge and that's exactly how they put it. It worked out for my family though. They sold the land to Granddad for a rock bottom price. He put his knowledge to use and turned it into one of the best spreads in these parts. By the time he got too old to run it, my father had gotten old enough to take over."

"And next it will come to you."

Logan brought the truck to a stop and cut the engine. "And next it will come to me." He reached over, caught her hand and brought it to his lips. He brushed a kiss to her smooth flesh. "Hungry?"

She raised a brow and shot a pointed look out the truck windshield. "What, are we going to dine on twigs and berries tonight?"

Logan smiled. "Actually, I have a basket in the back along with a six pack in the cooler. I thought we'd have a little picnic beneath the stars."

Both brows rose at that. "Mr. Cartwright, are you getting romantic on me?"

"Trying to, Miss Murphy. Are you up for a little romance tonight?"

"A girl's always geared for a little romance." She turned her hand over, catching his chin in her palm, and outlining his lips with the tip of her finger. "You're a good man, Logan. A sweet, tender man, not to mention you're sexy as all get out."

Logan didn't know what to say to that, so he said nothing. Instead, he watched as emotions swirled in her eyes and hoped with all his might that one of those meant she felt the same about him as he already felt about her.

* * * *

"Tell me about your father." Logan dug into a bag of rice chips and crunched on a handful as he put his other hand behind him and leaned back on the blanket they'd laid out over the grass for their picnic.

Jaelynn sat with her arms around her legs, hugging her knees to her chest, her head tipped back as she gazed up at the stars. "There probably isn't much to tell that you don't know already. Not if you follow the rodeo circuit at all."

"I heard he had another stroke."

Jaelynn raised her head and looked at him.

He winced. "Sorry, that's definitely not real romantic conversation, is it?"

She smiled, surprised to feel it come naturally despite the gloominess of the subject. "No, you lose points on the quixotic meter for that one."

"The quixotic meter? I'm not even going to ask what that is. I didn't mean to put a damper on the mood. It's just, well, I've never met him, but all accounts have him as a good man, a helluva rodeo rider, and not a bad father either. I hate to see a good man go down that way."

"You and me both, and he is all of those things you said and then some."

An old George Straight song drifted through the serene night air from the cab of the truck, and Jaelynn stood and held out a hand for Logan's. "Let's dance, cowboy. None of that fancy stuff you do for your class at the bar. Just some good old fashioned slow dancing. Do you think you can handle that?"

Logan put his hand in hers and let her pull him to his feet. "I believe I can still remember how it's done."

He enveloped her, his arms snaking around her and drawing her in. He was warm and hard and felt so incredibly fantastic that Jaelynn sighed and lay her head on his chest as she lost herself in simply being with him, in the music that caressed the air around them, in a night that proved to be like no other she'd ever shared with a man.

As George sang about crossing his heart and making promises, Jaelynn wondered if fate had slipped into the booth at the radio station and picked out the CD. And as she eased back enough to look up at Logan, catching the gentle awareness in his gaze, she decided if it had been in her power to give all she had to make his dreams come true she would've done it for this man without any urging from fate.

Logan's hand moved to brush the backs of his fingers down her cheek, and she closed her eyes, angling her face into the touch.

"Make love to me, Logan. Right here, right now beneath the stars." She opened her eyes to see his glistening. She wouldn't accept that they were tears of an emotion neither of them should feel so soon after meeting. Despite her request, her choice of words for him to make love to her, what they shared couldn't be that serious. Could it? It wasn't possible to feel it so soon. Was it?

She pushed the questions aside without answer as he slowly nodded and covered her mouth with his. The kiss felt unlike any they'd shared so far, full of so much meaning and unspoken truth. His tongue slipped between her lips and licked her very soul. She'd told him to make love to her, and by God, he did, starting with her mouth.

He caught her bottom lip between his teeth, pulled at it as he nipped, then licked to soothe.

"You know what's happening, don't you?" His voice grated the moistly sensitive flesh of her mouth, a hot abrasion that sizzled to her core.

