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Elle Saint James

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my very favorite hero, my husband. Thanks for supporting me in this dream job.

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Badlands 3

ELLE SAINT JAMES

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Chapter One

A mile outside of Campbell's Valley Township—1890

"I can't help it if my husband chose last night to head for his final reward unexpectedly, sir." The midday sun beat down upon the top of Maggie Altman's head as if she wasn't wearing her thickest bonnet for protection. The tingling in her warming cheeks signaled she was already getting an excess of sun and this fact increased her anger and despair to the boiling level. "Why can't I continue on alone with this group?"

"As wagon master on this journey, my word is the law. With your husband dead, your options are limited to one." The wagon master spat out a long stream of tobacco juice, wiped the back of one sleeve over his mouth, and turned his face up to Maggie's.

She tried not to show the disgust she felt at his barbaric oral practices. "And what is my singular option?" Even though she already knew the answer to her own foolish question. She was screwed.

Maggie Altman never wanted to come out to the dusty Wild West. Her hometown of Philadelphia bustled with a myriad of activities to indulge in, places to go, things to do, people to see and be seen by. She adored the refinement and elegance of living in a city. She'd

never wanted to ride a long distance in a lonely covered wagon much less accompany a wagon train in one. The only thing worse was being left all alone in the Badlands of South Dakota with a dead husband.

After an arduous three-month trip headed for the even more barren wilderness of Montana, her life certainly hadn't turned out the way she'd once expected it to. Of course, it was her own damn fault. She'd made a mistake with a man.

Caleb had warned her about Edgar, but she hadn't listened. Caleb rescued her when her family abandoned her. However, his plan to carve out a life as a sheep farmer in Montana had been his long-sought dream not hers. And now he was dead. A ripple of sadness threatened to engulf her, but she held her sorrow and tears inside for now.

"I'm as sorry as I can be about this unfortunate set of events, ma'am, but without your man to accompany you farther, you can't be associated with this wagon train anymore."

"So I'm just stranded out here in the middle of nowhere?" The rough planks of the buckboard's unyielding seat where she perched dug deeply into her derriere. All the layers of petticoats beneath her skirt didn't help cushion the uncomfortable bench. She squirmed first right and then left, searching for a modicum of respite. Truthfully, it was better to sit still than to move, but she was restless. Contemplating her dismal choices—or rather her single dismal choice. She didn't want to be left by herself in this desolate, unforgiving place.

"That was the agreement signed by your man. If for any reason the occupants of the wagon can't pull their own weight, they're dropped at the nearest city, village, or township along the way."

"And you think I can't?" The awful reality was she *couldn't* pull her own weight in this circumstance, but she hated that the wagon master assumed as much. It was common knowledge among the other folks traveling along on this trip. Maggie loathed campfires and living outside. The bugs, the uncomfortable ride in the wagon, the endless

sunshine beating down on her once-fair skin were all additional torture. This entire journey had been like taking a slow, hot, bug-infested ride to hell.

“Ma’am, we’ve all seen what you are and are not capable of doing to help on this journey. Honestly, I don’t believe you even have the basic skill needed to drive the wagon you’re sitting in.”

She tilted her head to one side wondering if she could pander to his good side. “Well, you could teach me. I’m a fast learner.”

He sent her a look of disbelief, likely questioning her ability to learn quickly, and muttered, “That’s not my job.”

Apparently, he didn’t have a good side. Maggie pushed out a long sigh of resignation. “Please, couldn’t you make an exception?”

“No. Your husband should have prepared you better.”

“He liked doing everything. He didn’t want me to help. He treated me like a lady. No one, least of all me, expected him to...pass on so suddenly.” She couldn’t bring herself to say the word *dead* out loud.

“Well, I’ll give you that. It’s pretty uncommon for a man as young as your husband to keel over. Usually, the women are the ones that don’t make it all the way to the destination, not the men.”

She wasn’t sure how to respond to that observation, so she remained silent.

“Our outfit always tries to convince the menfolk to leave their women behind and send for them later once they’re settled, but sometimes they just can’t be swayed to good sense.” He eyed her from head to knees and added, “I guess it’s understandable on occasion.” He looked away, as if with regret. She wasn’t sure what his exact thoughts were, but with his lecture and intense stare seemingly at an end, he hocked up another repulsive spit ball and released it in another thin, coffee-colored spurt.

Maggie swallowed her disgust and made the effort to explain why Caleb had insisted she come along. “In our case, there was no choice. I needed to come along with him. He couldn’t leave me behind.” *Because I had nowhere else to go.*

The wagon master's eyes caught hers in another unreadable gaze. She wished she knew what would convince him to allow her to continue. He tilted his head back and sighed deeply as if no reason would ever compel him to journey with a woman if he had a choice.

After a long while, he shrugged. "Still, if your man needed to bring you with him, then he should have taught you better to pull your own weight before he dropped dead. And maybe he wouldn't have, if you'd helped him more."

His insinuation that *she* was to blame for her husband's untimely demise sent a cold chill to her bones. Was this foul man correct? Was she at fault? She thought about her last few hours with Caleb from the night before. He'd gone to bed early with a worsening headache and then he just hadn't woken up this morning. Her best friend. Her rescuer. Her husband. Gone. Just that quickly.

Even though she thought she'd cried herself dry over Caleb this morning, Maggie's vision narrowed and again filled with bitter tears. Not for the first time today, she contemplated whether she'd rather be the one dead instead of Caleb. At this point it was a toss-up. "His name was Caleb."

The wagon master pushed out another long breath. "Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry *Caleb* didn't prepare you better. But those are my rules."

"You're truly going to leave me out here all alone?"

"Not exactly. I'm not heartless." The wagon master sent his gaze to the town of Campbell's Valley behind them approximately one mile due east. "We haven't even left sight of the town we stopped in yesterday."

Maggie twisted her head around to gaze forlornly at the small town, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. *Why am I even here?*

The short answer was she hadn't had any choice in the matter. The long answer involved her imprudent history and an ill-conceived plan to leave the difficult situation she'd created for herself back in Philadelphia.

"Normally in this situation, I'd have one of my scouts accompany

you, but we're already behind schedule and, honestly, I don't have a man to spare."

"But how will I get back home?" If she could even go back home. Her father had been fairly adamant that he never wanted to see her again. Her mother had been appalled over the initial disgrace. The trip to Montana made a bad situation even worse. If she ever made it to her family's stately doorstep, her mother would take one look at Maggie's sun-kissed face and refuse to allow her back into the family home.

"That's up to you. I'd suggest selling off your supplies and equipment and buying passage to the place of your heart's desire. Lucky for you there is a train station in Campbell's Valley." He lifted his arm and pointed at the town again.

"Right. Lucky." She didn't feel very lucky. "Since we aren't continuing on the journey, shouldn't I get a partial refund of the enormous amount of money Caleb paid you?"

His stare went as cold as a gravedigger's shovel in winter. "No refunds. No discussion." Apparently, money was another thing the wagon master was stubborn about.

"What about my husband?" Maggie sent her gaze to the back of the wagon where Caleb rested. He was already encased in a hastily handmade shroud created from leftover grain sacks. The wagon master frowned, likely annoyed at allowing Maggie to take the scrap fabric from his supply wagon.

"I'd suggest burying him." The smirk on his face told her he was well rid of her and did not care one whit about her plight. He took his hat off, slapped it against his thigh and watched as dust flew from the creases. He wiped his sleeve across his forehead, transferring the sweat accumulated there to his shirt before putting his hat back on his balding head. He spat a final squirt of brown juice from between rounded lips, nodded his head once, and turned to the line of wagons already moving away.

Goodbye and good riddance. She had more important things to

worry about—like burying her best friend and deciding what on earth to do next.

Maggie twisted to look over one shoulder at her new destination. Pretending she rode atop a lovely bay mare in the riding park near her home in Philadelphia, Maggie took hold of the reins, clicked her tongue and edged the two nag horses into a wide circle pointed toward town.

She did *too* know how to drive the wagon, but admittedly, this was the first time she'd attempted to do so on this awful trip.

A tear slipped out of one eye and down her heated face for Caleb's sake. He deserved better. Caleb's dreams and innate gumption concerning owning property in Montana, raising sheep, and working the land should have inspired her. However, his dream had never been close to her desire.

And while she hadn't loved him like a husband, Caleb had been a good man. They'd grown up together in the same exalted circles of Philadelphia's high society. Like Maggie, Caleb had also disappointed his family with the choices he'd made, most significantly that his selection of bed partners did not include women. An aspect of their unusual relationship as a young married couple was their lack of sexual intimacy.

The hot sun caressed her face as she drove the tired horses forward. She made her way slowly across the rutted lane back to Campbell's Valley.

Her ultimate destination was the white-washed church with the small bell tower steeple they'd passed by only yesterday. Never in her wildest imagination had she thought she'd ever see the humble house of worship again, let alone consider a burial for Caleb there.

Chapter Two

*The Double Chance Saloon –
Campbell's Valley, South Dakota*

With the midnight hour close at hand, Wyatt Chance was just about finished for the evening. The folks around Campbell's Valley didn't often stay up late drinking or gambling. That was fine with him. The days in the saloon were long enough without having folks cutting into his sleep time.

"Good night, Wyatt. Try to stay out of trouble." Laughter followed Joe Stanton's farewell.

"I'll do my best, Joe," Wyatt answered, then added, "Tell Frank I'll be at your store bright and early in the morning to pick up supplies." He made a mental note to remind his brother, Wade, to pick up the supplies before opening the saloon tomorrow.

"Will do." Joe exited the Double Chance Saloon with a friendly wave.

Wyatt resumed wiping the bar with a dampened cloth as the last patron, the owner of the dry goods store in town, departed between the swinging doors to the also quiet streets of Campbell's Valley.

Wyatt never kicked anyone out, and once or twice heavy persuasion had been needed to reroute a few out-of-town guests. But not tonight.

He wiped down all the tables and flipped the chairs upside down on each flat surface as his final act before closing the bar and heading to bed for some much needed rest.

This time tomorrow night, he'd be camping a couple of miles up

north on the private property he owned with Wade. They each took turns doing the back-breaking work needed for that piece of land to yield its wealth. In fact, the secret piece of land they owned was the primary reason they were even in Campbell's Valley, but no one needed to know that.

Wyatt and his identical twin brother had opened the saloon and gambling hall as a side venture, to keep local folks from finding out what they were *really* doing here. The Double Chance Saloon, a former whorehouse they'd gotten cheap from the local land office and renamed, became their primary residence.

Neither of them ever expected the decoy venture to be such a huge success. Apparently, folks in these parts needed entertainment and distraction once the whorehouse went broke.

To keep the townspeople even further in the dark about their mining venture, each of the brothers took a turn at being Wyatt Chance for a week at a time in the saloon. As far as anyone knew, they weren't twins but simply one man. He'd mentioned having a brother once by mistake to the local storekeeper, but Joe hadn't seemed to take note of his error. Wyatt paid closer attention to what he said afterward.

Once he and Wade finished up with their primary occupation, they'd likely leave this small town with all the wealth they'd accumulated. When that day came, he wouldn't miss the bar or the property up north one iota. Both involved different sorts of back-breaking work.

The swish sound of the doors admitting someone startled Wyatt out of his reverie. Wade was early. And worse, he wasn't supposed to enter through the front. *Damn it.* Wyatt turned in time to see the two swinging half-doors settle back into place with a curse about to explode from his lips. He stifled the foul word because the newcomer wasn't his brother. Not even close.

In front of the swinging doors stood a gorgeous, if slightly bedraggled, woman. The bonnet hid most of her head, but a few

strands of her rich brunette hair escaped to outline a heart-shaped face. The display tantalized him enough to want to see more. Her bright blue eyes were visible from across the room. Wyatt had always been partial to brunettes with blue eyes. Her long slender neck fairly called to him as she stood quietly, her eyes searching the place speculatively.

His libido, long neglected, came alive. Women, beautiful or not, weren't allowed in his busy life right now. What he needed to focus on was working in this saloon. Not lusting after slender-necked, blue-eyed visions of perfection.

"I'm just about to close up for the night," he told her in a wooden voice. "Maybe you could come back tomorrow." She didn't make a move to leave. Instead, she stared at him for a full minute before her bottom lip began to tremble.

Aw, hell. He couldn't abide a female crying.

Wyatt started to ask her what was wrong, but her expression promptly folded inward. Her chin dropped, she sniffed, and tears burst from those beautiful baby blues before he got the chance to tell her she could stay. She didn't cry out loud, but trails of tears dripped off her cheeks and on to her dress.

"Please. It's been the most unimaginably horrible day." Distracted by her sultry, trembling voice, he waited to hear more. She lifted her head and pierced him with an intense watery gaze that went straight to his soul by way of his softening heart. "Could I please have something to drink? Tea, if you have it, brandy if you don't." She lifted a small, colorful satchel attached to one wrist. "I've got enough money to pay."

While he kept both tea and a particularly fine brandy in stock, he wasn't sure he should allow her to stay. The sudden attraction he felt for her was problematic. If she did remain, he'd have to fight the sincere urge to woo her. She was elegantly beautiful. Refined. A lady, no doubt about it. The rumpled travel clothing she wore did nothing to detract from her appeal. Wyatt couldn't afford any feminine

distraction. Not to mention Wade would give him hell if he ever found out.

“Normally, I don’t break my steadfast rule to close at the stroke of midnight, but if you promise not to tell anyone, I’ll make an exception.”

Her shoulders dropped an inch as if in relief. “I swear, I’ll take the secret to my grave.”

Wyatt gestured to the barstools on his left. She moved to seat herself at the first one as he closed the doors, slid the evening barrier in place, and secured the saloon from further patrons.

Behind him, Wyatt heard the scrape of the wooden stool across the floor and the rustling of her skirts as she seated herself. The thought of her rounded bottom perched on the stool made the spit dry up in his mouth.

He shook his head to send the crazy attraction far away, crossed the room and ducked through the opening at the end of the bar.

“Do you want tea, brandy, or tea with brandy as an extra flavoring?”

“I choose the third option.” Her playful smile set his heart to pounding faster.

“My pleasure.” And it was. Upon closer inspection, she was far lovelier than he’d originally thought.

Wyatt quickly brewed the tea with the leftover hot water he hadn’t yet discarded. He then strained the leaves into the only porcelain cup he owned—left over from the former whorehouse owners—placed it on a matching saucer, and added a generous touch of brandy. When he turned back and set the cup before her, she looked like she might start crying again.

“Thank you very much.” She bent her head and took a sip. “It’s perfect.”

The soft sigh exhaled gently from her lips and went straight to his stiffening cock.

“You’re welcome,” he managed. The desire to leap over the bar

and kiss her senseless subsided only with much concentration.

The grandfather clock, resting against the wall at the base of the stairs to the second floor, started its long, gonging chime to signal the midnight hour. Closing time. Wyatt glanced at the clock face after the second sound and studiously scrubbed the already-clean counter to give his hands something to do while she finished her tea.

She took another small sip of her drink and promptly straightened in her seat. “Do you know where I might find a place to sleep tonight?”

Wyatt’s cock had an answer, and the sudden vision of her in his bed made his dick throb with desire. He contemplated the unbearably long time since he’d been with a woman. He quelled his urges telling himself he didn’t need any feminine complications. “There’s a hotel down the street. I’m not sure if they have any rooms available.”

“There aren’t any at all. I’ve already been there.”

He nodded. “Lots of folks are in and out of there. The town’s been seeing lots of newcomers lately.”

“Why?”

“The gold rush northwest of here in Lead, South Dakota, even all these years later, has brought most of them along with a few farmers and others just tired of the crowded cities back East. Perhaps they’ll have an open room tomorrow. Other than that, I’m afraid you’re stuck with the church. The preacher opens the doors and offers the church pews up as overflow from the hotel sometimes.”

She glanced to her left at the stairs leading to the upstairs rooms lining the balcony. The former whorehouse had boasted seven large rooms available with little or no waiting for the patrons wanting private time with a woman. Wyatt forced his thoughts away from the sexual pleasures he could induce if she joined him in bed. Instead, he focused on how to get her out of the saloon before he used his acute gift of persuasion.

“Do you have any rooms to rent?” Her gaze slid to his eyes, and he became the one seduced. But he couldn’t rent her a room.

Especially not tonight. Wade would be rolling in right around dawn, and Wyatt would head out soon after.

“No. I’m sorry, I don’t have any rooms. I just supply drinks and gaming tables.” He shook his head to reaffirm the lack of rooms available and glanced at the grandfather clock across the room. “But only until midnight on Sunday nights. As you can see, I’m ten full minutes over my own closing rules.”

“Could you please give me a place to sleep just for tonight?” She sent another intense gaze his way. Just the concentrated look resting in her seductive, blue eyes was enough to persuade him. Almost.

Unfortunately, the gossip of her staying the night would run wild through the streets if anyone saw her enter the saloon and not leave. Normally, Wyatt didn’t care about rumors, but he didn’t want *her* reputation ruined.

“Please. I don’t want to traipse down the street at this hour to go back to the church.”

Wyatt didn’t want to complicate his life with a woman sleeping so close and unable to touch her. He shook his head, but it was hard to mean it. “I honestly can’t do it. I can, however, walk you to the church after I finish closing up my saloon so you won’t be alone.”

She took a long sip of her tea and replaced the cup in the saucer carefully. The sound of the delicate china clinking together echoed across the room.

“How much would you charge me to stay in one of the rooms I know you have upstairs? I promise it doesn’t have to be fancy.”

Wyatt clapped a hand to the back of his neck and rubbed. “Thing is, ma’am, I’m not set up to run a hotel. The rooms haven’t been dusted or cleaned since the former owners left six months ago and the couple beds remaining aren’t made up. No sheets.”

“There’s not a single clean room upstairs or down with sheets?” Her incredulous expression only made him want her more. She might just be better at persuasion than he was.

His hand dropped to the bar surface. “Just mine.” *And Wade’s,*

which is upstairs. Wouldn't his brother be surprised if he rented his room out for the night?

She smiled wistfully. "I guess I'm not prepared to go *that* far for a room."

Wyatt had a thought and tried to stop it, but his mouth opened. "I'd give it to you and sleep elsewhere, but I could only do that for tonight. And you'd have to leave before dawn."

Her expression changed to one of surprise. "That's very sweet of you. But where would you sleep?"

He grinned. "I'll figure something out." He could give her Wade's room for one night and still sleep in his own downstairs. An easy decision to be a hero to a beautiful woman.

"Thank you..." She narrowed her eyes. "I'm sorry I don't know your name."

"I'm Wyatt Chance."

"Pleased to meet you. I'm Maggie Altman."

Maggie. A seductive name if there ever was one. "What brings you to town?"

"Bad luck and unfortunate circumstances." She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "I was on the wagon train that came through yesterday, but my husband died last night in his sleep, and the wagon master wouldn't let me continue on the journey."

"I'm so sorry for your loss." *Damn.* His amorous intent dried up like weeds in the blinding heat of summer.

She nodded once but didn't look up. Eyes downcast, she took another sip of tea and remained silent.

"Do you have any personal belongings?"

"They're at the church. I left my wagon and horses there in payment for the burial. I *was* offered a wooden pew for tonight, but after several months in the back of a wagon, I most desperately wanted to sleep in an actual bed tonight."

"Understandable. Traveling by wagon to a new place is a difficult life. Losing a loved one during the journey is worse. I'm very sorry."

She nodded again. "Caleb was a good man. I'll miss him, but the wagon journey to Montana was his dream, not mine. I'm not quite sure what I'll do now."

"Would you like another cup of tea?"

"No. Just a comfortable place to close my eyes and rest for a few hours."

Wyatt gathered her cup and placed it beneath the bar. He led her upstairs to Wade's room at the far end of the long second-story hallway.

"It isn't much, but I call it home." *Or Wade does when he's here.* Wyatt decided he'd also put a note on the outside of this door, just in case Wade came in early.

"It's perfect." She cast her gaze to the neatly made bed, and he avoided looking into her eyes from then on. She added, "I'll be gone before the sun comes up. I promise."

"In that case, I'll bring you some water tonight so you can wash up in the morning before you go."

"Thank you."

Wyatt nodded, gathered some of Wade's clothing for show and the things he'd likely need in the morning. He left before any further words were spoken.

Bringing her water was likely a bad idea, but it was the hospitable thing to do. *And I can see her again one last time before I go.*

Stifling a vision of her undressing, he hurried to his own room located downstairs next to the kitchen. He fetched a spare pitcher and bowl to get her some water. Promising himself he'd deliver it promptly and escape down to his own room, Wyatt finished the task and headed upstairs.

If Maggie departed before dawn as promised, he'd have one less thing to remember to tell his brother in the morning.

Chapter Three

Maggie wandered around the small room. A brass headboard graced the wall with what looked like a very comfortable mattress in front of it. There was no footboard, but instead a padded brown leather bench.

Perhaps it made the previous business transactions much easier. Before she left the hotel, Maggie overheard two women talking about the town's saloon being a former brothel. They found a bar easier to tolerate than a whorehouse.

The room itself, while neat and tidy, definitely displayed a masculine decor. It had colors of the earth and a homey quilt covering the sheets. She'd expected garish furnishings and loud, bright colors splashed everywhere, left over from the previous business.

She removed her petticoats and loosened the pins poking her scalp. It was a relief to take her hair down and let it fall around her shoulders. She struggled with the buttons on her dress but finally managed to undo them enough to be able to slip the garment over her head without ripping it. She also wasn't good with a sewing needle, yet another offense the wagon train women belittled her for during the trip. Tonight was the first night she hadn't been insulted repeatedly before heading for bed.

Luckily, Maggie hadn't put her corset on this morning as she didn't have anyone to help her tighten it up. She hadn't worn the constricting device much since leaving Philadelphia. It was just too uncomfortable day to day. And too difficult to put on without the help of a maid. Unfortunately, it was yet another thing the other women of the wagon train marked against her. She'd heard more than one overly

loud comment referring to her undergarments. “Loose women also don’t bother with corsets.” Maggie thought corset-less women exhibited vast intelligence.

With her bags and extra clothes still over at the church, she planned to sleep in her under slip for tonight. She didn’t have any other options. Honestly, she’d never felt as alone in the world as she did in this moment. She fought off the melancholy of her current circumstances and tried to think positively. Wyatt’s face flashed bright in her mind. She glanced down at her limited attire, and a new feeling seeped into her bones.

Anticipation coiled in her belly at the idea of being alone and undressed with Wyatt in the room. The moment she’d laid eyes on him she’d been taken aback. His honey-streaked blond hair, just a little too long to be considered respectable in polite society, suited his tanned skin perfectly.

Square jawed, blue eyed, and sporting a sensuous mouth she wanted to stare at all night, he would have fit just fine in her world even with his longish locks. With shoulders so wide and muscular it looked like he spent his off time chopping cords of wood rather than pouring drinks all day. The thought of getting a peek at those muscles made her tight and anxious beneath her skirt.

A light knock sounded at the door, and her heartbeat sped up a little.

“I have your water,” he called out from the hallway.

She peered out the door first then opened it wide. Outlined in the frame, his magnificent body seemed to fill the space. The beauty of his well-defined muscles called to her on a feminine level.

She wanted him.

Her heart pounded hard in her chest at the realization of her desire. Wyatt glanced down at her clothing, or lack thereof, and quickly focused his gaze up to her face. Did he like what he saw? She shook off the foolish notion, motioned him inside and stepped back to allow him entrance. He hesitated for only a moment before crossing

the threshold.

“Thank you,” she said.

He nodded, turned away and busied himself with the task. He placed the water pitcher and bowl carefully on top of the stand to the left of the door.

Maggie watched his shoulders and arms, unable to stop looking at the well-defined muscles rippling across his fine body. Even hidden beneath his clothes, she knew he was strong. Maggie wished she could bury her face against his chest and hug him tight. She only wanted to assure herself she was still alive. She needed to pretend that the problems in her miserable life would eventually work out.

It couldn't be inappropriate to desire the closeness of a man to soothe her soul after such a horrible day? The road ahead was filled with so much uncertainty she wanted to lose herself in Wyatt's arms if only for a few minutes.

He turned around, and she launched against his solid warmth. She slipped her arms around his neck and pressed her face into his throat. The tears coating her cheeks came from somewhere deep within her soul. She sobbed a little and clung to him as though he were the only thing keeping her sane. Wyatt stiffened at first when she fell against him, but then slipped his arms around her body and tightened the embrace. Her gratitude amplified when he didn't push her away.

Cocooned in his arms, Maggie felt a modicum of relief. She didn't know how long they stood quietly in each other's arms, but after a while, Wyatt led her to the bed. They stumbled across the short space in the room and bumped against the edge of the bed. Wyatt loosened his hug, but Maggie dug her fingers into his arms, reluctant to let him go.

“You should lie down and rest,” he murmured against the top of her head.

Maggie tightened her already-hard grip. “Please don't leave me yet. You can't imagine how alone I feel right now.”

He patted her back once and stroked his hand from her shoulder

down to her waist. “All right. I won’t go. And you’re not all alone. I’m right here.”

“Thank you for holding me.”

“My pleasure.”

Maggie released her titanic grip on his neck and sent her gaze to his face as they parted. His smile riled her emotions and made her think of all the sinful things she wanted to do to him.

After staring at his mouth for several long seconds, wishing he would kiss her, Wyatt lowered his head and touched his lips to her mouth, as if silently commanded by her wicked imagination. The moment their lips touched, Maggie’s heart banged against the inside of her chest in desire for more.

She sent her arms around his neck once again to pull him closer. His tongue blistered a path between her lips and entered her mouth, sweeping forcefully against her tongue as if searching for the warmth inside. Never had she experienced such a sultry, demanding kiss.

In fact, it seemed like an eternity since she’d been this close to a man. She and Caleb never kissed after their marriage ceremony. The one other time she spent intimately in the arms of a man she’d thought she might marry, Edgar, also hadn’t been *this* exciting. She wanted to wrap herself around Wyatt and never let go.

Maggie tightened her grip around his neck as the kiss grew frenzied. She leaned back against the soft surface of the bed and pulled him with her. He didn’t stop the movement or resist her intentions. With some maneuvering, she put him flat on top of her with his growing cock centered between her legs.

It was likely outrageous to yearn for a man so desperately, especially a stranger, but she wanted Wyatt more than anything she’d ever desired. She wanted him to make love to her. She wanted to spend the night in the arms of a sexy man without fear of discovery. She wanted...to be loved again. Even if only for a short time.

Maggie pushed her hips up into his hard cock. He groaned and pushed back. His hand slid from her waist to cup her breast. The

moment he thumbed the tip she arched into his firm muscular body like a cat waking up after a long nap. The feeling of desire tingled from her breasts straight down to the core of her body, even as he touched her.

The frenzied kiss turned into a seductive exploration.

His hand quickly trailed down to her thigh, fairly burning her skin through the fabric of her slip along the way. During the blissful kiss, her impromptu nightgown rode up above her knees.

The moment his hand touched her bare flesh, Maggie groaned and squeezed Wyatt's neck even tighter. *Please touch me. Please touch me.* The chant in her fevered mind melded with the rhythm of his tongue in her mouth. She wanted his hands on her body. As if directed by her thoughts alone, his fingers scalded her skin as they traced a path ever upward from her inner thigh to the equally hot space between her legs.

Wyatt's very stiff cock pressed firmly against the core of her heated body. A gush of moist desire coated her lower lips. His hand scorched a trail to her intimate spot. When he stroked his finger across her curls there, a moan of unfathomable bliss escaped her throat.

The place he stroked lit her inside like a lantern flame turned up to high. Each pass of his finger over the sensitive nub sent her further and further to a place she'd never been. The pleasure grew with each rub of his finger across her clitoris. She yearned for an indescribable joy that she couldn't name.

Her body trembling from the inside out, Maggie hit a pinnacle of delight moments later as one final stroke sent her to pleasurable oblivion. She moaned at first, then broke their kiss to release a small scream of satisfaction as waves of pleasure rode across every part of her, body and soul.

"Damn. You make me wild with noises like that, Maggie," Wyatt murmured against her moist, swollen mouth.

She wanted to respond, but found herself only able to release one more moan against his face. His hard cock still pressed deeply against

her leg, but otherwise he didn't move his body to complete this lovely interlude.

Maggie knew what happened next. His stiff cock would enter her body. But he didn't move to do this. Instead, he pushed his lips against hers for yet another sizzling kiss. After several lip-licking minutes of him making love to her mouth again, she wondered why he didn't go further. Her singular other experience with sex hadn't taken this long.

"Aren't you going to take your pants off and...come inside of me?" she asked.

"No."

Her eyes opened. "Why not?"

He pushed out a long breath and rested his face against her throat. "It wouldn't be right. I don't want to take advantage of you any more than I already have."

"You aren't taking advantage of me."

"My hand is between your lovely thighs, and I just made amazing sounds come out of your mouth. In my mind, that's the very definition of taking advantage."

"But I wanted it. I want you."

"Come back in a week and tell me the same thing and we'll discuss it."

"But I don't know where I'll be in a week."

"All the better reason to take some time and consider your options before making any decisions you can't take back. I appreciate your desire to please me, and I will, in all likelihood, kick myself later, but I can't in good conscience allow this to go any further." He shifted his hips from her body and removed his hand from between her legs.

However, he didn't extract himself from her. He placed his lips on her neck and kissed her with a sensuous slide of his tongue along her skin. She trembled at the sensation he evoked with a mere touch of his mouth. How many men would stop and refuse an offer of sex so as not to take advantage and then kiss her with such sweet deliberation?

No one she had ever met until now.

Wyatt was a very interesting man. Perhaps she *would* come back in a week and attempt to take things further. Unless she was already gone. If the telegram she'd sent to her family resulted in a ticket home, she'd be gone as soon as possible. He was right. She didn't need a complication like this when her future remained so uncertain.

"Then will you kiss me again?"

"Yes. Kissing you is like taking a little taste of heaven," he murmured against her throat. He lifted his head and sent a particularly scorching gaze into her eyes before lowering his mouth to hers for another soul-melting kiss.

They snuggled together for a long while until Maggie dozed off. When she woke herself turning over later, she was nestled beneath a quilt. Wyatt had exited the bed but wasn't gone from her mind. She turned onto her side, buried her head into the pillow and contemplated what she might do to tempt him at the end of one week.

Maggie's vividly sexy dreams were filled with Wyatt and all the other temptations she could think of to instigate. Later in the night, she even conjured the sensation of him sleeping alongside of her, comforting her and consoling her when her dreams turned unbearably sad.

Chapter Four

Wade Chance nearly fell off his horse a half dozen times as he rode the last few hundred yards into the covered space behind the saloon he and his brother owned. The small stable they kept would be too difficult to manage tonight in his inebriated state.

The three generous shots of whiskey he drank before leaving their private property up north had been unwise, as were the next three, but the success of the past week urged him to celebrate a little heavier than usual.

Wyatt would be heading back to the mine in a few hours so he didn't bother storing the saddle in the storage shed. He simply pulled the saddle from their horse, tied the reins loose enough on the post so that Lucky could get water and feed, and maneuvered himself carefully through the rear entrance of the saloon. He put the saddle on the floor beside the back door and negotiated his way toward Wyatt's room.

The accomplishment of last week's gold mining had brought him back several hours earlier than expected. Usually, he arrived just before dawn, but this time he couldn't wait to tell Wyatt about the new vein of glistening minerals he'd discovered and the quantity of refractory ore he'd managed to pull out in just a few days' time.

It was grueling, spine cracking work to extract the Black Hills gold, but well worth it so far. They weren't foolish about the gold-embedded rock they'd collected so far. They both agreed to wait until they finished mining before spending their wealth. The bulk of ore extracted was amassed in a hidden shaft closer to the mouth of the cave they worked.

Once they accumulated as much as they thought they'd ever be able to spend, then they'd cash it all in and make plans for a new life. Until that time, their gold mining operation was a well-kept secret.

No one in town suspected they had a gold mine, and being identical twins helped them realize their dream a little easier and without any nosy townspeople following them around. Knowledge of a gold discovery in a new area always brought a horde of folks in search of the same thing. He and Wyatt vowed to keep this claim completely undisclosed until they left with their treasure.

Stumbling inside the back of the saloon, Wade made it to his brother's room and called his name twice. Wyatt didn't move. His brother was sound asleep. Wade suddenly realized it was unfair to wake him in the middle of the night. His brother was about to have an arduous work week ahead. The good news would have to wait until morning.

Unsure he wanted to navigate the stairs to his own room on the second floor, he sighed and moved toward the steps anyway. He needed to get at least a few hours of shut-eye before resuming the saloon duties at dawn. He'd be miserable tomorrow otherwise, so he soldiered up the stairs as quietly as possible.

The grandfather clock chimed twice, signaling the late hour, as he stepped onto the second level. Unsure he was ready to steer himself down the hallway littered with furniture left behind by the previous owners, Wade focused his attention on his bedroom door and the long floor space to get there.

Several curses and bruised shins later, Wade entered his room only to discover it was occupied. A woman's scent tantalized his nose and identified the sleeping occupant as female before he even saw her curvaceous form. Too drunk to care why a woman was in his bed, Wade stripped down to his long underwear and slipped beneath the sheets next to her warmth.

He pulled the soft woman into his arms, and buried his face in her sweet-fragranced hair before realizing she was sobbing.

Wade pulled back a bit. “What’s the matter, honey?”

Her eyes remained closed but she sighed and murmured, “I miss you, Caleb. I’m so sorry.” She then sniffed a few times and snuggled up closer.

Wade didn’t know or particularly care who Caleb was so he folded her into his embrace, placing her head against his shoulder. “Shush now, honey. It’ll be all better in the morning.”

She didn’t respond, and it became obvious this charming girl was crying in her sleep. He kissed her forehead, leaned his head back against the pillow and fell asleep before he took two more breaths. He barely had time to dream before the poke to his shoulder, an undetermined amount of time later, brought about a very rude awakening.

Wade opened his eyes slowly. In his blurred vision, he saw his brother with an infuriated expression plastered on his face. Wade tried to sit up and realized his arms were still filled with softly-perfumed female. Not the worst way to wake up, but Wyatt poked him in the same tender spot of his arm again and ruined his mood.

He extracted himself without waking her and followed his brother all the way back downstairs to Wyatt’s room.

Once they were alone, Wyatt threw his hands in the air. “You slept with her? What were you thinking?”

“I was thinking how drunk and tired I was, and you’re lucky I didn’t wake *you* up in the middle of the night. The question should be why is *someone* sleeping in my bed! Thanks for the heads up, by the way.”

Wyatt’s eyes widened. He shot his hands in the air again as if in utter frustration and glanced at the ceiling once before drilling his gaze directly into Wade. “I left you a note...as usual.”

“Where?”

“In the back room where I *always* leave notes for you right before you arrive at dawn. I see you came in early.”

Shit. Wyatt *did* always leave him a note. He’d forgotten to look in

his excitement over the news about the mine. “Oh. Yeah. I got here around two.” Wade ran his hand down his face in a futile attempt to wake up and sober up at the same time. “Sorry.”

“Why are you early? And more importantly why are you drunk?”

Wade grinned. “I found the richest vein of gold ore since we’ve been mining here. I worked the spot for only half a week, and I just doubled our accumulated take in the last four days.”

“Doubled? In four days?”

“Yep. And the best news is I didn’t even finish with the new place before it was time to return last night.” Wade smiled at his brother’s awestruck expression. “I hid all the new gold ore farther down the mine shaft so you could see it and left the equipment next to the spot so you can continue this week. I also left you the other half of the bottle I slugged down in celebration, but I don’t recommend drinking it all at once.” He put a hand to the side of his head and rubbed.

Wyatt smiled and then sent his gaze upward to the ceiling. It wasn’t difficult to read his mind. Knowing his brother as he did, Wade knew he wondered what happened between him and the girl in bed upstairs without the words being spoken. “I just held her. That’s all. She was crying in her sleep about someone named Caleb. Who is she?”

“Her name is Maggie Altman. She arrived to town in one of those wagon trains, but they dumped her after her husband died yesterday. She got left behind.” He leveled his stare at Wade with a sappy expression.

Wade tilted his head to one side. “And she sweet talked you into letting her have my bed.”

“Yes. The hotel was full up, and she didn’t want to sleep on a church pew after being in a wagon for the past few months.”