"Yeah, I'm about to get you inside me again." She angled her head and bit her way along his chin and jaw to his ear. "That's all I need to know right now."

His hands glided from her hips, up her back and down again, their lower bodies still pressed firmly together, still swaying to the music. He gripped her shirt at her sides, pulled it free of the waistband of her jeans and delved his hands beneath. His palms were riddled with calluses, their roughness another tender abrasion to the smooth skin of her back. He tugged the shirt over her head, stopping when the neckline covered her eyes, the sleeves binding her arms, and his mouth dropped to the swell of one breast.

Jaelynn's shirt and the intensely exquisite things his tongue did to her chest blinded her. Colors exploded in the darkness behind her lids, offering evidence to her excitement, proof to her pleasure as his tongue moved beneath the edge of her bra and expertly found her hardened nipple. Not that she needed anything to highlight how utterly magnificent the things he did to her felt. No, she needed only the wicked sensations pulsating through her, the heady hunger clinching at her belly to know she might die from his having her this time, but what a way to go.

He growled against her breast, the sound vibrating her flesh. "Damn clothes." He ripped the shirt the rest of the way off, tossed it to the ground with one hand while the other made quick work of the fastening to her bra.

Jaelynn laughed, albeit breathlessly. "Having troubles, cowboy?"

"Consider yourself lucky I'm not tearing them off of you." What he did was about as close as he could get without destroying the fabric. He yanked the bra off, and her breasts dangled free. Then his

hands covered them, held them, weighed them. "God. Sweet God." He dipped his head and lifted one to his mouth.

Jaelynn buried her hands in his hair, her head falling back as his lips worked first one breast and then the other, his teeth joining for alternating bites that left her incensed and panting.

"So amazing. I never thought you would be this way, taste this way, *feel* this way. In all my fantasies, I couldn't have conjured this." Even as he spoke, as he continued his mindless exploits of her breasts, his lower body swayed in a move that tantalized and drove her to sheer madness.

She abandoned her hold on his hair for one on the button of his jeans. "Damn clothes," she managed to gasp as he sucked her nipple between his teeth for a particularly more pressured bite than before. Slight pain laced with delicious pleasure, and she fumbled in her haste to free his cock from his jeans.

He laughed and tipped his head to gaze up at her, his lips grazing like a feather to her brilliantly receptive nipple. "Having troubles, cowgirl?"

It was Jaelynn's turn to growl, the sound only succeeding in drawing a laugh from him that reverberated over her heated flesh. Then he eased his lower body back, creating enough space to work, and his hands started to move. In a haste both frenzied and crazed, they removed each other's jeans and underwear, both somehow managing to free themselves of their boots. Logan deserted his hands' explorations of her body long enough to yank off his t-shirt and then, glory be to God, Jaelynn could touch too.

Mouths explored, tongues licked, hands teased, and the passion continued to build. The rhythm changed from slow and tender to fast and rough so many times in a single minute Jaelynn's mind lost all grip on reality, her body exasperated with need.

"Now, Logan. I need to feel you, now." She curled her fingers over his shoulders and pushed, taking the lead to guide him down to the blanket. She went with him, straddling his hips as he laid back, his

gorgeous eyes heavy lidded, his lips swollen from his assault on her body, from her attack on his mouth.

His hands tightened on her hips and, for a long moment, they stayed that way, her body poised to lower on his erect cock, their gazes locked, breathing ragged. "Do I need a condom?"

His consideration to ask even though they hadn't used one earlier in the evening simply offered up one more example of what a truly amazing man he was.

Jaelynn shook her head. "I want to feel you, all of you."

He swallowed visibly but still he didn't loosen his grip on her hips so she could move. "Jaelynn, I—"

"Don't," she said quickly, cutting him off in midsentence. Fear of what he'd been about to say turned her blood to ice even as her core heated with the flaming need to have him.

"I won't," he whispered. "You already know." Using his firm grip, he pulled her down, impaling her pussy with his thick, wide rod, and she cried out, the pleasure a shocking bolt of white-hot lightning streaking through her.