Wade huffed. Probably it didn’t hurt that she was beautiful beyond words. “Thanks for easing the way. You could have told me you took in a stray.”

“I thought she’d be gone before you arrived. I asked her to leave

before dawn. And there was that note I left that you didn't read."

Wade rolled his eyes. "I didn't see the stupid note, all right?"

Wyatt looked upstairs again. The expression on his face could best be described as wistful. The beauty upstairs must have pulled some long-neglected heartstrings. His brother didn't often let any women into his heart. The girl upstairs must be something special.

Wade was sympathetic, but clarity came soon after. "You better leave before she wakes up and sees the both of us."

"I know." Wyatt lowered his gaze. "Be nice to her," he paused and narrowed his focus, "but not too nice."

Wade sighed. "Right. Nice, but not too nice. Get going. I left Lucky's saddle in the back room by the door."

Wyatt turned back. "One other thing, go pick up supplies at Joe and Frank's store this morning. I told Joe to expect you."

"Damn it, Wyatt, you always leave that for me every single week."

"One of the few privileges of being the older brother."

"Only by seven damn minutes."

"Still, it's a privilege I enjoy." Wyatt exited the back of the saloon carrying the saddle and wearing a big smile. Wade pondered the idea of getting more sleep in his brother's bed and quickly dismissed it. He needed to wake up. He exited the building and stuck his head in the horse's water trough directly after Wyatt rode off.

After three vigorous dips, he woke up enough to get back inside, clean up and redress using the clothing his brother had heaped in a pile on the side chair. He rinsed the foul taste out of his mouth and readied himself to resume the duties at the saloon as Wyatt Chance.

He walked out in to the main part of the saloon in time to see his lovely bed companion descend the steps. He couldn't read the expression on her face.

She made it to the ground floor before announcing, "You slept with me last night."

Wade couldn't tell if she was angry or not. "You were crying in

your sleep.”

Her eyes cast downward. “Thank you for holding me.”

“You’re welcome. Want some breakfast?” He regretted the words the second they exited his lips. He didn’t know what Wyatt had left to eat.

She stared at him for a very long time before answering quietly, “No, thank you. I told you I’d leave before dawn.”

“So you did.”

Her wary expression didn’t worry him as much as her sudden movement nearer. Carefully, she closed the distance between them one step at a time. Once she got to within two feet, she stopped. “You aren’t Wyatt Chance.”

No. But how did you guess?

“Sure I am.” Wade pasted a big grin on his face. “Who else would I be?”

“I don’t know, but you aren’t the man I met last night.”

“I held you all night long, honey.”

She nodded. “Perhaps. But you aren’t the man I met first.”

“What makes you say that?”

She leaned in closer and took a deep breath. “You smell different.”

Chapter Five

“That’s just the whiskey. I drank too much last night.” His glib answer didn’t convince Maggie that the man who stood before her this morning was the same as the man she’d met last night.

“How did you have time to drink so much before coming up to my room?” Something was up. While this man had held her all night long and looked very much like the man from the night before, it wasn’t Wyatt.

He shrugged and grinned. “Trust me, honey. It doesn’t take very long to down a half bottle of booze.”

She let the matter go for the time being as she had more important things to deal with this morning. Like what to do with the rest of her life.

“Do you have time to walk me down to the hotel?”

His gaze narrowed for a moment. “Maybe. I have to pick up some supplies at the dry goods store.”

“I can wait.”

“No. That’s okay. Let’s go. Where are your bags?”

“Ah, ha!” She whirled on him. “I told you last night. Are you saying you don’t remember?”

He placed a hand across his eyes and rubbed vigorously. “No. I’m saying I drank last night. Memory is a tricky thing after drinking as much as I did. Are you going to tell me where they are or carry them yourself?”

She sighed. “I left them at the church.”

He pulled one hand down his face. “Oh right. The church.”

“You don’t remember because I never told *you* anything, I told

your identical twin instead. Where is he?”

“Listen, I’m sorry I’m not the man you wanted me to be when we woke up, but please don’t spread tales around town. It will only make you look foolish.”

She held her tongue, and after a few seconds, she nodded. “You’re right. I’m sorry. Yesterday was a very bad day.”

He approached her and put a hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry about your husband. I don’t mean to be such a bastard. My head hurts a little.”

* * * *

Maggie stared at him for a long moment. Had he finally convinced her he was Wyatt? Funny thing to have this intriguing woman able to tell them apart. Because he smelled different.

With her unwavering gaze caressing him, if he didn’t know better, he’d think she was interested, but likely it was just that wanting-to-feel-alive sensation a person got after someone they loved died. He’d felt it more than once in his life. Didn’t matter who died, the overwhelming desire to live always socked him in the gut. The urge to be as close as possible to someone—anyone—was a powerful motivation for human contact and often demanded action. She looked like she needed action.

Wade opened his arms wide, and she fell into them. She grasped him tightly to her lovely body. He hugged her close and whispered nonsensical things to assure her she was all right, she was alive, and she wasn’t all alone. He wondered briefly if Wyatt had offered any consolation last night and to what extent. Wade wished his brother had explained more about this delectable female.

* * * *

“What *do* you remember about last night?” Maggie had lovely

memories about the time they'd spent together. Did he remember what happened between them before she fell asleep or was that why he'd been drinking?

"I remember the whiskey."

"Do you remember the kiss we shared?"

Maggie felt him stiffen in her arms and wished she could see his expression. She suspected he didn't remember because she hadn't kissed this man. She'd kissed his twin brother. She wondered why being twins was a secret.

"How could I forget?" His tone of voice was unconvincing. Maggie imagined that kissing him would be completely different.

"Will you kiss me again?"

He remained quiet for a long time before whispering, "I don't think that would be a good idea."

"Why not?"

He pulled himself away from her. "Because I have a full day and lots of work to do before I open my bar. I'll accompany you to the hotel if you'd like, but then I have to take care of my own life."

Maggie secured her hands against his chest and sent her gaze to his eyes. "I'm sorry. You're right. Thank you for everything. I don't mean to be difficult."

He stared at her for a long time before his eyes narrowed slightly. "I hope you don't feel like I took advantage of you last night."

"No. I said so last night. You don't remember me telling you that?"

He shrugged and grinned. "Whiskey makes me forgetful."

"Are you going to use whiskey as an excuse for every question?"

"Maybe. How many more questions do you have?" He narrowed his gaze and stared deeply into her eyes.

Why was she being so obstinate? This man, or maybe two different men, had housed her when she didn't have a place to go. She should be grateful.

Maggie cast her eyes downward and away from his piercing

regard. Whether or not this was Wyatt, he had the same impact on her. Lustful. She lusted after both of them and since that had gotten her into such trouble back home, she forcefully retreated.

She took a step backward and away from his unique but equally engaging scent. “Thank you for the room...” She paused remembering the intimacy and decided not to remind him of it. “And for the beverage last night. How much do I owe you?”

His gaze went to the small reticule she held in one hand. “Nothing.”

“Please. I can pay you.”

He shook his head. “Just do me a favor and don’t spread tales about me being two men. I don’t want you to get a crazy reputation in town.”

Maggie pondered that information for a moment, wondering why he was so worried about her looking crazy, but she nodded. “Of course, I must be mistaken.”

“The hotel is at the other end of town on the opposite side of the street. You can’t miss it.”

Maggie opened her mouth to remind him that she’d been to the hotel last night and had told him so, but decided not to mention it. Whatever his secrets, he was entitled to them, and she was too indebted to make an issue of it. Instead, she cleared her throat and forced herself to say, “Thank you.”

They walked over to the door she’d entered the night before. He undid the locks and opened one side enough for her to slip through. He followed her to the church without once ever touching her. A pity. Once at the church, he offered to keep her bags at his saloon so they wouldn’t have to carry them all the way to the other side of town.

“Best of luck to you.” He paused and caught her eye. “And I’m really sorry about your husband dying yesterday.”

Maggie nodded and walked away. The wooden planks squeaked as she walked along toward an uncertain future. She ignored the feeling that she was leaving someone important behind. Wyatt, or

whoever let her out of the saloon this morning, also intrigued her. As had the man from the night before. She wouldn't soon forget either of them.

* * * *

The clerk at the hotel had the same sour expression on his face as he had the day before. Maggie formed a wide smile on her mouth and approached the wooden counter ready to be unwavering in her need for a place to stay.

"Hello, sir. I'd like to see about procuring a room for the week, please." She widened her smile even though he hadn't lifted his head.

"No vacancies." He still didn't look up.

"My dear sir, could you please do me the courtesy of looking at me when you speak?"

His head snapped up so fast he almost lost the surly expression on the way up. However, it had only shifted to anger.

"Whether I look at you or not, I still don't have any rooms available." His gaze moved from a full frontal assault to a casual once over from the bonnet she wore to her hands. The sneer that appeared made her think he wasn't impressed. Likely she wouldn't be either if she could see a mirror.

Calling up everything sweet from her soul was difficult, but she did it. "Do you think there might be one available later on today? I could wait."

His thin shoulders lifted quickly and dropped. "I'm not a fortuneteller, madam. How would I know that?"

"Perhaps if you stopped acting like such a tight-assed little toad and looked in your ledger, you might see if anyone is scheduled to leave today." Maggie regretted her acerbic tone and the words that slipped out in her fit of anger. She clamped her lips together tightly to ensure no more displeasure escaped.

The clerk went from angry to furious in the space of time it took

for her to draw another breath. “Step away from this counter, madam. There are no rooms available for you.”

“I apologize, sir.” She didn’t mean it, but desperate circumstances called for a little bit of prevarication. “My husband passed away yesterday, and I find I’m not myself today.”

His eyes narrowed. “Are you the one they kicked off the wagon train?” The nasty insinuation showed clearly in the small curve upward at each corner of his thin, cracked lips. His eyes widened as if he contemplated hearing some juicy gossip firsthand.

She wondered how on earth this unpleasant man knew this information. Had her life story already been spread around town? Maggie had a flash of inspiration and remembered the callous women on the wagon train she’d traveled with these past months. Perhaps they also talked behind her back at every town they stopped at.

Maggie sucked in another sharp breath. “I...well, not exactly kicked off, but I was unable to continue without my husband. I need a place to stay until I can make arrangements to go back home.”

The clerk inhaled deeply, dropped his gaze, and searched through his ledger, flipping pages every couple of seconds. Maggie waited patiently, trying not to chew the inside of her lip.

He suddenly slammed the book shut and looked up. “I’m sorry. We don’t have anything for vagabonds or wagon train riff-raff.”

Maggie fisted one hand. Before she could pop the jackass in the nose, a garishly dressed woman stepped up to the counter. She had hair the color of flames done up in a complicated arrangement, a buxom figure most women likely envied and wore lots of make up on her wide face. “Give her a room, Percy, or I’ll tell the management here about *our* little arrangement.”

The clerk’s face drained of color. “But I don’t have any rooms available.”

“I know you do have at least one room for rent. Give it to her.”

Percy sniffed once and opened the ledger again. “That will be a dollar a day in advance, please.”

“Fifty cents,” the woman said. “And don’t give her the shitty storage room with the wobbly cot either. Let her have the room at the end of the hallway upstairs. It’s plain, but serviceable.” The woman winked at her and smiled.

Percy turned and reached for a key in the large, square rack of cubby holes behind him. He handed her a brass key attached to a palm-sized oval piece of brass with the number two one eight etched on both sides. “Here. You’d better not cause any trouble during your stay.”

“Unlike you, I know how to act politely.” Maggie crushed the cool, brass key in one hand as relief poured through her soul. One small victory was all it took to change the war, her father had been fond of saying. She finally understood the adage.

Percy huffed as if in disbelief. “Do you have any bags?” His scrutiny over her lack of luggage seemed to further dim his view of her.

“I don’t have them with me. They were at the church, but now a friend is holding them for me.”

If this brash woman hadn’t helped her, she might have had to beg another night at the saloon—and suffer the attentions of the delectable Wyatt’s duplicate. Not exactly a hardship, but if the town was already discussing her life, it wouldn’t be prudent to keep chancing them finding out she stayed alone with a man on her first night in town.

Percy put the guest book on the counter and pointed to an ink well. “Can you write your name, madam? If not just scratch an X on the bottom line.”

Maggie shot him a withering gaze at the slight, signed her name without comment, and turned to the older woman with flame-red hair, ignoring Percy and his vulgar attitude. “Thank you so much for helping me.”

“You’re welcome, honey. Us independent women have to stick together.”

Maggie smiled with sincerity for the first time since entering the

hotel. “Yes, I guess we do. I’m Maggie Altman.”

The woman thrust out her hand, grabbed Maggie’s, and shook it hard. “My name is Sadie Winters. Or at least that’s what people call me.”

“Pleased to meet you, Sadie.” Maggie resisted the urge to hug the woman in gratitude.

Sadie pointed to a door on the left. “Are you hungry? We could grab us a meal in the dining room.”

“That would be lovely. Thank you.” Maggie’s few possessions were tucked away at the Double Chance Saloon down the street, but the idea of a meal outweighed the need to attain her things this minute.

They strolled into the dining room and got seated. Once their orders were taken, Sadie stood up and excused herself to take care of a necessity.

Maggie sipped her tea and contemplated the last couple of days—the endless wagon train journey concluding near the Badlands, Caleb’s death, the burial, Wyatt at midnight, and then his look-a-like before dawn.

After giving the two horses, wagon, and supplies to the church in exchange for burying Caleb, Maggie had very few dollars left. Sending the telegraph and return message slip to her parents, while necessary, had been very expensive. Until they responded, she only had enough money to last about a week in this town. If her parents didn’t send any money or a ticket home, she was stranded in Campbell’s Valley.

“I heard she didn’t even know how to cook anything at all, let alone roast anything over an open campfire. How can one hope to survive on a wagon train without the least notion of how to prepare a meal for her husband?” A titter of laughter followed from a table to Maggie’s left. The low tone of the speaker was still loud enough to carry across the room to her flaming ears.

“The poor man probably died of starvation,” said another in an

even louder voice.

“And I understand he was a very attractive man,” came a third voice in a semi-hushed tone. “Could have had his choice of any woman instead of the lazy one he brought along on the journey.”

In that moment, Maggie knew these women were talking about her. All she heard the entire trip across country was “poor Caleb” and slurs against his inappropriate, unproductive wife. Little did they know that Caleb didn’t choose women. Ever. He preferred men. She was the exception in his life and only because he was her best friend with a heart the size of the sky. Caleb likely saved her from a life on the streets back in Philadelphia.

“Did you hear that she slept at the saloon on the same night that her husband died?”

Someone sucked in a shocked breath and added, “Scandalous!”

At first, Maggie wanted to hide under the table and promptly slink out of the room. Before she could make a move to leave the room, Sadie’s hand fell on her shoulder. “Don’t mind them, honey. They’re dried up old shrews with nothing better to do than bad mouth women who are prettier than they are.”

Sadie sneered at the trio, now wide-eyed with mouths hanging open, turned her back on them, and sat back down at their table. “Their husbands spend money on whores to satisfy them because it isn’t food that keeps a man at home. The way to a man’s heart rests directly in the wet space between a woman’s thighs.”

The three turned pale and only a vague hissing sound issued from their open mouths as righteous indignation framed their faces. They sputtered and rattled the china gracing their table before making a big show of leaving the dining room. They shuffled out, heads held high, muttering about crass manners and wicked women.

“How interesting.” Maggie knew Caleb would have probably liked Sadie and her forthright ways. “I didn’t know that about men’s hearts.”

Sadie laughed out loud, long and hard. The waiter returned with

their food and Sadie told the waiter to put Maggie's food on her tab.

Maggie shook her head. "No, I can't let you do that. You've helped me so much already."

"Don't worry, honey. I have a business proposition for you. After we eat, let's take a walk and discuss it."

Maggie had no idea what sort of business she had in mind, but she nodded and ate her food with the gusto it deserved. The eggs were poached to perfection, the steak was delicious, and she relished each bite, grateful it wasn't half-charred campfire fare.

After the meal, Maggie and Sadie strolled down the rough-hewn, covered wooden walkway toward the end of town and the saloon. Wyatt's face came to the forefront of her mind with each step.

Sadie didn't say anything for so long Maggie felt the need to start the conversation. "I don't know anything about business." She slowed her steps and turned to Sadie. "I'm not sure I'd be any help to you in that regard."

"Well, I need your help with the saloon owner, Wyatt Chance."

Maggie came to a dead stop on the walkway. "I don't understand."

"You see, I used to own that property where his saloon is now. I was the madam of the town's only whorehouse before my thieving partner, Henry, absconded with all my money. I've had six months to generate some more capital and I'd like to partner with Mr. Chance. Up to now, he's been very adamant about not going into business with me."

"I'm still not sure how I can help you." Maggie's cheeks warmed as a vivid memory of Wyatt touching her sizzled in her mind.

"I believe you can persuade him."

Maggie shook her head. "Why on earth would you believe *that*?"

Sadie laughed. "Everyone in town knows you spent the night with him, honey. You can't tell me he didn't avail himself of your charms." Sadie's gaze scrutinized her body from breasts to thighs. "You'd tempt a saint."

Maggie's mouth opened in shock but no sound came out. She swallowed hard and tried again. "He didn't...I didn't...nothing happened." *Well, not much anyway.*

"Don't be such a prude. Besides, I'm not asking you to sleep with him again. He'd probably do anything for you after last night. And besides, I only want you to convince him to let me have the rooms upstairs to use for my girls."

"Maybe he thinks your *business* will interfere with his saloon."

"Pshaw. He can still do the same thing he always does downstairs in the bar. I know he isn't renting those rooms out. It's a waste not to use them. Tell him that I'll cut him a large percentage of my profits and assure him that my girls will draw many more customers into his bar."

"I appreciate your aid with the hotel clerk and the lovely meal, but I can't help you." *I won't. Not after Wyatt gave me a place to sleep.*

Maggie started to turn away, but Sadie grabbed her arm and leaned in close. The harsh gleam in her eye couldn't be mistaken for anything but malice. "I believe you should reconsider. I wield more power in this town than most folks realize. I'd hate for you to have trouble here. You wouldn't want the sheriff to run you out of town for vagrancy, would you?"

"Are you threatening me?" Maggie suddenly came to realize she had a poor record in understanding people's motives, especially when they offered friendship. And tangling with the law was the last thing she needed.

Sadie replaced her nasty expression with a forced smile. "No. I'm just strongly suggesting that you help me."

Chapter Six

Wyatt spent a surprisingly frustrated week away from the saloon. Usually, he preferred the quiet time away from town and being left to his own devices on the primitive land. He didn't relish the backbreaking work of digging for gold, but it centered him. This week, however, he didn't seem to have the patience for it. And even the lure of this rich vein of golden ore couldn't distract him from Maggie Altman's perfumed existence.

His mind resided back in Campbell's Valley, and his imagination ran wild with visions of Wade with Maggie. His thoughts weren't jealous in nature. He was more anxious. If push came to shove, he wouldn't be opposed to sharing her between them. It wouldn't have been the first time, although in the past, they'd known each of the women they'd shared would be temporary. Maggie was the first he wanted to have occupy a place in his life permanently.

Was that crazy?

His largest worry about Maggie was her location. Was she still in town? Had she gone to the hotel for a room? Had Wade offered to let her stay longer? Would she even still be in town when he returned after his week at the mine? And on and on, until he'd driven himself nearly mad with longing.

He mined about as much as Wade had the week before and therefore had tripled their already nice amount of raw gold ore. The vein was still producing as much as when he'd started Monday morning. Wyatt expected they'd spend a few more weeks before this vein gave out, and they'd be ready to sell all the raw ore, pocket a large amount of money, and head back East or wherever they decided

to go.

Wyatt's thoughts strayed back to Maggie again as he saddled Lucky and readied himself to return to the saloon later tonight. He planned to give himself enough time to question Wade about Maggie. His brother would likely laugh at him, but he didn't care. If she was still in town, he planned to make himself available to her.

Did she need anyone to help her? Likely, she still mourned her husband, and he cooled his substantial ardor a notch. Their night together had been nothing more than his comforting a new friend when she felt all alone in the world. At least that's what he convinced himself of all week. Now that some time had passed, perhaps she needed a friend again.

Unable to concentrate on anything else, Wyatt packed up Lucky and headed for the saloon a few hours early. Two hours later, he rode up behind the saloon ready to grab a few hours of sleep. First thing in the morning, he'd search the town for the woman who haunted his mind. In the small stable where they kept their horse, he unsaddled and quickly brushed Lucky down, settling him in for the night.

Wyatt entered the back entrance to the saloon, cleaned up in the mud room and headed for bed.

Inside his room, a surprise waited. His brother slept soundly in his bed. Wyatt checked the place where they left notes to each other. Nothing. He was early, but still Wade should have left a note of some sort. His brother rarely left notes though, or bothered to read any, so he shouldn't be surprised. He lifted his eyes to the heavens and sighed until something important occurred. There was likely only one good reason for his brother to be sleeping downstairs.

Was it because someone beautiful was sleeping upstairs?

Wyatt climbed carefully up to Wade's bedroom, hoping for a better surprise in his brother's bed. Easing the door open silently, the scent of her luscious perfume greeted him with a punch to his libido. Moonlight filtering into the room cast light on a sleeping figure tucked under the sheets of Wade's bed.

Maggie.

Wyatt took a deep breath, filled his lungs with her luscious scent, and entered the room. He just wanted to sleep alongside her and be available in case she was still saddened over her loss. And he wanted to hold her in his arms.

Undressing completely, he slid between the sheets of the bed where Maggie rested. He slipped his arms around her, and she snuggled closer. She didn't seem to be awake, so he squeezed her tight and buried his face in the soft strands of her hair. With her unique scent tickling his lungs, Wyatt relaxed, and enjoyed the closeness of her body.

He drifted in and out of sleep at first and wondered if he only dreamed of being in bed with Maggie. He imagined this exact scene several times during the past week. Would he wake up in the cave on their property in a few minutes? He inhaled deeply, and her scent came again. No. Not dreaming. His rock hard cock readied for action, but Wyatt wasn't interested in accosting Maggie while she slept. Once she woke up on her own, he'd see if luck was on his side.

The memory of her coming into the saloon for the first time entered his mind. He'd probably fallen in love with her in that moment.

She sighed in her sleep, and the breath from her lips brushed along his collarbone. His dick pulsed against either the sheet or her night gown. Some part of him knew this wasn't a very gentlemanly thing to do.

If there had been any other place to sleep in the entire saloon, he might have abandoned her and left his conscience untroubled. However, they really *didn't* have any available beds, just several empty rooms.

The choice between sleeping with Wade or Maggie wasn't a difficult one. Plus, Wyatt wanted her with an unimaginable need he hoped she might share. Would she be interested in another liaison tomorrow morning? One more question circled his brain. What had

happened between Wade and Maggie in his absence?

Had they formed a bond? Were they involved? Had she fallen for his easygoing brother? Would she consent to be involved with both of them?

Maggie stirred in her sleep and snuggled up closer to his side. His cock pulsed with impatient desire, but he would never do anything until he was sure she was completely awake and gave consent.

Stripping naked and sliding into bed with her, however, might make that hard to understand. Wyatt just wanted to hold her. He'd knocked back a few shots on the way home from the property, and as the buzz faded from his satisfied brain, he dozed off into a restless sleep.

Her seductive voice came in his dreams. "You're back. I missed you."

Wyatt responded sleepily. "I missed you, too." It was the truth, but a nagging alarm went off in his head.

Seconds later, she shifted on top of his body, her thighs bracketing his unruly cock, now pulsing against her hot center, and his mind went blank.

* * * *

Maggie moved onto Wyatt's naked form and reveled in the taut ridges of his torso pressing into her thinly clad body.

Waking to a man in her bed had initially shocked her, especially given the conversation with the other man the night before which had landed her this soft bed.

Now that the first man she'd met had returned, her suspicions were confirmed. He asked her to come back in a week, and as it worked out, she ran out of money to stay in the hotel after exactly one week. Sadie offered to pay for her room several times, but Maggie declined knowing what she expected in return. Each and every day for the past week, Sadie had found a way to corner her in the hotel lobby

or dining room to pitch the same business deal. Maggie ran out of polite ways to say no mid-week. Sadie then reminded her of her dwindling funds. Maggie didn't need reminding. Nor did she want to go into business with the madam.

Last night, she'd come in just before midnight and begged for a place to sleep. The "Wyatt" from last night hadn't hesitated in agreeing to let her stay. His happy-go-lucky demeanor was inviting, and they'd spent a lovely few minutes talking before he closed up. He was very sweet. And the man beneath her was also very sweet.

They must be twins since they looked remarkably alike, however, she could tell they were different. Partly in their eyes. Not the blue-gray color, which was identical, but the way they looked at her. The first Wyatt had stared at her with a quiet intensity the second man lacked.

The second man she'd met gazed at her with a silent curiosity. Obviously with interest, but not quite the same power as the first Wyatt.

Regardless, she liked them both and wanted to spend time with each of them to discover other similarities and differences. Making a choice would be too difficult. She wondered if they had ever considered sharing a woman.

Until this trip with Caleb, she'd never considered that such wicked things took place. Her sincere desire to participate in such an event was more shocking still, as was her desire to instigate a threesome.

The farther away from Philadelphia society she got, the more she grew up. She had become very worldly on this unexpected trip out west. She and Caleb had shared much, and Caleb was a fountain of information regarding sexual practices. He told her very lurid tales of the varying types of sexual contact between men and woman and men with men, as they traveled from Philadelphia across the country to a new life.

Right this moment she wanted to put some of his information into practice. She was about to incite a man into sexual intercourse. And if

his twin were here, she'd invite him into her bed as well. Scandalous. A word she was fast becoming very aware of in her thoughts and actions.

Maggie broke the kiss and snuggled her face into his neck, inhaling the masculine scent of his skin. How did anyone believe they were only one man?

With his cock resting between her thighs and only her thin nightdress as a barrier, Maggie tried to think of a way to "accidentally" get him to make love to her.

Her insides ached for him to fill her just like they had a week ago before he'd satisfied her and left her aching for a more intimate taste. She was no virgin and not because she'd been married to Caleb. She and Caleb never shared a bed or an intimate encounter.

A disgraceful interlude with Edgar, a suitor who had lied about his intentions, ruined her for any others in the high society of Philadelphia. Once Edgar abandoned her, Caleb stepped in and saved her from complete ruin.

The sexual act had hurt at first when Edgar's cock had entered, but up until then, all the sensations he'd evoked from kissing her, touching her everywhere, and sucking on her breasts had been lovely.

When his cock finally pierced her for the first time, she cried out in partial pain and partial surprise at the unusual feeling. It wasn't unpleasant, but Maggie felt something was missing after the act was complete. She and Edgar had hurriedly dressed and shared one last kiss as he fondled her breast beneath the fabric of her day dress. And then they'd been discovered by none other than her father.

The laughable part was that she'd been found alone with Edgar and still fully clothed. If they'd been seen a mere twenty minutes earlier, they'd have been caught completely naked and in the throes of passion. Well, Edgar's passion was clearly expressed in the groaning and contorted facial expressions during their lovemaking. Her level of passion ended with his final thrust.

The crimson shade of her father's displeasure was displayed

clearly on his face as he ordered them out of the conservatory. Then the shouting ensued. Later, in the discontented company of her mother, the blood on her thighs from their coupling was all it took to seal her fate.

Unlike in Regency England, during which gentlemen were forced to marry the lady in trouble, Maggie was deserted by Edgar and banished from her home without a dime. Her one-time lover was thrown from her house where very little else happened to him at all. After the incident, Maggie went to Edgar's home to smooth things over and determine their next course of action. Edgar wasn't inclined to help her. Without Maggie's dowry, he was no longer interested in courting or marriage.

Her father had been correct. Edgar only wanted her money. Caleb warned her about Edgar's intentions well before the incident in question. She hadn't listened, and in the end, Caleb rescued her from the being cast out of her home.

Similarly caught in his own compromising position, Caleb's lover hadn't been a woman. His family hadn't been kind to him regarding the discovery.

Maggie and Caleb met up in an abandoned cabin on the outskirts of town and planned and plotted while they waited to discover if she carried a child. Luckily for her, she wasn't pregnant. She'd never been so happy to experience her monthly courses, ensuring she could travel without the scare of birthing a child on the trail.

Luckily for Caleb, he gained access to his limited fortune and had withdrawn some of it before being asked to leave town forever.

Maggie and Caleb had married at a small church on the edge of town and set off for Montana a week later with the wagon train. That dream ended with Caleb's death.

After spending half of her remaining coins on a place to sleep at the hotel, Maggie returned to the saloon exactly a week later and begged the bartender still claiming to be Wyatt, for a room in exchange for helping to clean up the bar.

After declining her offer for a barmaid, he pointed to the room upstairs and said they'd talk in the morning after she had a good night's sleep.

Now, a few hours later, she was in the very arms of a man she desired. A man she wanted to join with in the most intimate of acts. It was time to wake him up and convince him.

"Where were you all week?"

Wyatt's eyes opened. Maggie was poised above him, her lips a breath away, and she wanted desperately to taste him.

"What?" He gazed at her in surprise.

"I'm not sure I understand why you are trying to keep the fact that there are two of you a secret, but I promise I won't say anything."

He blinked a couple of times as if astounded to find himself in a conversation. "I'm not quite sure what you're talking about."

"Then just kiss me." She lowered her lips to brush gently against his. The firmness of his mouth sent a pulse of desire straight to her pussy. Her breasts pressed into his chest, and her nipples hardened and tingled. She parted her lips giving him access if he wanted it. By the way his tongue shot into her mouth, she assumed he did.

She broke the kiss. "Are you really Wyatt?"

"Of course. Who else would I be?"

Maggie smiled as any number of other responses occurred to her. "Are you going to tell me your brother's name?"

"What brother?" he asked without missing a beat.

"I see."

"I doubt it." His murmur held a note of sarcasm.

Maggie decided to stop aggravating him. "I promise not to give away your secret, although I'm not sure why it is such a huge confidence that you two are obviously twins."

He sighed in response, and Maggie decided not to press her luck. "I'm sorry. I won't ask again. I simply wish for a place to stay."

"For how long?"

"As long as possible until I figure out what to do. Last night," she

paused and sent her gaze to his, “*you* told me we’d discuss this in the morning. Is it morning yet or would you rather talk about something else?” She pressed her hips against his and rubbed her center against his hard cock. The sensation made an ache form deep in her body. She wanted him with a quiet desperation she’d never felt before.

“I certainly wouldn’t want to presume.” He pushed his cock against her with a decided thrust. “What did you have in mind?”

“I’d like for you to push your cock inside my pussy and make love to me this time. Is that clear enough?”

His eyes widened a bit, and she smiled at his shock.

“That is precisely what I want to do, however I don’t wish to intrude upon your mourning.”

His mention of Caleb made her eyes water, but not because she loved him in that way. She didn’t. But she did miss him. “It’s true I’m in mourning for my husband, but we were never intimate. His interests were satisfied elsewhere and in a much different way. Caleb only slept with men. But we were the best of friends, and he rescued me.”

“Are you a virgin?”

“No. That’s what he saved me from back home.”

“I see.” He looked relieved, but she could tell he still harbored questions.

“Please make love to me. I have missed you all week.”

He studied her face for a few moments before slipping his hand to cover one breast. The warmth of his hand and the overall shock that he’d touched her made her nipple come to pert attention. His thumb scraped across the tip, and the feeling sent a pulse of longing to the space between her legs. One soft sigh later, he pulled her nightgown over her head. She helped him discard it over the side of the bed. And then they were deliciously skin to skin in a tight embrace.

“I’ve wanted you since the moment I saw you,” he whispered against her ear. His cock pulsed against her belly.

“Me too.” She reached down between them and stroked his stiff

cock once. He hissed a breath between his teeth, which suggested he liked having her touch him. "Take me at your pleasure."

"Taking you will be my pleasure, but not quite yet. I want to touch you everywhere."

"I won't stop you," she murmured against his face.

He smiled and kissed a path from her cheek to her neck and didn't stop until he had one nipple secured between his lips. The suction he inflicted made juice run between her legs in utter desire to copulate.

Wyatt caressed her and kissed her mouth for what seemed like hours. She also explored his body a little. She ran her fingertips along his muscular shoulders as he licked her nipples.

She arched her back as he nibbled her breasts, inciting her passion. He sucked at the tips of her breasts until she was sure there was a pool of wetness the size of a lake between her legs ready for his cock.

He slid a hand between her legs and found her clitoris. He stroked her there again and again until she quivered on the brink of ecstasy, ready to fall over the edge of an endless abyss. Waves of pleasure radiated to every limb. She barely caught her breath when he then shifted his hips and replaced his fingers with the head of his cock. He pierced her with an utterly rapacious gaze and pushed forward into her body.

The immense girth of him surprised her even though she'd stroked his cock earlier. Her inner muscles stretched to accommodate him. He thrust slowly as the pulses of her climax continued to squeeze her pussy muscles all around his cock.

His eyelids dipped halfway as he fully seated his cock against her womb. She reveled in each and every place they touched. His thighs pinned her legs to the bed with the weight of his body cocooning her gently. The coarse hair on his chest brushed across her sensitive nipples. Even the scent of his skin amplified the level of her desire.

"I knew you'd be perfect the second I met you." Wyatt's deep tone was laced with desire.

“Did you?” Maggie smiled and pushed her hips forward, eliciting a gasp from his lips.

“It’s a miracle I didn’t throw you onto the bar to have my wicked way with you the moment you stepped through the door.”

Clutching his shoulders and burying her face into his throat, she whispered, “Now that your cock is exactly where I want it and stretching me to the limit, please continue with your wicked intent. I’ve dreamed about being with you.”

“My pleasure.” A groan escaped as he pulled his cock halfway out of her body before piercing her deeply once again. The delicious sensation now pulsing between her thighs sent a spiral of wanton arousal to her core.

Her first experience with sex, while fairly nice at the time, didn’t even come close in comparison to the bone-deep feelings of desire Wyatt brought about in making love to her. His pace increased, and she thought she might burst from the exhilaration of the moment. When his fingers delved between them and stroked her clit again, Maggie screamed as an even more powerful climax rippled through her.

Wyatt’s strokes sped up, driving his shaft deeply with each push until a low growl rumbled in his throat. A warmth hit her womb and held her in ecstasy for a few moments before he stiffened, slumped forward, and trapped her against the sheets.

After several moments of exchanging only panting breaths, Wyatt clasped her to his chest and rolled them until she rested on top on him. She nestled her face into his neck and took a long breath inhaling the musky scent of his skin.

“You are exquisite.” Wyatt’s breath caressed her shoulder.

“Thank you.”

Those five words were the only ones spoken before the door to the room burst open, and the Wyatt Chance from the night before entered the room.

Chapter Seven

Wade woke up when he heard Maggie scream above stairs. He first assumed an intruder, but the squeaking of the bedsprings signaled something else going on.

The grandfather clock in the main room of the saloon chimed two o'clock. The exact time last week when he discovered Maggie. A smile shaped his lips automatically thinking about her. The love-making noises from above intensified, and before he realized it, he'd lifted out of Wyatt's bed, drawn by the exquisite noises Maggie made in the arms of his brother. Wade wanted to join them.

He waited for a few minutes trying to decide what to do and whether he'd be welcome if he intruded. His libido convinced him to at least go up and suggest a threesome. Bursting into the room probably wasn't nice, but he calmed himself with the knowledge he'd leave if they didn't want him. Or if Maggie didn't want the both of them.

Stiff cock leading the way, Wade climbed the stairs and threaded his way down the hall with the extra furniture and various trunks still littering the hall until he stood before the door of his own room.

He listened at the door and heard soft conversation, but no bedsprings squeaking. He thrust the door open and stepped inside.

The delectable sight of a naked Maggie resting on top of his brother's body sent a rapid response down to his cock. It throbbed once in unsatisfied hunger.

As he suspected while climbing the stairs, Wyatt and Maggie had deepened their relationship to the intimate level. Now the only question became would they let him join them.

Wyatt bolted upright in bed, nearly dumping Maggie on the floor. “What the hell, Wade?”

“I could say the same thing, Wyatt. Why didn’t you wake me up when you got back last night?”