She rode his cock, keeping with the same alternating tempo of slow to fast, tender to rough until neither could hold out any longer. They exploded together in a wash of cries and essence, and she collapsed on top of him, panting and exhausted.

Chapter 5

Logan stared up at the flickering stars in the sky and felt more alive than he'd ever been in his life. Exhausted, a little fuzzy in the brain, but alive and utterly content to be so. His arm wound around Jaelynn, his fingers dancing lightly over the bare skin of her shoulder. Her fingers kept tempo on his chest where her hand rested next to her cheek. She turned her face into his chest, planted a kiss on his left pec and rested her chin there as she looked up at him from beneath long lashes.

"What did you mean by what you said before, about conjuring fantasies?"

Logan didn't have the strength to move more than his eyes, but they rolled rather easily before settling to gaze back at her. Hell, his cheeks even burned as he caught the small smile playing at the corner of her lips. "I had my healthy share of fantasies where you're concerned."

"Oh, my God, you're kidding."

"No, ma'am. The rodeo magazines run some pretty great shots of you now and then. I'd love to tell you I buy the magazines to read the articles, but I think you'd see through that lie."

She giggled. "That line stopped working decades ago." She laid her head back down on his chest. "Wow, I'm glad I didn't know that before. I guess it's safe to assume I've lived up to your expectations?"

"Sweet thang, you dug a grave for those expectations and buried them six feet under the moment you walked into the bar."

She fell silent for several heartbeats before she sighed and shifted slightly. "I should be getting back."

Logan closed his eyes, knowing it was coming but not yet ready to face the reality of it. "What's next for you?" He felt her shrug.

"We'll move onto the next rodeo, the next town on Monday."

"And start it all over again by the weekend?"

"Actually, no. We have almost two weeks off between shows this time. Most everyone will take a break, go home, visit family or whatever, and we'll hook up again the day before the rodeo kicks off."

"Where will you go? To see your father?"

She nodded and pushed herself to her elbow, though her gaze and her hand remained on his chest. "Yeah. I have to. God, it's not going to be a fun trip. He's not doing so well, Logan. This last stroke, well, he can hardly see for himself anymore."

"I didn't realize it was that bad." All accounts he'd read put Buster Murphy in rough shape but, hell, the man was seventy-two and lived through two previous strokes before this last. Who wouldn't be in rough shape after that?

Jaelynn started to sit up, and he let her go, his hand on her shoulder falling to her waist. She nodded again and then shook her head. "It's worse than I've wanted to admit. He needs someone to care for him. He can't live alone anymore. It's bad enough he had to give up the little ranch he'd bought after the first stroke, but now I'm going to have to move him to the city, find a place for him, a nursing home that can give him what he needs." She sighed and squeezed her eyes shut. "He's going to hate that. He'd likely rather die than live in a nursing home, but the only other choice is for me to..." She trailed off and opened her eyes to look at him. "Is it okay if we don't talk about this anymore right now?"

Logan sat up and pulled her into his arms. He kissed the top of her head. "Yeah, it's okay." He held her for a long while before he spoke again. "You could spend a few days here. Maybe I can even help you figure out a different solution to this problem with your father, one that will make both of you happy."

Jaelynn looked up at him, a world of unidentifiable emotions swirling in her eyes. "You just want a partner for the dance thing on Wednesday."

He forced a smile even though his heart lodged in his throat. She hadn't immediately said no. It had been a long time since he'd prayed to the man upstairs, even longer since he'd asked for divine assistance, but right about now a million pleas and promises flittered through his thoughts, the loudest of which was, *Please, God, let me keep her.* "You bet your sexy ass I do."

"And where would I stay?"

"With me. I have a place behind the main house. It's not much, but it's private."

"I didn't think there was any privacy at your place right now. Don't you have family running amok on the land or something?"

He chuckled. "You're not far off with that description, but they'll be gone tomorrow."

She stared at him, her gaze dancing over his face. "I do already know," she whispered finally, and Logan's heart nearly stopped beating. "I just don't know what to do with it."

He squeezed her, closing his eyes as he tucked her head beneath his chin. "Then stay and maybe we'll figure that out too."

* * * *

The dance-off, as Logan's students liked to call it, turned out to be three hours of some of the dirtiest bumping and grinding Jaelynn had ever witnessed and certainly ever been a part of. It all took place on the dance floor of the Double Horn Saloon before a crowd of gathered onlookers who, Jaelynn had been told, would vote on the best couple by the volume of their applause. The going census among the dancers was that she and Logan had it licked before they even stepped foot on the floor, but that didn't stop anyone from showing their stuff.

Nearly two hours of brisk moving and hard gyrations passed before Jaelynn managed to sidestep her way out of Logan's embrace and off the dance floor. She wiped a bead of sweat off her forehead with the back of her hand and smiled all the way to the bar, where she ordered a tall glass of ice water.

She leaned back, preferring to admire her man's moves rather than rest her buns on the nearest stool. It had been four days since the rodeo left Sunset, four days she'd spent in the sole company of Logan Cartwright, and four days since she faced the fact that she loved the man clean to her toes.

She should've been scared out of her boots, had been from the start, she reminded herself. That had changed somewhere along the line, though she couldn't quite pinpoint why or when. Instead, she felt happy. Ecstatic, really, except when she started thinking about the reality of life away from Logan's arms. It couldn't stay this way. She knew that, accepted that somewhere deep inside. She still had a father to care for, a decision of his well-being to make, and a rodeo waiting for her to compete again in less than a week's time.

One more night, she told herself as she turned her upper body to snag the glass of water the bartender set on the bar. She'd give herself this last night to live in her oblivious bliss high above the clouds before she set her booted feet firmly on the ground once more.

"You two look great out there," Misty leaned across the bar to say.

Jaelynn sipped her water and shot a glance over her shoulder at the bartender. "Logan's the one with all the moves. All I have to do is follow his lead."

Misty made a 'hmpf' sound. "I guess he's going to get what he's always wanted after all. I suppose he deserves it after everything he's been through."

Jaelynn slowly turned and angled her head. "What are you talking about?"

"He didn't tell you about Emma, I take it. His ex-fiancé. You've probably heard of her. Emma Morrison."

Misty's eyes gleamed a little too much. As much as Jaelynn wanted to snort and turn away she couldn't. Neither could she stop herself before she asked, "Logan was engaged to Emma Morrison?" Yeah, she'd heard of the woman, even crossed paths with the bitch a time or ten in the rodeo circuit. Emma was ruthless, heartless and spiteful in her pursuit to be the next reigning rodeo queen. A title most in the business believed belonged to Jaelynn.

"She's from these parts, you know?" Misty nodded. "She and Logan burned hot and heavy for years. Not childhood sweethearts, but damn close. It figures he wouldn't tell you about her though, seeing as you're in the rodeo and all. It's what he wanted to do, you know, before his dad got ill."

Jaelynn's head spun as she tried to make sense of all Misty said. "Logan wanted to compete in the rodeo?"

"Sure did," Misty nodded. "Planned to make a life out of it with Emma. Lost his chance when his dad took sick though. Emma went on anyway, said she wasn't going to let his family problems stand in the way of her getting what she wanted. She lit on out of here and made a name for herself." She shook her head and sighed. "I always expected Logan to follow as soon as he got things at the ranch so he could leave it. Of course, by then he'd lost his way in, I guess you'd call it, some guy Emma knew who helped her out. But now he has you, so..." She left the implication hanging in the air and shrugged again. "Well, I've gotta get to my other customers. Good luck out there. Not that you'll need it," she muttered as she walked off.

Jaelynn stared after the bartender, her ears ringing, heart pounding. It didn't make sense. None of it. Logan wasn't using her. He couldn't be. Why would he?

Slowly, she turned to face the dance floor, her gaze instantly landing on Logan. How well did she really know him? She supposed about as well as anyone could get to know someone in a week. Certainly well enough for her to have thought him a good man, a

decent man, an honorable man. Men like that didn't use a woman the way Misty implied he was using Jaelynn.