Maggie smiled, settled the sheet across her breasts and folded her arms. “Am I seeing a ghost or are you both finally willing to admit there are two of you?”

“Ghost means dead, right?” Wyatt focused his glare on his brother. “You were asleep in *my* bed, and you didn’t leave a note as to why, so I came up here.” He glanced at Maggie. “I can’t believe you came in here. The fact of our being twins used to be a secret.”

Wade laughed. “She knows, Wyatt. She’s always known. We never fooled her for a second. She knew the morning after you left.”

Wyatt pushed out a long sigh of resignation. “Which makes me wonder if there is anyone else in town we *aren’t* fooling.” He squeezed Maggie tightly.

“I don’t know how everyone can’t see it,” she murmured quietly and snuggled closer. “But I didn’t hear anyone say anything this past week in regards to there being two of you. I did, however, hear quite a few things about saloon owner, Wyatt Chance.”

Wyatt slung his arm around her shoulders, pulling her close to his chest. “Oh? What did you hear?”

“You are persistently discussed in every corner of town and likely desired by every female, even the married ones, but you don’t ever approach women. Some think you are brooding and very serious while others remark that at times you’re very funny and open, which only adds to your mystic. Perhaps you don’t know this, but with the mere crook of a little finger, either of you could have any female in town in your bed.”

“I only want *you* in my bed.”

Wade started laughing. “I’ll bet I’m the funny and open one.”

Maggie nodded. “Likely true.” She sent her gaze to Wade, and a smile framed her lips.

Wyatt squeezed her and kissed the side of her face. “So I’m the serious brooding one? That hardly seems fair. I can be funny.”

“The difference I see is in your eyes. Wyatt has a quiet intensity in his gaze. However, Wade’s eyes dance with mischief. And the way you each smell is decidedly different. But most women in town haven’t been this close to you without clothing.” She grinned. “At least that’s what I assume all the wistful looks are about. Both of you are unquestionably handsome.”

“But the question is, which one of us do you want to be with? Or is there the possibility that the both of us could fill the role of lover?”

“That’s a difficult answer. I hope you don’t expect me to choose between you?”

Wade turned his gaze from Wyatt to Maggie. He understood clearly his brother was besotted.

“Did you come up to chastise me, replace me, or join us?”

Wade’s gaze zeroed in on Maggie’s face. “I’d like to join the two of you. Just want to make sure I’m welcome.”

Wyatt shifted his gaze to Maggie as if to ensure she wasn’t horrified by the suggestion of both of them wanting to have sex with her. “It’s up to her. I have no problem sharing.”

Sharing wasn’t a commonplace thing in Eastern society, and truthfully the Wild West, while rowdy and uncouth, didn’t publicize those who chose a different path. The silence in the room stretched out, and Wade wondered if they’d just made a big mistake in asking.

* * * *

Maggie’s heart sped up its pounding beat against the inside of her chest. She was surprised they couldn’t hear it. With the both of them in the room at the same time, the picture repeating over and over in her mind was of being sandwiched on the crowded bed between them.

She motioned to Wade with outstretched fingers. “Please do. Join us.”

Wade suddenly cast the same intense look in her direction. Wyatt's cautious stare slid to the door and the man who was indisputably his mirror image. "Are you sure? No hard feelings either way, right, Wade?"

"Course not."

Maggie looked first at Wade standing in the doorway and then back at Wyatt. "Did you know that it's called *ménage à trois* in France?" she asked, wondering if she was in over her head.

Wade's eyes widened slightly. "How do you know that?"

She shrugged. It wasn't the right time to bring up her husband or his proclivities and sexual knowledge. "I'll tell you later. For now, come here."

He closed the door. Peeling his shirt off as he walked, Wade closed the short distance to the bed in moments. Wyatt twisted to his side to offer more room. Maggie shifted over and patted the open space on the bed with a hand.

Wade kicked his boots off and slid his pants down his muscular thighs, revealing his firm cock already big and hard jutting from the curly dark-blond patch of hair between his hips. Visions of carnal activities danced in her eyes, and she wondered if she had the nerve to instigate any of the salacious sexual positions skittering through her mind. Caleb had educated her in quite a few.

"What did you have in mind?" Wade murmured as he sat on the small space she had indicated.

Maggie reached out and slipped her hand around his cock. Squeezing lightly and enjoying his sharp intake of breath at her forward action, Maggie bent over and took his wide cock into her mouth. She sucked the head inside as far as it would go. His hands landed on her head, and a mild curse escaped his lips as she licked and pumped his cock in and out of her mouth.

Behind her, Wyatt's hands were on the move, and in a few seconds, she felt his large fingers work their way between her thighs. He flicked her clit and slid his fingers inside her pussy to arouse her.

She moaned loudly as she continued to suck on his brother's cock. The salty, masculine taste of Wade's shaft ramped up her desire. She fairly tingled from head to toes from all the sensations racing through her body.

She was fast coming to a pinnacle with every stroke of Wyatt's nimble fingers. She wrapped her hand around the base of Wade's cock, squeezing with the same rhythm as she sucked his width into her mouth. She tried not to climax until he'd been satisfied.

As Wyatt rubbed her clit and pumped fingers in her pussy, he also kissed a random path across her lower back, flicking his tongue along her spine. Wade massaged her scalp as she sucked his cock. Each scrape of his fingertips through the locks of her loosened hair sent tendrils of warm erotic sensation through her limbs.

Wyatt took a little nibble out of her hip as he sped up his strokes against her vibrating clit. Another finger was inserted into her pussy, and she squeezed them instinctively with her internal muscles. Was that three or four fingers inside her now? She didn't know or care. Maggie moved her hips against the bliss between her legs and found she couldn't hold the pleasure back any longer.

With four male hands continually caressing her skin, she couldn't stop the inevitable orgasm. She convulsed with wave upon wave of wicked pleasure radiating up and down her body. She pushed her hips against Wyatt's inserted fingers and released Wade's cock from her lips to shriek as waves of the incredible orgasm rode mercilessly across her being.

After a few moments, as she tried to remember how to breathe again, Maggie reached out for Wade's cock to slip it into her mouth again. Wyatt's fingers weren't inside her any longer, but he still kissed and nibbled her back.

Wade's hands slid from her head to her shoulders to massage her neck. "I want to come inside of you, Maggie. Let me." She nodded, unable to speak. He pressed her onto her back against the crisp sheets and slid over her relaxed body, joining them at the hips. She turned

her head in time to see Wyatt lower his face. He kissed her lips with a sensual pace that had her longing for the intimacy to last forever.

As Wyatt distracted her with the succulent kiss, Wade's cock pushed into her pussy a few inches. Her internal muscles grabbed at him and squeezed as he slid all the way inside. His growl of pleasure diverted her attention from Wyatt's kiss momentarily.

"Christ, you feel good." Wade pulled his cock out in a slow glide of wet friction. The sensation he brought about tingled through her body. Each stroke of his cock inside sent a zing of delight to her core.

Wyatt cupped one breast and ran his thumbnail across her nipple, sending a shower of tingly sensation through her chest and down to her pussy. Between the two of them touching her it wouldn't be long before she came again.

Wade increased the depth of his cock strokes inside her pussy, pounding deeply. Her mouth belonged to Wyatt as he licked leisurely between her lips, but she was fast coming up on a blissful release as Wade sped up. His hands gripped her hips and drove his dick deeper and deeper. Each connection with the end of her pussy made her eyes want to roll back in her head with utter delight.

She clenched her pussy muscles as another orgasm ripped through her body. The friction of Wade's cock sliding in and out of her body made for the most powerful feeling yet tonight. Wade didn't pause or stop as she climaxed. Three strokes later, he pushed his cock deeper than ever before, and she watched as his body stiffened above her. A guttural sound came from between his lips. The same blissful sound echoed in her mind. He fell forward, trapping her to the bed a minute later.

His panting whisper came later. "Christ! That was amazing." He turned his face into her neck and kissed her throat. Wyatt kissed her lips. She was surrounded by male heat and delighted in the safe feeling as she recovered.

Maggie came back to awareness a few minutes later. Wyatt rested on her right, and Wade still draped across her body. He shifted a

moment later. His semi-hard cock slid out of her body, but Wyatt distracted her with another kiss.

“Can you breathe?”

“Almost.”

He chuckled and rolled off the bed, and allowed her to take a deep breath again.

After he cleaned up, Wade came back to bed and snuggled next to her. Wyatt kissed a path down to her nipples and gently sucked at the tips sending spirals of pleasure to her pussy again. Maggie wasn't sure how much more she could take. She'd never known lovemaking could be like this. Warm and deliciously snuggled between two loving, desirable men was the best possible scenario imaginable.

“I feel like I should say thank you,” Maggie murmured.

Wyatt released her nipple and leaned up on one elbow to stare deeply into her eyes. “Not at all. Probably, we should thank you instead.”

“Well, this has been the best night I've spent in Campbell's Valley since my inauspicious arrival.”

“What brought you here tonight?” Wyatt asked. His loving gaze still rested on her face.

“I ran out of money. I sent a message to my parents begging for assistance, but they declined to help me due to my poor life choices. And I didn't get an answer to the other telegram I sent to my former husband's...um...partner. I probably won't get one from him.”

Wyatt narrowed his eyebrows. “Explain your former husband's *partner*. I want to make sure I understand.”

Maggie took a deep breath. “My husband was shunned from his family because he preferred men to women in a sexual fashion. He only married me because I got caught in a compromising position with a man who turned out to be the worst kind of debaucher. Edgar was only after my money. He deserted me after my father caught us alone together. My father disowned me, and with no forthcoming dowry ready to line his pockets, Edgar didn't want me either.

“Caleb married me because we were friends. We were never intimate. He wanted to go to Montana and operate a sheep ranch in the northwest away from his family. His partner went on ahead to scout out the best land to purchase once we arrived. He’ll be devastated to learn Caleb is gone.”

“I see.” Wade brushed a strand of hair from off of her cheek.

“So now I’m desolate, alone, and stranded in the Badlands with very few coins left and depending on the kindness of strangers.”

Wyatt snorted. “We aren’t exactly strangers anymore.”

Maggie cupped his face. “Still, I’m not something you planned.”

“That doesn’t matter. We could find room in our lives for you. Don’t you think so, Wade?”

“Yep. Help in the saloon would be great for a change.”

“Unfortunately, I’m not very well versed in the art of running a saloon.”

“You don’t have to be. I think it would be nice to have some company at the bar even if you just sit and look pretty.” Wade shoved his arm beneath a pillow and closed his eyes.

Wyatt kissed her lips. “Don’t worry, we’ll figure something out. Get some sleep. We can talk about it in the morning.”

Maggie settled against her lovers and relaxed for the first time in a long time. Even if it didn’t last forever, it was nice to fit in someplace for a change.

* * * *

Wyatt closed his eyes after Maggie fell asleep, but didn’t drift off for quite awhile. He had a lot on his mind with this recent romantic development in their life. The tight space on the bed didn’t allow him to toss and turn, but that’s exactly what he would have been doing if he’d had the space.

“Are you still awake?” Wade whispered a few minutes later.

“Maybe. Why?” he returned as quietly as he could.

“What are your intentions towards Maggie?”

Wyatt didn’t answer right away. “I want to be with her,” he said simply. “I care for her in a way I’ve never felt with another woman before.”

“Me too.”

“When the opportunity comes up, I’ll ask her to make our arrangement more permanent.” Wyatt hoped she would want to stay with them.

“So you’ll marry her one day?”

“Yes.”

“Good. She’s perfect for us.” Wade didn’t say anything else and soon Wyatt heard him snoring.

He smiled to himself and fell asleep dreaming about a grand future where the three of them made a life together.

Wyatt woke an indeterminate amount of time later to Wade’s strident tone. “Hey, wake up. It’s past sunrise.”

Wyatt stretched and looked out the window. Dawn had broken, and the first shafts of light filtered into the room. “Guess that means you’ll be riding to the property by the light of day for the first time since we opened the saloon. Just be careful no one sees you.”

Maggie’s eyes opened slowly. She yawned and slid her fingertips across his torso to the muscles on his abdomen as if the ripples had captured her attention.

“Shit, Wyatt, that’s not the only problem,” Wade said as he glanced at his pocket watch. “You gotta get the bar ready to open up.”

“Time has a way of hurrying along when a man is in the arms of a beautiful woman.” Wyatt placed his hand over Maggie’s and squeezed her fingertips. Unable to stop touching her just yet, he hugged her tightly one last time before rolling out of bed to start his day.

“We can discuss all of this later on. Wade, you’re stuck up here or downstairs in my room while I get the bar set up. Your choice.”

“Easy.” He grinned and slid back into bed. “We’re staying up

here. Oh and go pick up supplies at the Stanton Dry Goods store later on. We need some things.”

Wyatt rolled his eyes and exited the room, leaving his brother and his love behind. Once they were all alone again, they could discuss a future together.

Surprisingly, the first customer waiting at the door before he opened was Joe Stanton. Wyatt knew he wasn’t a heavy drinker and wondered at his presence so early.

“What’s up, Joe? I’m not really open for a few more hours yet.”

“Oh, I know that. I’m not here for a drink.” He looked over his shoulder as if someone might be watching them. Wyatt didn’t see anyone in the streets. Joe wiped a hand down his face. “Wyatt, listen, I hate to butt in, however, there’s talk in town that a woman spent the night here, and it isn’t the first time.”

Wyatt closed his eyes. “She didn’t have enough money to stay at the hotel anymore. I just gave her an old room upstairs. Just like last week.”

“I believe you.” Joe cleared his throat. “But the ladies of the church are less convinced. They think you’re taking advantage of a widow, and I’ve been elected to come speak with you about it.”

Wyatt leaned a shoulder against the door. “And what words do you have to convey? Choose them wisely.”

Joe’s shoulders sagged as if loathe to tell him anything. “The ladies want me to suggest that Mrs. Altman stay at the church at night to alleviate any hint of impropriety.”

Wyatt knew there had been plenty of “impropriety” going on, not just a hint, but it wasn’t anyone else’s business. The memory of Maggie’s rose-scented skin floated across his mind. “Would you be upset if I told you to go to hell and that my private life is no one’s business?”

The glimmer of a smile shaped Joe’s mouth. “Nope. That is, in fact, what I told the old biddies all up in arms about this situation in the first place. And while I agree with you in principle, I answer to a

higher authority in this town.”

Wyatt raised his eyebrows. “Higher authority like the sheriff?” He didn’t imagine the sheriff cared what he did privately.

“Customers.” Joe released a nervous laugh. “The women in town have threatened to boycott my store, so I came to make peace by mentioning the obvious. Honestly, I’m not here to make an enemy. I just don’t want to lose any business.”

“I see.” Wyatt exhaled a long breath. “What do you think it would take to get them off my ass and yet do a good deed by offering a lady a place to sleep in the comfort of a bed versus a spine cracking wooden pew?”

Joe snorted once and shrugged. “Knowing the town’s female population as I do, I’d say you’ll have to marry her.”

Wyatt straightened to his full height. Joe’s hands came up in front of his body as if in defense. “That’s not what *I* personally think, you understand?”

“Got it. Thanks for bringing this to my attention. I’ll think about what you’ve said, no promises.”

“Thanks, Wyatt.” Joe turned and hurried away.

Marry Maggie. Even the town thought it was the perfect idea and he and Wade had already discussed that very topic late last night. The only remaining question was, would she want to marry them? Or did she want to return home to Philadelphia?

Once they had finished all the back-breaking work extracting gold from the mine, they planned to sell all of it, the land, and the bar anyway. Perhaps they’d travel back to Maggie’s hometown and liven up the high society circles with all their newfound wealth.

Most importantly, Maggie would be theirs permanently.

If she agreed.

Chapter Eight

Wade fell asleep again with Maggie clutched in his arms shortly after Wyatt left the room. He woke a few minutes later. At first, he couldn't remember where he was, but soon the memories of the three of them from the night before intruded with sensual clarity.

Maggie shifted in bed and snuggled next to him. She kissed his jaw, and his cock promptly woke up.

"Do we *really* have to stay up here all day?" Maggie whispered.

The sun had risen well passed the horizon, and stronger rays of light from the eastern sky already blazed through the curtains and into the room. He cleared his throat. "I have to stay hidden until I can slip away without anyone seeing me. You can leave whenever you want. But I'd wait until there aren't any customers downstairs, and you may want to ensure no one sees you coming out of the bar at all."

"Why?"

"Townspeople will likely gossip about you spending the night here versus at the hotel if they see you roaming around up here or directly outside."

"Oh well, that won't matter. They already gossip about me, and they all knew I spent the night here last week." Her expression softened as if his words didn't sink in. "Thanks for letting me stay here again."

"Believe me when I tell you it was my pleasure. I'm sorry the townsfolk are so interested in your private life."

She laughed, and the sound of her mirth enthralled him. "It doesn't matter what they think." Wade wanted to make love to her again. Just the two of them.

He leaned forward and caught part of her laugh against his lips when he kissed the corner of her mouth. She stunned him by climbing on top of him, legs straddling either side of his naked hips. Her pussy slid along his stiffening cock, drawing a sharp hiss of pleasure from his lips.

Curling her long hair behind one ear, she smiled down at his delighted shock. "Feels like you want me." She pushed her center harder against his dick, which grew even wider in appreciation.

"Oh, I do."

"What's stopping us?"

"Not me, honey. You have my full attention and cooperation." He lifted his hips up quickly, joining in the action as she ground down with the subtle undeniable motion of her hips. The sensation so hot between his cock and her pussy lips, it was a wonder they hadn't set fire to the sheets already.

"That first night we slept together, why didn't you try anything?"

"I was drunk, and besides, I'm not that kind of man." He slid his hands to her hips to aid in the movement between their slippery flesh. His cock rose to an impressive size, ready to fuck blindly. Wade tempered his lust, and waited to see what Maggie might do to lead this seduction.

A sultry grin shaped her mouth. "I like the kind of man you are very much." She lifted her hips. His dick rose and slid into her body an inch before he realized what shifting her body so suddenly had done.

Wade's eyes closed and rolled back in his head at the utter and intense pleasure of the unexpected enveloping connection.

"Jesus, you sure know some great moves." Wade adjusted to the new position quickly, and his cock sank farther in the silken, hot depths of her tight pussy.