And yet, why not tell her about his past association with Emma Morrison? He'd been engaged to the woman, for crying out loud! He'd planned to spend his life with her. He'd lain in his bed with Jaelynn these past few nights, and they'd talked sometimes until dawn and never once had he brought up Emma.

Logan turned on the dance floor, his narrow hips grinding to the beat of the music, and his gaze locked with hers. Jaelynn felt her chest tighten even as her eyes brimmed with tears. She needed time to think, needed some quiet so she could attempt to piece all this new information together. She stood and walked out of the bar. Rain poured from buckets out of the sky, but she didn't care. It wouldn't be her first escapade in the rain, and she doubted it would be her last.

* * * *

Logan lost his step as he watched Jaelynn leave the barroom. Where in blazes was she going? He didn't care about the final half hour of the dance-off. It was all in good fun anyway, and he would've preferred the crowd go for one of the other couples rather than him and Jaelynn. But it was raining something fierce out there, and he couldn't fathom why she could've left.

He wove his way through the line dancing couples and then the gathered crowd in the bar until he reached the door. Rain soaked him to the bone the instant he stepped outside. He stopped, lowering the brim of his Stetson to keep the sheets of rain out of his eyes so he could see. He spotted Jaelynn halfway through the parking lot, headed where, he didn't have a clue. He broke into a jog to catch up with her.

"Where are you going, darlin'?" He reached out, catching her upper arm and turning her to face him. The daggers shooting out of her eyes made him take a full step back. "Jae, what's wrong? What's going on?"

"I'm through giving you want you want, Cartwright, so you can find some other rodeo cowgirl to use."

Logan blinked, his head throbbing so suddenly it felt as if she'd hit him with a sledge hammer. "What the...? Jaelynn, sweetheart, what are you—?"

"You never told me you wanted to be in the rodeo, that you dreamed of it before your father got sick." She was livid, shooting the words out so fast he could barely keep up. He managed to catch the gist of them though and only succeeded in being even more confused.

"What little boy doesn't want to be a rodeo star? Hell, what does that have to do with anything?"

"It wasn't just a little boy's passing fancy for you, Logan, and you know it. You planned to make a life out of it."

"I did." He nodded, trying hard to hold onto his own quickly rising temper. "You, of all people, should know how a father's health can change a son or daughter's plans."

"And Emma Morrison, you were engaged to her."

Logan shook his head, not in denial but to jar his brain into the conversational switch she'd just taken. "Christ, Jaelynn, I never claimed to be a virgin when I met you."

"Oh, fuck you!" she spat and spun on her heel.

Logan had never been so confused in his life, and as long as she remained pissed at him, he figured he was likely to stay that way. "Will you stop just a damned minute and let's talk about this?"

"I don't want to talk," she shot over her shoulder. "I want to leave."

"Fine." He caught her by the waist and hoisted her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

"What the hell are you doing?" She pounded her fists into his back. "Put me down."

Logan winced—the woman was strong enough to pack a helluva punch—but he kept walking. "You want to leave. I'm taking you to the truck."

"I didn't say I wanted to leave this place with you. I meant I want to *leave* leave."

"Fine. You can leave. We're going to the house. You can talk or you can listen, but either way, you're not making a damned bit of sense, and I'm not going to try to sort any of this out in the pouring rain. When we get home, you can gather your stuff and leave if you still want to. I'll even drive you to the airport."

The fight left her as he shoved her in the passenger seat of the cab and slammed the door. He walked around to the driver's side and slid behind the wheel.

"I know I'm not making any sense," she said so softly he barely heard her.

He laughed, a short burst that clearly summarized the exasperation and confusion he felt and started the truck. "That's the most sensible thing you've said since you walked out of the bar."

She crossed her arms, her movements jerky and shot him a glare that, even in the darkness of the night, held enough derision to make him laugh again. As far as first fights went, he figured they had gotten off to a good start for a doozy.

She stayed that way for several miles, and the silence droned on. Finally, she huffed a sigh. "I thought you wanted to talk."

"Did I say that?" He hid a smile and barely contained another laugh. She was pissed at him, for what he still hadn't exactly figured out. Using her, his desire to live the rodeo life, his engagement to Emma Morrison, none of that should've amounted to a hill of beans in her eyes. Well, except for the first part, though he'd yet to see how he could be using her.

"I will, if that's what you want." He loved her enough to tell her anything and everything she wanted to know. He wondered if she loved him enough to listen. "You might have to tell me what you want me to say though."

"The truth would be a good place to start."

"I've never lied to you about anything, Jaelynn." He took a deep breath as he struggled to keep the truck at a safe speed through the storm on the dark roads to the ranch. He'd never wanted to be home as much as he did now. If he could hold her, look her in the eyes as he talked, maybe he could put an end to all this madness.

"You didn't tell me anything, either."

Logan pushed the breath through pursed lips. "Okay, I figure you're pissed, though why I haven't got yet, because of my past with Emma. Since I'm not sure what else has those sexy panties of yours in a wad, and you don't want to tell me, I'll spill my whole life story, just the highlights for now. When I hit a sore spot, you let me know."

He paused, waiting for her to say something, and when she didn't, he went on. "I wanted to be in the rodeo for as long as I can remember. Being as your father brought you up in it, I'm not sure you can quite understand the want, but I've watched your career, and I know you can understand the drive to be the best. You are, by the way, the best female rodeo rider out there." He shot her a glance as he pulled the truck onto Cartwright property.

Still, she said nothing, so he continued. "I had plans, big plans that revolved around the rodeo. I hooked up with people, made contacts, and worked my ass off toward that single-minded goal. Then one day I met Emma and, well, I'll just say it, I fell hard and fast."

He thought she muttered something like, "Sounds familiar," but couldn't be sure. He didn't stop to ask. "She wanted the same things I did. Or at least she claimed to. It seemed like the perfect fit, a match made in heaven. The dance lessons at the bar," he shook his head and brought the truck to a stop outside the little place he kept behind the main house, "were all her idea. She roped me into it as effortlessly as she lassoes cattle now. We did it for a little money and because it kept our days free. At least that's what I thought. I didn't know she used it as an excuse to spend the nights at the bar, looking to pick up rodeo cowboys."

Jaelynn looked at him then. "She cheated on you?"

"See, that's something I never quite figured out either. Hell, there was so much I didn't get, still don't, and likely never will. I was so naïve." He ran a hand down his face and laughed though the sound held little humor. "Pa got sick. I wasn't about to leave him, to leave the ranch to who knew what fate. There wasn't anyone else to keep it going, so it fell to me. Emma couldn't understand, or wouldn't. I don't really know which. She could only see what she wanted, the life she said she wanted for both of us slipping away. So she found someone else, hooked up with a guy in one of the two-bit rodeos that came through Sunset, worked her way up, and now, well, she is what she is."

"From what I've heard of her, a rodeo tramp." Jaelynn turned her head back to stare out the truck window, the glass muffling her words.

Still, Logan heard them, and he chuckled. "Yeah, I've heard that too. I guess I owe her, though, for getting me into the whole dancing gig, anyway. See, thing was, I started to enjoy it. It seemed I'm not so bad at it."

"Not so bad at it," Jaelynn mumbled. "You know you're good, but that's irrelevant at this point."

"Then what is relevant, Jae? What set you off like that back at the bar, because I'm damned if I've worked it out yet."

"Misty," Jaelynn answered with a sigh. "She told me you're only using me as an in to the rodeo. Now that you're not so needed on the ranch, you're looking to take back what you gave up."

Logan gaped at her. "And you believed her? Christ, Jaelynn. Did you even stop to think for one second about how ridiculous that sounds?" He didn't wait for her to answer. He'd managed to keep his rein on his temper fine until now, but he felt it slipping at Misty's relentless meddling in his life, at Jaelynn's utter stupidity for believing the other woman. For crying out loud, women could be so dense sometimes.