"So do you." She leaned down to kiss his chin, and her nipples grazed his chest. Before he could kiss her in return, her back arched, baring her full beautiful breasts for his appreciation.

Wade wanted to hug her hard, kiss her breathless, and fuck her senseless all at the same time. His hands slid from her hips to cup her lovely breasts. She lowered her torso as he lifted his head to capture one pert nipple in his mouth. She tasted like hot sinful delights wrapped in a delicate package. He released the tip to watch her move up and down on him.

Wyatt met Maggie first, and Wade knew his brother had certainly fallen hard for her in just a short time. Wade had to admit a certain desperate longing when she was around, and never more so with just the two of them alone now. She inspired him to a softer way of thinking. After only knowing her a week, Wade wondered how he'd ever live without her.

His cock throbbed in ecstatic glee as she moved her hips up and down in the most sensuously erotic glide he'd ever experienced. He leaned forward and licked one taut nipple, eliciting a moan from her sweet lips. Wade sucked the tip between his teeth and took a nibble. She gasped, and the motion of her hips sped up until she rode his cock harder and faster.

Wade slipped his hand between them and stroked her clit with his thumb. Her slick cream coated his fingers as she pressed up and down on his cock in a more frenzied rhythm. He wanted to insert a finger in her backside, but didn't want to leave her clitoris unattended until she found satisfaction. Meanwhile, it was all he could do not to explode in release.

He circled her clit once more and lightly bit down on her nipple at the same time. Maggie sucked in a deep breath, arched her back, and a little shriek erupted from her. Soon after, the tell-tale sign of her climax squeezed his cock as she continued the frantic motion of her hips.

Wet with her creamy juices, Wade slid his hand around to her backside and inserted a soaked finger into the ring of her tight little back hole. At the same time, he shot his cock deeply into her pussy. Her gasp of pleasure at his surprise rear invasion pushed him over the

edge and into amazing orgasmic satisfaction. The buzz of his release started at the base of his spine and spiraled forward, blasting out the end of his cock with exuberant speed.

His knees bent as pleasure twisted his body and stiffened his muscles with gratification. With Maggie cradled in the bend of his hips, Wade thought he might come again from the mere sensation of her skin against his. He kissed her soft breast.

“God in heaven, I’ve never felt anything so good in all my life.” Wade stilled after a few moments, slid his arms up for an embrace, and grasped her tightly against his relaxed body.

She released a long sigh against his neck in a warm breath of air. “Me either.”

Wade squeezed her closer. “Would you be alarmed if I told you I was getting very attached to you?”

Maggie lifted her head and grinned. “No. I might be of a similar mind.”

“Good. I hope you’re still here when I get back next week.” Wade leaned up and captured her mouth in a sensual kiss. The taste of her made his cock stiffen immediately as if the randy beast hadn’t had more than enough today. Lord above, Wade hadn’t enjoyed sex so many times in years. And his previous engagements had never felt so utterly satisfying. He broke the kiss and rubbed his whiskered chin against her face.

The music of her sudden laughter made Wade’s heart speed up a notch.

She placed her hand on his jaw. “I imagine I’ll still be here. The truth is, I don’t have anywhere else to go.”

Wade put all the sincerity he could muster into his next statement. “Stay with us. I have no doubt Wyatt wants you to.” *I certainly want you to stay.*

Her lips pursed into a circle. She let a long sigh push through her lips. “I don’t want to be a burden.”

Wade laughed. He tucked an errant strand of her hair behind one

lovely ear. “You wouldn’t ever be a burden, honey. How about if you marry one of us and we can keep making each other happy for a long time? Or is it too soon since you lost your first husband?”

“You want to marry me?”

The shock on her face looked genuine. Marrying two men was probably not what she’d dreamed of as a young girl, but Wade hoped she would consider it. “Both of us do.”

Her gaze strayed to the ceiling as if she contemplated the unusual idea.

“You should obviously marry Wyatt on paper since he saw you first, and because that’s the only name the townsfolk know. But any wedding would come with the condition that I’m just as much a husband as Wyatt is in the final arrangement.”

She tilted her head and narrowed her eyes. “Two husbands? I’m not sure how I feel about that. Marriage isn’t what I expected you to offer or what I planned for my immediate future.”

“Think about it. I’m not trying to pressure you, honey. I just want you to know you have a place with us.”

Her expression turned somber for a moment, but he pulled her head into his chest. “Just rest for now, Maggie. We can talk about this later.”

At least he hoped she would want to talk about a future. His heart pinched in pain at the thought of losing her.

Wade hugged her tighter and kissed her forehead, wanting to imprint her onto his soul. He’d make sure and tell Wyatt to use his keen powers of persuasion to win her over to their ultimate desires.

* * * *

Maggie hugged Wade tightly as he dozed off. Eyes closed, she inhaled his unique male scent, trying to memorize it for later. She couldn’t possibly stay here and accept handouts from these two fine men. Could she?

The intimacies were certainly delightful, but she wasn't ready to settle down permanently in Campbell's Valley, was she? The offer of marriage from Wade was sweet, but did she know these two well enough to spend the rest of her life with them?

Sadie would love it if she convinced Wyatt to make the seven rooms upstairs into a brothel for a percentage of the prostitution sales going to the saloon. Sadie had been relentless for the entire week, before Maggie returned to the saloon, trying to coax her into a partnership.

Maggie understood why the brothers didn't want to have a business partner, due to the secret of there being two of them. She didn't fully understand the reason for this secret, but still didn't want any part of the negotiation with Sadie.

Besides, women shouldn't be sold for sex, and she didn't care what Sadie said about the "poor starving girls" who used to be in her employ. Their plight after Sadie's partner ran off with all their money was sad, but not compelling enough for her to join into the madness.

Maggie had plenty of her own problems.

Sadie thought that's why she spent the night again, but it wasn't. Maggie refused to partner with the madam. She'd sooner starve. And it would probably come to that eventually.

The final blow had been the telegram from her parents which arrived early yesterday morning.

Margaret,

You made your decision to leave for the Wild West after embarrassing us by participating in a disgraceful manner with a man we didn't approve of and now you want us to fund your return? You may now live with your inappropriate choices. Do not ever contact us again.

There hadn't been a signature at the end of the terse-toned note, although she suspected this message undoubtedly came from her

father.

Maggie was at the end of whatever hopeful attitude sustained her thus far. A nagging thought erupted in the form of Sadie's persuasive and firm tactics. Maggie hoped there wouldn't be serious repercussions to her refusal to snag the attention of Wyatt and bend him to Sadie's will.

She had until tomorrow morning to deliver her answer to Sadie's hotel room. The insistent madam wasn't going to like her unwillingness to help. But she didn't care.

The answer of what might become of her in this harsh landscape overrode her fear of Sadie. For now.

Chapter Nine

Wyatt left the quiet of the saloon and went down to Joe's store to pick up the weekly supplies. Wade purposefully left it for him to do in retaliation for the week before. Sometimes his brother could be so infantile.

"Howdy, Wyatt." Joe wouldn't look him directly in the eyes, but instead made a big show of dusting his shop as if it were a life or death matter.

"Don't hurt yourself cleaning so hard. I'm not angry about your earlier visit."

Joe promptly dropped the cloth he'd been very intently wiping the counter with and smiled. "Good. I'd hate to lose one of my very best customers to stupid gossip and pressure from others. I probably shouldn't have come down there, but I also wanted to warn you about all the talk going on around town."

"I appreciate that." Wyatt cracked a smile and shrugged. "As I said, Maggie ran out of money and needed a place to stay. I couldn't in good conscience turn her away."

"You don't have to explain anything to me. It's your business, but the townsfolk have to flap their gums about something. Speaking of which, and just so you know, I noticed Sadie has been spending a lot of time with your girl at the hotel and around town. I suspect she's trying to influence her. She's still intent on going into business with you. Just as intent as you are *not* to run a whorehouse."

Shit. That's all I need. Extra pressure from unexpected places to make the empty rooms upstairs into a brothel. "Thanks for the information. You're right. I'm not interested in selling the sexual

favours of women for a living. Sadie can find another place.”

“You might want to think about making your upstairs another small hotel, Wyatt. The town’s only other hotel is usually filled to capacity. You could make some extra money.”

“Nope. It’s more trouble than it’s worth. I like the quiet privacy of having the place to myself after everyone leaves. If I make it a hotel, there will be people traipsing in and out all the time. I prefer solitude over the few dollars I’d make renting rooms. But thanks for looking out for me, Joe.”

Joe laughed. “Well, that’s what friends are for. If there’s anything I can do to help, I hope you’ll let me know.”

“Sure thing. You’d be the first person I seek for friendly advice.”
With the exception of Wade. Joe nodded and ducked behind the counter and motioned for Wyatt to follow into the storeroom at the back.

Wyatt piled his list of goods into a cart for pickup later and headed back to the saloon with the first load in his arms. Joe Stanton was a good friend. A part of him hated to lie to Joe, but once on this path, it would be difficult to explain their secret without causing hard feelings.

There were times when Wyatt wondered at the judgment of keeping their motives and identity furtive. Initially, they’d done it to keep the land a secret to stem the competition. The city of Lead, northwest of Campbell’s Valley, and also Deadwood, had become thick with get-rich-quick gold seekers from all across the states.

He and Wade wanted a quiet place to seek their fortune, not a chaotic, dirty existence fraught with worry over land rights and the like. There were plenty of stories and legends born in mining camps both in South Dakota and California that kept him quiet.

So he talked himself out of feeling guilty over the deception.

The reason they suspected the parcel of land held a cache of gold was because of a woman back home who was said to be half Indian on her father’s side. She was ignored by the so-called “decent” people

in their hometown, but Wyatt and Wade's dad hired her to keep house shortly after their mother died.

Kimimela, had been treated poorly by her last employer and became a fond member of their male-dominated family. Wyatt suspected his father fell in love with Kimi, as they nicknamed her, but didn't make his feelings known until after they left home.

Kimi told him and Wade countless bedtime stories about the Dakota lands throughout their childhood. She spun stories of golden caves and adventures in the woods of a far off land. When they'd gone back home for their father's funeral last year, she confided in them that the cave wasn't a fairytale. She gave them a fairly detailed map of where to find the land she'd grown up near and revealed a hidden cave very near what was now Campbell's Valley.

She urged them to buy the land and make their fortune.

Wade had been ecstatic about heading to the Dakota Territory on an adventure in search of secret gold. Wyatt, meanwhile, remained skeptical of hidden treasure or finding anything of value in the middle of nowhere, but Kimi was insistent. They pooled their money and bought the thirty-acre piece of land for a very reasonable price. Considering they *had* found gold in the hidden cave centered in their parcel, the investment had been a very wise one. And a lot of hard work.

Wyatt abandoned his thoughts of how he got here when he felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up in warning that he was being watched. Without stopping or changing his stride, he swept the area with an eye for the unusual. Wade must have already left for the mine because Lucky wasn't hitched to the back rail. As he passed the empty building next to the saloon, Wyatt noticed a well-used pair of cowboy boots behind an abandoned wagon.

Someone *was* watching him.

Worse, the space where the stranger hid was in direct line with the back entrance to their saloon. If Mr. Boots had been there all morning, he probably saw Wade leave for their mine.

Wyatt walked slowly to the porch at the rear entry to the saloon, pretending there wasn't some stranger watching his every step. He shouldered the door open, turning toward the wagon next door as he pushed it wider. He casually looked to his left in time to see the blur of an unidentifiable man wearing the dusty boots scramble away in a hurry.

Damn. Who knew their secret now?

* * * *

Sadie Winters fidgeted in the uncomfortable side chair gracing the hotel's "best" room. With the possibility of finally securing the upper level of the Double Chance Saloon as her base of operations so close to finally being realized, she found her level of anxiety difficult to temper with any realistic patience.

"Where is that girl?" she mumbled to herself and resisted the urge to rise and part the lace curtains on the east window to check for Maggie's return. A quick look at the room's small desk clock signaled only a few minutes had passed since she'd checked the last time.

Sadie had made it very clear to Maggie what she expected as an answer to her final offer, but anything could happen.

A knock on the door startled her as if she hadn't been expecting it, but she had. Unable to suppress a grin, she rose quickly and went to the ornate door. "Who is it?" she inquired an instant before turning the chiseled glass knob.

"It's me, Ronald," came a familiar voice as Sadie whisked the heavy door wide open.

Displeasure sucked the smile from her lips as quickly as dawn stole the night. "What are you doing here?" It wouldn't do to let anyone see the company she kept.

Ronald, her unofficial assistant since her partner Henry had disappointed her, stood like a rock centered in the frame of the door. Sadie grasped his shirt front and pulled him inside before anyone

caught a glimpse of him loitering around her room.

Pulling the dilapidated cowboy hat from his balding head, Ronald stumbled inside far enough for her to close the door.

"I seen something strange at the saloon."

"What do you mean something strange? Is it something I can use to blackmail Wyatt?" Sadie had sent Ronald to watch the saloon with the hopes of getting some juicy dirt on Wyatt that she could use for leverage. Maggie was too wishy-washy about hurting Wyatt after he'd let her stay overnight. She needed a backup plan just in case.

"I don't know about that, but it's a mystery."

"What are you talking about? What mystery?"

He crushed his hat to his chest and leaned forward as if about to impart confidential information. "I seen Wyatt go over to Joe's place to pick up supplies. And then I went and got a drink at the hotel and watched for him to come back, but I didn't see him come by. I snuck over to the back of the place where I figured he'd be coming and damned if I didn't see him exit the bar and ride off on his horse."

"Where did he go?"

"Dunno. He just rode off."

Sadie sent her gaze to the ceiling and back to his pinched face. "So what's the big mystery?"

"Well, I had to duck behind a wagon and some brush so he wouldn't see me and then I waited to make sure he didn't come back right away."

Rapidly losing patience, Sadie glared. "Yes. And?"

"And then a few minutes later, I seen him come from the opposite direction carrying a box of stuff from Joe's place and enter in the back of the saloon as pretty as you please."

Sadie shook her head. "So maybe he rode his horse to the town's stable and then left it there before he finished up at Joe's place." *Idiot*. She employed a total idiot. "You are so dense, Ronald. What's the mystery?"

"Well..." He paused, and his gaze narrowed as if he were trying

to remember something buried deep within his thick skull.

After a full ten seconds of silence, his eyes suddenly widened as if inspiration finally registered. He looked back at her with an odd gleam of lucidity in his eyes. “He was wearing different clothes when he came back the second time than what he wore riding out of town on his horse.”

* * * *

Maggie got out of bed and dressed in a hurry as Wade readied himself to leave for an undisclosed destination. He told her he’d be back in a week. It was all very thrilling, being a part of a secret. No wonder they didn’t want to have a brothel upstairs. Their secret wouldn’t last very long with the clientele traffic in and out at all hours of the day and night.

Wade kissed her soundly on the mouth and then slipped downstairs a few minutes after Wyatt left to pick up supplies. Maggie remained upstairs and straightened the room. She watched Wade ride out of town from the second-story window. It was still fairly early and not too many folks were out and about at this time of morning. Neither of them needed to be seen in the saloon today. But she found it more and more difficult to care what others thought of her behavior with Wade and Wyatt.

The female population could gossip themselves silly about her circumstances for all she cared. They weren’t worth her concern. If the brothers didn’t care, then she decided she didn’t either.

Instead of worrying about her status in town, she determined her first plan of action was to tell Sadie where to stick her business offer. She wasn’t even going to tell Wyatt or Wade about Sadie’s insistence of letting her be the hostess for all the girls who would be parading around, if they allowed her into the saloon. In fact, she wasn’t even going to tell them that Sadie had approached her.

A sound from below startled her from her reverie.

“Maggie?” Wyatt’s voice echoed through the empty saloon.

“Yes.” She hurried along the hallway and down the long set of wooden steps leading down to the bar. “Did you call me?”

Wyatt came from the back and looked around the empty room before putting his gaze on her. “Is Wade already gone?”

Smoothing a wrinkle out of her dress as she took the final step down, Maggie nodded. “He left just a few minutes ago. Is something wrong?”

Wyatt’s calm face dissolved into concern. “It’s possible someone saw him leave.”

Maggie narrowed her eyes and shrugged. “Is that a problem?”

“Maybe. If the same person just saw me come back from the dry goods store a few minutes later.”

“Well, like you said before, I’m sure no one will believe that you are two men.”

Wyatt approached her. The scent of soap and man reached her before he did. “I don’t remember saying that. Are you sure it was me?”

Maggie laughed. “Maybe it was Wade. Either way, I promise I never said anything to anyone about my earlier suspicions.”

He smiled. “I believe you.”

“Can I help you get the bar ready today?”

He rubbed the back of his neck with a hand. “Actually, I wondered if you wanted to go get married?”

Maggie felt her mouth fall open. “You really want to marry me?”

“Very much.”

“But why?”

His eyes strayed up to the second floor. “I’d think it was fairly obvious, but perhaps you don’t feel the same way. I love you.”

“I do feel the same way.” Was she ready to marry again? At least this time it would be for love. “And Wade brought it up this morning before he left.”

Wyatt hooked his thumbs in the waistband of his pants and caught

her gaze. “Would you rather marry Wade?”

She shook her head. “Getting married again just wasn’t what I had on my mind today. Actually, I planned to ask you for a job.”

Wyatt moved in closer. “Well, as wife to us, you’d be welcome to work here. In fact, I’d insist if it made you happy.”

Maggie sighed as the realization of all her shortcomings as a wife surfaced. “The problem is I’m not really very good at anything domestic. But I’ll certainly do what I can to help if you’ll show me what to do.”

His eyebrows narrowed. “So is that a no to my marriage proposal?”

Maggie released a sigh. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to marry him, but so many things in her life remained up in the air. She didn’t have any money. She didn’t have anywhere else to go. She loved them too much to allow them to marry her out of pity. “I don’t know. It’s not that I don’t care deeply for you. In fact, you’re perfect for me, but what about Wade? He’s perfect, too.”

“Doesn’t matter which of us marry you. We’ll both do everything to see that you want for nothing.”

“And how would we live in this town? What if someone finds out there are two of you? What if they discover I slept with both of you?”

“It’s no one’s business what we do in our private lives.”