"Why would I need you to get into the rodeo if that's what I wanted? Talent and skill would get me that just fine, darlin'. And as

for not being needed around here, hell, that hasn't changed. If anything, I'm needed around here more than ever. I'm the one that keeps this damned ranch from folding and, you want to know something, I love the Sam Hill out of it. I love the ranch, and I love my life. That dream of being a rodeo star was just what I said, a boyhood fancy. It just lasted until I got way out of boyhood."

"Well, hell, that's telling me, isn't it?" she spat and got out of the truck, slamming the door behind her.

Logan sat stunned and watched her through the windshield and the falling rain as she entered his house pretty as you please without looking back to see if he'd followed. The rain had slowed to a drizzle. Part of him considered putting the truck in reverse and driving straight back to the bar for a night of down and dirty drinking with good old Jack, something he hadn't done in too many years to count. The other part had him stepping out of the truck, shutting the door a lot more softly than she'd done, and walking into his house.

* * * *

Jaelynn stood in the kitchen nursing a beer by the time Logan followed her. She leaned against the counter by the fridge, one arm crossed beneath her breast, the other holding the beer to her lips, and studied him. He stopped just inside the kitchen doorway and studied her right back.

"I'm going to say this only once so listen up because it might be the last time you ever hear it from my lips." She took a deep breath and said it. "I was wrong."

Damned if his lips didn't twitch at that. There was still a great deal of temper there. She could see it swirling in his chocolate eyes, in the hard set of his jaw, but amusement glinted close at its heels.

"I jumped to conclusions that I can't even explain myself. You asked what I was thinking, and I don't have a clue. This entire week has been," she paused and took a long pull from the beer, "hell, I don't

even know what it's been. You've knocked me out of my boots, and I'm not sure how to slip back in them again." He opened his mouth to speak, but she shook her head. "Wait. I'm not done."

Amusement warred with the temper. He closed his mouth and lifted a brow.

"Do you love me, Logan Cartwright?" The other brow came up to join the first, but he didn't answer. Her heart skipped, tripped, and she had to look away. "Do you want a damned beer?"

"Yes."

She whipped her gaze back to him. "That would be a yes to which question exactly."

The kitchen was small. Four strides brought him within inches of her. They felt like the four longest strides of her life.

"Yes, I want a beer." He reached out and took the one from her hand, tipped it back and drank deep. Then he reached for her with the other hand, his fingers grazing down her cheek. "And yes, I love you. Though I'm not sure why you had to ask seeing as you said you already knew."

"You haven't said it yet." She sounded breathless, her whisper shaking with emotion, her skin tingling from his touch, from the mere proximity of his body.

"You told me not to."

"Do you always listen to what a woman tells you?"

"I try, but from now on, I promise not to try so hard. Right about now, though, I want you to do the listening. I love you, Jaelynn-Sue Murphy. I love you with or without that damned rodeo. See, you haven't done a lot of talking in the last week, but I've done a lot of thinking, and here's what I propose."

Jaelynn felt her eyes go wide at his choice of words. He saw it too because his lips curved in a slow grin. "Yeah, I'm getting to that, too, but not quite yet. The way I see it you have two choices. One, you can toss your father in a nursing home in the city where he will likely die of unhappiness inside a week. Or two, you can quit the rodeo and stay

home to take care of him. Now, I don't see as you really want to do either one of those so I'm offering up a third choice. Bring him to live here, on the Cartwright ranch, where I can see after him when you're away."

Jaelynn was completely taken aback by his offer. She stared at him, her mouth falling open and tears burning her eyes. "Logan, I—"

He kissed her quiet and then set the beer they'd emptied together on the counter and pulled her into his arms. "I'm not done yet," he told her as he started to dance to a beat only in his head. "See, there's a catch to him living here. I mean, I can't let him live on Cartwright land, take care of the man, for Heaven's sake, and not get something out of it."

Jaelynn narrowed her misty eyes. "Exactly what did you have in mind?"

"You have to dance with me."

She blinked in surprise. "We are dancing."