Maggie tilted her head to one side as something occurred to her. “Are you going to stay in Campbell’s Valley from now on? I hadn’t ever planned on living in the middle of South Dakota.”

His eyebrows rose slightly. “What did you have planned?”

She pursed her lips and sent her gaze to the ceiling. “My plans have changed constantly since I left Philadelphia. The only thing I seem to be able to count on is my life changing.” There was no plan in place currently for her lonely life. She was stranded with no money and no prospects of getting any in a strange town. Was it wrong to marry a veritable stranger? And his brother? In her heart, she knew they were perfect for her. They loved her. But they lived in

Campbell's Valley. Did she want to remain here?

"If you marry us, we can strive to keep things as steady as you want them to be. Or we can try to surprise you every day to ensure change continues to be your way of life."

Maggie laughed. "Very funny."

"Don't change the subject to my amazing sense of humor. Now about my marriage proposal. What do you say?"

The life Caleb planned in Montana wouldn't have been much different. She would have been living with two men in that scenario, as well. Only this time, the two men would be sleeping with her instead of each other.

She tilted her head to one side and didn't hide the amused grin. "Wait just a minute, mister. I need to know a few things. Do you have any prospects? I need to make careful decisions from now on. I don't want to end up all alone and broke in the middle of nowhere...ever again."

Wyatt moved closer. "I promise you won't be all alone and broke. Wade and I have quite a few prospects. The saloon has been more lucrative than we expected."

Maggie crossed her arms. "Then why don't you both stay here and run it? Why the skulking out of here each week to go north?"

"The reason we're hiding the fact that we're twins has to do with the property we own a few miles north of here. And it's a secret."

"My, my, yet another secret from the Chance brothers?" Maggie grinned again. "I can't imagine what other confidential information you could be keeping."

He grinned and took a step closer. She could reach out and touch him if she wanted. "Good. Then our plan is working."

She narrowed her eyes. "So you aren't going to tell me?"

He shrugged. "I'd tell my wife, if I had one. Want to reconsider my proposal?"

Maggie laughed out loud. "You're very amusing."

"I told you I could be funny. Everyone thinks Wade is the fun,

loving one, but obviously I can make *you* laugh. Think about it.”

“Okay, I’ll marry you.”

“Excellent. Now I can reveal all the Chance family secrets.” He opened his arms wide as if waiting for her to hug him.

She stepped forward into his embrace. Burying her face against his chest, she added, “You don’t have to tell me all the secrets. I was just joking. See, we have that in common. We can both be funny.”

Wyatt laughed. “I’m glad we have something else in common.”

He hugged her tight before whispering in her ear, “The secret is we’re mining our land for gold.”

Maggie stiffened in his arms. “You found gold?” Never in a thousand years had she expected him to say that.

He grinned. “Yep. As soon as we get all we can, we’ll sell it all at once and move wherever we want to go.”

“Are you sure you want me as a wife?”

“I’m positive.”

“With all that money, you could acquire a fine wife from an upstanding family anywhere in the country.”

“*You* are from an upstanding family, and we both want you.”

Maggie flung herself against him and wrapped her arms around his neck. “Yes. Yes. Yes. I’d love to marry you and Wade.”

“Let’s go over to the church and take care of it. I don’t mean to be unromantic, but I have a fake business to run so I can keep up appearances. And to that end, I need to get the locals off my back about making an honest woman out of you.”

She took a deep breath. “All right. Let’s go get married.”

“Do you want to change clothes?”

She gestured to her skirt. “I’m already wearing my best dress.”

“I’d be willing to buy you a new one.”

She scrunched her face. Six months ago she would have jumped at the chance for new clothing. Today, she wanted to marry a man she loved, and the clothing she wore didn’t matter one single bit. “No, I’m ready to go now.”

"I'll promise for both Wade and myself that we'll love you from now on. No matter whether you're domestic or not. I meant it when I said I fell in love with you the moment you stepped inside the bar that first time."

"I love you, too. I just don't want you to have regrets. I'm not gifted in cooking or cleaning. I want you to understand the extent of my limited domestic skills."

"No regrets. I want a wife, not a maid." He lowered his head and branded her mouth with a quick, passion-filled kiss. "If we hurry, we can get hitched and be back in time to open the bar."

She grinned. "How very romantic you are."

Wyatt laughed. "Well, perhaps we could open a little later and spend some time alone time together in an hour-long honeymoon."

She pressed her lips together in mock ire, but then failed to hide her amusement. This gorgeous man loved her, and she felt warm all the way to her bones with his proposal of marriage. "Make it two hours, and you've got a deal."

"Done."

Less than an hour later, Maggie stood next to Wyatt, clutching his fingers, and repeated vows to love, honor, and cherish until death parted them. And moments later, Maggie Altman became Maggie Chance. She was a wife again. Only this time, she was madly in love with her new husband—and his brother.

On the way out of the church, a tall man wearing a sheriff's badge stepped in their path and blocked them from moving back to the bar.

"Wyatt? Can I have a word, please?" The stern-faced sheriff glanced at her once and added, "In private."

"Whatever you have to tell me sheriff, you can speak freely. This is my new wife, Maggie. We were just married. Maggie, this is Sheriff Vanguard."

Sheriff Vanguard tipped his hat and gave her a curt smile. "Ma'am." He turned his attention back to Wyatt. "To the point then. I got a report that someone stole your horse this morning."

Chapter Ten

Wade rode to their property on the quiet, barely-existent trail through pine-scented wooded landscape. The mid-morning sun broke through the trees with different sized shafts of light spilling on the various shades of green and brown along the path. It was a beautiful ride to their land, but he'd done it in the wee hours of the morning so many times, he'd never known how pretty the trip was in the light of day.

Today, he took his time, set a very slow pace for Lucky, and extended the trip to measure and enjoy the land around him. He hated leaving Maggie behind alone but needed to get back and get working on their vast financial future. This was the first time he didn't want to hurry up and get to the mine. It usually took two hours in the near dark, and at his leisurely pace today, he would likely add half an hour to his familiar trip.

The slow journey gave him time to think about their immediate future.

And Maggie.

Their brief discussion the night before on the future relationship with Maggie made him smile.

Wade knew Wyatt was deeply in love with Maggie. At the end of the week when he returned, Maggie and his brother would likely have already tied the knot as a part of their permanent trio. That arrangement suited him just fine. Maggie was perfect for them.

From the very beginning of this secret gold seeking venture, Wade knew Wyatt wanted to take the gold they'd accumulated and sell it off to their pre-arranged contact in Rapid City as soon as possible. The

contact assumed they were headed to a property near Deadwood to stake a claim, and as most knew, all that land had been claimed.

Once they brought all the raw ore they'd mined, to their Rapid City intermediary, it would be melted down and the gold extracted. They'd always planned to sell the property to someone in Campbell's Valley. They wanted to leave it to someone deserving of a boon. Wade's first choice was Joe Stanton and his brother Frank or perhaps even Sheriff Vanguard. All three were decent men who'd been friendlier than most when they'd moved to town.

Wade took a deep breath of fresh air. The scent of pine and loamy earth filled his lungs. With their ultimate goal on the horizon to being fulfilled, Wade relaxed a notch and slowed his mount to take in the majesty of the nature around him.

To his left was an incline with low scrub bushes against tall skinny trees rising several yards to the peak of a small hill. To his right, he saw much of the same landscape of bushes and trees until he caught something out of the corner of his eye. Several yards into the woods, in a small clearing between the trees was a pile of rocks that looked like someone's grave. He would never have seen it at night, and the mound was too uniform to have occurred in nature. Why would someone stack up a bunch of rocks?

"Whoa." Wade pulled on Lucky's reins until they stopped. He started to dismount and explore the stone pile to assure himself there wasn't a dead body underneath it, but paused when he heard the snap of a branch on the trail behind him. He twisted around in his saddle and searched the land.

Shit. Someone had followed him from town.

* * * *

Wyatt forced his face not to betray the turmoil in his mind. "What makes you think someone stole my horse, sheriff?"

"A witness came to my office with the information a little while

ago.” Vanguard nodded once to Maggie, and the corner of his mustached mouth lifted. “I guess you were off gettin’ hitched. Joe told me I’d find you here at the church. Don’t worry though, I’m about to go track the thief down.”

Holy shit! “I appreciate it, sheriff, but my horse isn’t missing. He’s in the stable behind my saloon.”

“That so? Mind if I take a look?”

“Actually, I do.” Wyatt paused, trying to think of a good reason why the sheriff couldn’t see his stable. He leaned forward and lowered his tone. “Could we do this later, sheriff? I’d planned to be busy for the next couple of hours with my new wife.”

Maggie’s head dropped forward, and he saw her cheeks turn crimson at the innuendo.

The sheriff straightened, and Wyatt thought he might have blushed a little, too. “Right. Well, if you’re sure you still have your horse.”

“I am sure. Excuse us, Vanguard. We have a honeymoon waiting for us.”

“I’ll let the witness know he was mistaken.”

“Great. Thanks, sheriff.”

Wyatt steered Maggie off the steps of the church and quickly back to the saloon. If Vanguard checked, he’d find out Wyatt hadn’t lied about a horse being in his stable. It just wasn’t Lucky.

“Are you about to get caught in a lie?”

“No. There’s a horse in our stable. It’s not Lucky though, so I don’t really want the sheriff to look too close. Why did you think I lied?”

“I saw Wade ride away this morning. I didn’t know you had a backup horse just in case.”

Wyatt smiled. “We have a small stable in back of the saloon. There’s another horse that looks similar to Lucky. We trade them out occasionally.”

“So someone else saw Wade leave this morning.”

“That’s my guess. I’ll go ask the sheriff later on. Right now, I have a honeymoon to get started on.”

“I’m all for the honeymoon, but do you think we’ll be left in peace?”

He shrugged, and a long sigh escaped. “Possibly. Vanguard’s not stupid, but I don’t know if he’ll go back to the witness, sneak a look in the stable, or chase after Wade. I don’t think he’ll let it go. But I also don’t think he’ll bother us today.” He winked.

“Who do you think the witness is?”

“I don’t know. I saw someone lurking around next door when I came back from Stanton’s Dry Goods this morning, but I didn’t see who it was. I only saw a mangy pair of boots and a blur of someone running away.”

Maggie got a worried look on her face. “Was it Sadie?”

Wyatt almost halted mid-stride in the middle of the road. He kept walking and didn’t respond until he got to the saloon doors. “Why would you think it was Sadie?”

“Because she is very intent on getting you to go into business with her.”

“How do you know *that*?” Perhaps Wyatt needed to understand how his new wife had spent her time before coming to him last night.

“She’s been trying to use me to convince you. She was insistent. But I told her no. When I ran out of money for the hotel, she offered to pay my way if I’d come over and get you to agree to a partnership.”

Wyatt unlocked the doors and entered the saloon after Maggie walked inside. “So is that why you married me, to convince me to open the upstairs as a whorehouse?”

* * * *

Maggie nearly fainted when he accused her of colluding with Sadie. Distrust laced with secrets was not how she wanted to start this marriage. “I promise you, Wyatt, I would never do that. Not ever.”

His expression immediately turned contrite. “I’m sorry. I know better. That woman just makes me crazy. She’s been here every week, and sometimes twice a week, trying to get me to go into business since a month before you got here. If I could figure a way to do it, I’d bar her permanently from entering my saloon.”

“Why do you think she’s so adamant to set up shop here again?”

Wyatt shrugged. “I don’t know and I truly don’t care. She’s a nuisance.”

“She told me this place used to be hers, but her partner stole all her money and ran off so she couldn’t pay for it.”

Wyatt rolled his eyes to the ceiling. “Be that as it may, I just want to live in peace while we’re here. Once we sell the gold we’ve accumulated, we don’t have to stay here. Like I mentioned before, we can go anywhere we want.”

Maggie pondered where she might want to go. “Where are you two from?”

“Wade and I grew up just outside of Omaha in a small town.”

“Do you want to return there?”

He shrugged. “Not necessarily. Our father is already gone, as is our stepmother.”

“What about your mother?”

“She died of consumption before we were two.”

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to be. We don’t have any memories of her, although our father said she was a kind, sweet woman who loved us very much.”

Maggie nodded. Her mother was determined and often cross in daily matters involving her children versus kind and sweet, but Maggie loved her all the same. Her father had only tolerated her existence until she got caught, then he banished her from his life.

“Wade and I talked about heading out west a little farther. Do you have any thoughts?”

Maggie frowned at first. “Like to Montana?”

“No, more to the southwest, like to Arizona or Colorado.”

She shrugged. “My thinking has been centered on getting back to Philadelphia, but I wouldn’t be opposed to going southwest.”

The knock on the door startled both of them. Wyatt sent her a look that said he didn’t want to answer the door to any other interruptions.

She glanced at the grandfather clock and smiled. “Technically, you’re supposed to be open, aren’t you?”

“Perhaps, but I promised my new wife a two-hour honeymoon, and I don’t want to break my word.”

The knock came again, only louder this time. “Mrs. Altman, are you inside? I have an urgent telegraph message for you,” came a muffled voice from outside.

Maggie sucked in a breath. An urgent telegraph message?

Who besides her parents and Caleb’s partner even knew she was here?

* * * *

“Where is he? Where is the sheriff? I need to talk to him.” Sadie wanted to pound her fist on the desk and get the idiot deputy to perk up and understand her urgency and ire. Her meddlesome plans weren’t working out the way she wanted.

With his ankles overlapped and resting on the corner of the desk, Deputy Cross looked like he’d been taking a nap. Sadie didn’t have time for his laziness.

Ronald’s information had been very interesting. However, the more crucial problem she faced had to do with anyone going up north of town on a regular basis. How long had *that* been going on? It had to stop at least until she had what she wanted from the saloon.

Without moving at all, Deputy Cross remarked slowly, “I don’t rightly know, Miss Winters. But I’m sure he’ll be back directly.”

“Tell Sheriff Vanguard I demand to see him the minute he returns.” She’d been about to send Ronald over to make sure the

sheriff understood that Wyatt Chance was up to something, but then decided the better course of action was to infer that Wyatt's horse had been stolen. She'd sent Ronald over to inform the sheriff and put out the alarm.

A stolen horse would result in a search party. A search party including Wyatt would leave the saloon empty. Time alone in the saloon was what she needed most of all. And never more than right now.

If the sheriff had instigated a search party, the entire town would have heard about it, but an hour and a half later, nothing had happened. No gathering of men to ride or anything. Then Ronald had mentioned the direction of the suspicious rider as heading north. She wished she'd known *that* crucial information earlier. Stupid Ronald and his lack of details had pushed the necessity to get into Wyatt's place to a dire pinnacle.

"I'll tell him, ma'am." Deputy Cross, still balanced on the two back legs of his chair, didn't move an inch. She wanted to kick his chair over and watch him land on his ass.

"See that you do. I'll be over at the hotel."

"Is there somethin' I can tell him for ya?" Hands folded behind his head, Deputy Cross remained still as frozen lake water.

"No. Just send him my way."

Sadie desperately needed to get inside that saloon, and she wanted lots of time to search the place thoroughly. She just needed a reason for Wyatt to leave. Then she could spend some quality time in the saloon looking for what was rightfully hers.

The money her partner stole from her and hid somewhere in the saloon had eluded her for months. She shuddered a little bit at how much time she'd lost trying to take apart her partner's former home in a futile attempt to find her money when the treasure she sought had been at the saloon all this time. Although, the time she spent at her partner's house did yield the information she sought in the form of a letter he hadn't mailed.

Thankfully, she'd had the presence of mind to open it and read the contents. That scoundrel. If it hadn't been for that letter, she never would have known the money he'd stolen from her was hidden in the saloon.

If worse came to worse, perhaps she'd take something valuable of Wyatt's and see if he were willing to bargain.

Perhaps Maggie mattered more to him than sole ownership of the saloon.

* * * *

Wade dismounted quickly and pulled his rifle from its holster. Aiming at the woodsy trail behind him, he pulled the rifle stock hard against his shoulder, sighted his general target, took a deep breath, and hoped whoever followed behind him was a stranger and not from Campbell's Valley.

Unlikely, since the barely-there trail led straight to the town, but he didn't relish shooting anyone.

Wade called out, "Who's out there?"

Ten seconds later it was clear that the heavens above didn't care about what he hoped. Sheriff Vanguard rounded the corner and into his sights. *Shit.*

He lowered the gun from its perch but left it in his hand and pointed at the ground. "Why are you following me, Sheriff?"

Vanguard stopped his horse a few yards away. Reins in hand, he leaned over the pommel of his saddle with a puzzled expression. "Is that you, Wyatt?"

Given his amused tone, Wade figured the jig was up and their deception had been discovered. "What do you think?"

"Well, you look quite a bit like Wyatt. But I just left Wyatt back at your saloon with his brand new wife and it's unlikely you were able to beat me here as fast as I was riding, so maybe you could introduce yourself. And then you can explain the gravesite over there with the

dead body underneath.”

“I just noticed the pile of rocks. You don’t know it’s a gravesite or that there is a dead body unless you put them there.”

Vanguard narrowed his gaze. “All right. I’ll give you that. But if we’re going to continue this conversation, I’d at least like to know who I’m talking to. So who are you?”

He hated to reveal his name, but didn’t see an option. “My name is Wade Chance.”

Vanguard nodded. “Why did you feel the need to keep your identity a secret all this time or the fact that there were two of you?”

Wade gripped his gun tighter and grinned. “Well now, that’s the very nature of how a secret works, Sheriff. I can’t rightly tell you now, can I?”

The sheriff sent his gaze to the treetops and shook his head. “I’m not your enemy, Wade. And I’ve known there were two of you since you moved here three months ago.”

Shit. “Is that so? Why didn’t you say anything?”

“Figured it was your business. Besides, I checked several places to make sure you weren’t wanted by the law. I just figured you hid out because you were a little strange.”

“A little strange?”

He tapped the side of his head. “Not quite right in the noggin or something.”

“Thanks.”

Vanguard laughed. “Well, now if you don’t reveal the truth, fiction is what most folks will invent.”

“Right. So now what?”

The sheriff’s gaze went back to the pile of stones. He nodded once in that direction. “Any idea what poor soul is resting underneath that pile?”

“Nope. I’ve only traveled this way under the cover of darkness. This is the first I’ve seen of it.”