He nodded, bent his knees and did a vertical circular move with this hips he hadn't done before. "Hmm, yeah, it seems we are, but I'm talking about forever, Jaelynn." He spun her around, her back slamming into his front, her head falling back on his chest. He leaned down and nipped the side of her neck. "Marry me, Jaelynn-Sue Murphy." He caught her hand, spun her out and yanked her to him again, this time front to front. "Dance with me in every way a man can dance with a woman from right now until the end of time." His hands moved to cup her ass, and he ground his rapidly hardening cock against her middle even as his lips grazed her forehead, her nose, and her lips. "Be my partner in dance, in love, in life," he whispered and kissed her.

She couldn't keep up. For the first time, she found it difficult to follow his lead with all the turmoil twisting through her head. Too fast, everything inside her screamed it was all too fast. They'd known each other barely a week and now they were talking marriage, forever. But as he pulled back to meet her gaze and she saw all the

promise and emotion swirling in his eyes, she knew she could've said yes that first night and her life would've been absolutely perfect.

She covered the side of his face with her hand and let her thumb graze over his lips. "I love you, Logan Cartwright," she said, her heart in her throat and likely in her eyes. "And I'll be your partner in all of those things and more." She kissed him. "So much more."

He picked her up, cradling her in his arms as he danced across the kitchen floor and up the stairs to his bedroom. He slid down her body as he laid her on the bed, going down with her even as they started tearing at each other's clothes. Fabric ripped, buttons popped and zippers busted in their haste to be skin-to-skin. Then, God, yes, he entered her.

Jaelynn cried out, her back coming off the bed as Logan buried his cock deep in her aching pussy. It felt exquisite, a mating like never before. This one with no holds barred, no emotions held back. Their love spewed between them as their bodies joined again and again, sweat forming a slippery coating on their flesh that heightened the sensuality of the moves.

When she crashed over the edge, her body quivering from the force, he held her tight, whispering his love in her ear. Then his lips covered hers, and he thrust inside her again, his cock still impossibly hard from the release he'd yet to allow himself. He made her come again and again with his fingers, his mouth, his cock until she lost count of the number of orgasms he gave her, until she begged him to come with her.

"Logan, now, my love," she panted through gritted teeth. "I want you to come inside me."

He rose to his hands on either side of her head and gazed down at her. "Are you ready, baby?" His voice was tight from holding himself in check so long, the muscles around his eyes strained, and his arms shaking from holding his weight.

"Yes." She lifted her hips, meeting his stroke for stroke in a wicked dance of flesh to flesh that had then both screaming as the climax took them hostage.

"Jesus," Logan said between ragged breaths sometime later. He was still on top of her, still inside her though his cock had started to go soft. It was a fantastic feeling, a truly delectable experience to feel him sated and shrinking in her delightfully used core. "We do that too often and we're going to kill ourselves."

Jaelynn laughed. "It's been said many times, sex is the best way to go."

"You damned right it is." He lifted his head and kissed her.

"Those are some moves there, cowboy. I wonder what your class would think of those if you threw them into a lesson."

"I think I'd have to adapt it a bit for them, maybe cut out a few special moves before I tried to teach them."

Jaelynn grinned. "And for me?"

"Honey, I have plenty more moves yet to teach you."

He grinned against her lips, and Jaelynn sank into the kiss thinking she'd live happily ever after taking Logan's lessons.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tonya Ramagos is a bestselling author of contemporary, fantasy, paranormal and cowboy novels. She spends most of her time in a fictional world dreaming up hot hunks and head-strong heroines. When she's not writing she's reading. Anything from legal and military non-fiction to any genre of romance can be found on her bookshelves and flash drives. Her music tastes are just as varied with artists ranging from country to rock to heavy metal loading her MP3 player. Her idea of relaxing is curled on the sofa or on her back deck with a book and a cup of coffee, glass of wine, or an MGD 64. A wife and mother of 2 fantastic boys, she enjoys playing games, dancing, and walking the nature trails around her home in Harrison, TN.

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