“Is this your property?”

Wade shoved the rifle back into its holster and pointed behind him. “No. Our property starts at the top of the next hill.”

Vanguard considered that information for a long while before saying, “If I promise to continue keeping your secret, will you help me out with a little bit of investigating?”

Wade glanced over one shoulder as the sun rose higher in the eastern sky. Bothered only slightly that the sheriff knew their secret, he considered his options. “Depends on what I have to do.”

“I need to find out who’s dead in that grave over there. Will you help me dig him up?”

Chapter Eleven

Maggie took in a deep breath for courage, and opened the message left by the man at the telegraph office. Wyatt waited patiently by her side, likely wondering if they'd ever get to enjoy their two-hour honeymoon. The message almost made her want to laugh out loud. If she'd received it yesterday, everything might have been different.

Wyatt murmured, "What does it say?"

She handed it to him with a sigh. He cleared his throat and read the message out loud.

Dearest Margaret,

Your father's recent message was sent in haste. He is angry, and understandably so. However, you remain our only daughter, and I do not relish the idea of you being stranded in a barbaric part of the country.

If you truly wish to come back home with the expectation of making amends, I've paid for a one-way train ticket to Philadelphia from your current location. Your ticket waits for you at the station. Please do not delay your return home.

With love, Mother.

Maggie was bewildered at her mother's change of heart. It came as an unexpected boon when she'd just reconciled to stay with Wyatt and Wade.

Wyatt didn't say anything for a long time, and she was grateful to have quiet time to think. Her first reaction was, "Too little, too late."

Her father's message yesterday had galvanized her decision to move forward with her life. She chose a new path. She'd made her decision to stay and gotten married to men she loved.

"I'll understand if you want to go back home." The tone of his voice was so low, she barely heard him.

"I don't think I want to return to Philadelphia."

"You married us because you didn't have a choice. Now you do."

Maggie whirled around and fixed a stern gaze on his face. "That's not true. I married you because I love you and Wade with all my heart. I never thought I'd get the chance to have what I wanted."

"What did you want?"

"I wanted to fall in love and marry, not be forced to marry a friend with no hope of a real life with a man or a family. And now that I have, I don't want another choice."

A grin surfaced on Wyatt's lips, and they fell into each other's arms. "I love you, Maggie. If you want to go back home for a visit, Wade and I will cash out everything and go with you." He followed that statement with an ardent kiss she knew would lead straight to the bedroom upstairs.

She smiled. "What I want is that honeymoon you promised me. You aren't about to stall me, are you?"

"Not me." His smoldering gaze aroused her as if he touched the hot spot between her legs. "I do know just exactly how we can start it."

"How?"

"What would you say to a hot, steaming bath?"

Maggie narrowed her gaze. "I'd ask where would we get one."

He nodded once in the direction of the other end of town. "There's a bathhouse next to the hotel. We could go there."

Maggie moved closer and wrapped her arms around his neck. "Much too far to walk. Let's go upstairs."

"Much too far. Let's stay downstairs." With his arms wrapped securely around her slim frame, Wyatt led her quickly to the

downstairs bedroom at the back of the saloon. “This is my room.”

“It’s very nice. Now let’s get undressed.” Maggie reached up and kissed Wyatt on the mouth. The moment their lips connected, he very nearly devoured her. His tongue tunneled deeply into her mouth, stealing her breath in the process.

She licked against his tongue, and the growl from his throat sent a jolt of creamy wetness careening out of her pussy.

Wyatt took his time removing her clothes at first, but by the time he got to her chemise, he nearly tore the flimsy garment in half to get it off of her. Once she was fully undressed, she helped him take his clothes off one piece at a time until they were both completely naked. The grandfather clock chimed the hour, which also signaled opening time at the saloon.

As the last gong sounded, Maggie said, “I’m glad you were wise enough to put a note out front before we left for the church to keep further interruptions from disturbing us.”

“I may leave that note up for the rest of the day. Now that I have you naked and in my bedroom, opening the bar today seems like more trouble than it’s worth—and a big waste of my valuable time.”

Maggie sighed as Wyatt pulled her tighter against his nude body and led her to the quilt-covered bed. He sat on the edge, grabbed her hips, and pulled her between his knees. His mouth sought one nipple and sucked it deeply between his lips. The tip of his velvet tongue swirled across her pert nipple, and she couldn’t help the moan that escaped.

His hands slid from her hips to between her thighs. The moment his finger grazed her clitoris, her legs went weak. She burrowed her hands into the silky hair and pulled his face closer into her breast. He nibbled at her peak as his fingers slipped inside her pussy to stroke and arouse her.

Each pull of suction at her breast sent a pulse of wetness flooding out of her pussy and onto his fingertips. He had two fingers inserted in her pussy, moving in and out to the rhythm of each suck of his

mouth on her nipple. The sensation was dizzying, and after a few minutes, she swayed on her feet.

“I need to sit.”

He disengaged his lips long enough to say, “Would you be willing to sit on my cock?”

Maggie laughed. “Yes, I’d be willing to sit on your cock.”

His fingers slid from her pussy. She widened her legs enough to allow his knees between them. The coarse hair on his legs tickled the inside of her thigh. His cock, hard and long, rose out of the patch of dark-blond curly hair at the juncture of his thighs and waited to pierce her. She wanted him.

He guided her hips directly above the wide tip of his cock and pressed her down until their flesh met. The heat of him aroused her and another flood of moisture coated her lower lips as his cock penetrated her pussy. As soon as he fully embedded himself in her core, his wet fingers probed between her cheeks at her rear entrance. She clenched her internal muscles around his cock at the invasion of her nether region. It felt like he must have used more than one finger.

“What are you doing?” she whispered. Wade had done the same thing, but only with one finger, and at the time, she’d been a little bit distracted with an orgasm.

“Something I think you’ll like.” One finger pressed slowly into her rear hole, and the sensation was just as dark and pleasurable as before. “Ride my cock and let me show you how good this can be.”

“I have no doubt as to how good it can be. Wade introduced me to this earlier.”

“Good for him. Now it’s my turn.”

Maggie was no ingénue in the knowledge of how various different sexual positions worked, but didn’t have much practical experience. Her former husband had explained the mechanics of two men loving each other. Some time on the long journey here, it occurred to her that a woman could experience that particular sexual act as well. She’d never told even Caleb that the prospect of having a man’s cock deeply

inside her bottom aroused her.

She lifted her hips up, and his cock slid out halfway. She dropped onto him, and the sheer unadulterated pleasure of the sensation wrenched another moan from her throat. Wyatt inserted another finger in her derriere hole as she found a comfortable rhythm moving up and down on his cock.

His fingers delved deeply into the dark space between her butt cheeks as she rode his cock harder and harder. His other hand found her clitoris and rubbed, adding another layer of bliss on top of the extraordinary experience. When his mouth fastened on her breast and sucked her nipple, she screamed his name and climaxed in a sudden plunge into dark, blissful oblivion. Her thigh muscles trembled with the effort of movement. She sat down hard on his lap, and his cock felt like it pierced a delicious path to her chest.

Wyatt thrust his hips against her and picked up the pace she could no longer accomplish as wave after wave of pleasure rode through her limbs.

A guttural noise came from Wyatt's throat as he penetrated her deeply one final time. The flood of his seed drenched her core as she attempted to revive herself from carnal bliss.

After a few moments, his fingers slid from her rear hole. He fell back onto the quilt and took her along. She draped over his chest in an unladylike heap, panting so hard she didn't think she'd ever catch her breath.

"That was amazing." Wyatt squeezed her into a tight hug.

"You were right. I did like that." Never in her wildest imagination did Maggie ever believe she would participate in such wicked love making. She never expected to enjoy any of the things Caleb had told her about on the journey here. Being with Wyatt was second only to being with Wade and Wyatt. She couldn't wait until the three of them were together again. She had many other positions she wanted to try.

They dozed in each other's arms. Woke and made love again and again throughout the afternoon.

After a third such foray into carnal pleasures, Maggie released a long sigh, slipped next to Wyatt's side and hugged him tight. "I think it's been longer than two hours since we started this honeymoon."

Wyatt laughed and planted a soft kiss on her cheek and whispered, "But so worth it. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Maggie was about to ask if she could take him up on the previously mentioned hot bath down the street, but the sound of breaking glass made them both sit up in bed. A few moments later, a muffled clatter came from inside the saloon.

Someone had just broken in and intruded on their wedded bliss.

* * * *

"Lucky we identified this poor soul as being Sadie's partner, Henry, before we had to uncover the entire body," Sheriff Vanguard remarked. He stood straight, and Wade heard his knees crack twice before he backed away from the pile. Wade hefted the final stone back in place on the recently uncovered grave and straightened, too.

"Yeah. We're *lucky* all right." Wade didn't hide the sarcasm in his tone. He wiped the accumulated sweat off his brow with one swipe of his forearm and stepped away from the pile of odious rocks concealing the unfortunate person still resting there.

Vanguard took the identifying piece of evidence and secured it in the knapsack strapped to his saddle.

"You want to offer any thoughts as to who might have done this horrible thing?"

Wade threw his hands in the air. "How should I know? I've only lived here for three months. This poor guy's been dead for at least six."

Vanguard shook his head. "I still can't believe you've traveled by this place so many times and never saw the rocks before now."

"Like I said before, it's my first time in the light of day. I only

went past this spot in the pre-dawn morning every other time.”

“Why were you sneaking out of Campbell’s Valley again?”

“Because I have a confidential mission I don’t want to reveal.”

“And the secret isn’t that you murdered some poor man for wandering too close to your property?”

Wade rolled his eyes. “No. It’s something else entirely.”

Vanguard raised his gaze to the leafy trees above and released a long sigh. “You’ll have to accompany me back to Campbell’s Valley. At best as a witness to the discovery of this crime, and at worst, as a suspect.”

“I’m neither a witness nor a criminal. I didn’t see anyone get shot nor did I shoot anyone.”

“Well, that remains to be seen.” Vanguard pulled his weapon from the holster on his hip. “I don’t want to have to use this, but I will.”

“Christ. This is ridiculous.”

Vanguard waved his gun. “Maybe so, but we aren’t leaving here until either you explain yourself or agree to come back to town with me.”

“If I come back, everyone in town will know Wyatt and I are twins. It will breed distrust. Distrust will lead to folks coming up here to see what we are doing. We don’t want anyone to know. Seems like a man has a right to privacy on his own land.”

“Maybe, but we aren’t on your land yet, are we? Now what has you sneaking off to the north of town in such an all fired hurry.”

Wyatt was going to kill him, but he spoke anyway. “We found gold on our property. We’re mining it discreetly. At least until you showed up and made me talk.”

Vanguard squinted. “Gold? Around here? Show me.”

Yep. Wyatt would string him up by his heels and leave him for the buzzards.

Chapter Twelve

“Did you hear that?” Maggie whispered and brought the sheets up quickly to cover her breasts.

“Yes.” Wyatt shot out of bed as quick as a scalded dog and searched for his weapon in the wardrobe next to the door. “I believe someone just broke in,” he whispered back as his fingers wrapped around the butt of his gun.

He released it from the holster, searched the clothing strewn about the floor for his pants and pulled them on one-handed. Stepping quietly to the door, he pressed his ear against it in time to hear someone speaking in low tones out in the main part of the saloon, likely near the polished wooden bar.

The voice was too muffled to reveal whether it belonged to a male or a female. Wyatt suspected the intruder had to be Sadie. No one else was as intent on getting access to his place, but it sounded like more than one voice. A chair suddenly scraped across the wood-planked floor.

The note on the front of the saloon apparently made the intruders think they’d gone to the hotel for their wedding night. Wyatt realized if they hadn’t been so impatient to get into bed, they would have been at the bathhouse right now. The trespassers would have had free rein to ransack and destroy everything.

Maggie being here made him reluctant to go out there guns-a-blazing, but he wasn’t about to let anyone ruin his saloon.

The sound of glass shattering from the other side of the wall made Wyatt grimace. He turned back to Maggie and motioned her to stay put before putting a hand on the door knob. He twisted the handle and

exited the room on silent bare feet.

Gun at his side, cocked and ready to fire, he traveled carefully along the narrow hallway leading to the sounds of burglary. Wyatt knew there were no candles burning out here before he and Maggie went to bed.

Even in the brightest part of the day, the large room was gloomy without light as there were no windows in the main part of the saloon. The previous brothel owners apparently had wanted privacy in the front parlor and the only meager light came from around the covering of the swinging doors they'd installed when making this their saloon.

The glow from an unseen candle bounced off of the walls and ceiling of the saloon, casting light and shadows around the tall room.

Once at the entry, he peeked around the corner and saw a man with his back to the hall. The man looked familiar, but Wyatt couldn't put a name to him without seeing his face. A candle flickered in its holder on the bar's flat surface.

The scent of whiskey permeated the air, and Wyatt suspected the stranger had knocked over a bottle in his search behind the bar.

Just then, the intruder turned sideways to rummage through the space beneath the bar next to where he kept the cash register. There wasn't any money anywhere in the bar area currently, but Wyatt didn't want the man to break anything else.

Gun comfortably in his hand, Wyatt crossed the room, silently lifted his arm, and aimed at the back of the intruder's head. "Stop what you're doing, or I'll blow your head off."

The man stilled and raised his hands to his shoulder. "Don't shoot, mister. I ain't even armed."

"Come out from behind there."

Hands still in the air, the man stepped sideways, crunching broken glass beneath his boots as he sidled out onto the main floor. He turned, and Wyatt recognized him as a local stable hand. Looking down, he also remembered those boots from the earlier intruder. Why would a stable hand break into his saloon?

“What are you doing here? And why were you spying on me earlier?”

“He’s with me.” Sadie’s voice carried down from the second story open hallway. Wyatt turned his head and looked up to watch her descend the staircase with a shotgun pointed in his general direction. He didn’t know if she was a good shot, but decided not to test her. Her weapon of choice allowed for a wide margin of error.

“Put your gun away, Wyatt. Ronald can’t hurt you.”

Wyatt lowered his gun arm, but kept his finger alongside the trigger. “But you can. Why are you stealing from me?”

“I’m *not* stealing!” The furious tone of her strident voice made him reconsider his own poor attitude at having his bar invaded. Sadie sounded crazy. “That money is rightfully mine!”

“What money are you talking about?”

She exhaled a long breath, traversed the final few steps of the stairway, and crossed the room to shove the barrel of her rifle in his chest. “My partner stole money from me and then ran off somewhere. I got a letter a month ago that said he hid the money in the saloon somewhere before he left.”

“Who sent you a letter? Who would know where your partner hid stolen money?”

“That don’t matter. What matters is that I need time to look around and find out where my thievin’ partner hid the money I worked so hard for.”

“Why would he hide it here if he ran off? Wouldn’t he take it with him?”

Sadie’s red lips pressed into a straight line. “Never you mind.” She turned to Ronald and sneered. “Put your fool hands down and get back to searching. It’s got to be here somewhere.”

Wyatt finally understood why Sadie wanted to be his business partner so insistently. “So I guess you’ve already checked his house.”

“If you could call it that. It was a tiny shack at the edge of the woods. I didn’t even know he had it until a piece of mail came for

him and the telegraph man asked me where to forward it. Most of the time, he lived in the downstairs room at the back of the saloon. Trust me, I turned that room upside down for over a week after he left and found nothing. The week after that we all got evicted for failure to pay the bank note.”

“Even if you find anything, what makes you think it isn’t mine now? I own this saloon now.”

Her thickly painted kohl-black eyelids narrowed, and she stared a furious hole through him. “Did you find my money?” The gun’s aim rose to his head.

“No.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Wyatt shrugged. “How much was it?”

Her generously painted red lips opened, but then closed. “You tell me. How much did you find?”

Ronald, still rummaging behind the bar’s counter, knocked another bottle to the floor with a clink and a crash. Wyatt turned toward the noise. “Damn it, stop breaking bottles.”

When he turned back, Sadie had an odd look on her face. “You have a very nice upper body, Mr. Chance. Do you have a huge cock to go with it?”

What was she up to?

Wyatt shrugged again. “Why do you need to know?”

“Well, it’s smack dab in the middle of the late afternoon, your bar is closed for the first time since you opened it up three months ago, and I wondered what prompted you to sleep in today of all days.”

“No reason in particular.”

“I don’t believe you. You’re shirtless and barefoot, which begs the question, what have you been doing and with whom have you been doing it?”

Damn it. Wyatt didn’t want Maggie in the middle of this battle.

“Ronald, go see if Maggie Altman is in the back room in the hallway where Mr. Chance just came from and interrupted you.”

“No!” Wyatt lunged forward only to find Sadie’s big gun pressing a dent in his chest. His heart pounded loud enough to be heard.

“I’ll shoot you dead, Wyatt. Don’t underestimate me.”

Wyatt took a deep breath and exhaled, trying to calm his rioting fury at dragging his new wife into this intrusion. “I swear to you that Maggie Altman is not in this building.” *It wasn’t a lie because her name was Maggie Chance as of several hours ago.*

Ronald crunched through the shattered glass and alcohol behind the bar and headed straight for the back hallway.

“Wait a minute.” Ronald paused halfway across the room. Wyatt considered his options and found he had little in the way of negotiations—with the exception of one thing. “Leave now and I’ll partner with you in your brothel business.”

“Forget it. It’s way too late for that. I only wanted to do that to get in here. I’m in here now. But instead of having to watch my back or wonder what heroic thing you’re about to try, I’ll just point my gun at Miss Maggie and we’ll see how hard you try to keep her head on her shoulders.”

Sadie nodded once at Ronald, and he disappeared down the hallway leading to his bedroom and, more importantly, Maggie. Sadie pushed the shotgun barrel harder into his chest. Wyatt closed his eyes. He didn’t want to die. Today had been perfect up until this surprising threat. He knew he’d let Sadie do whatever she wanted. He wouldn’t risk Maggie’s life for any amount of money.

“Ronald,” Sadie yelled over one shoulder. “Bring her out here.”

Wyatt gritted his teeth until he thought they might crack in his mouth. Ronald came back alone. He shrugged. “There’s no one in the back room.”

“How very interesting.” Sadie turned and smiled. “Now where could she have gotten to do you suppose?”

Wyatt smiled for the first time since being rudely interrupted from his honeymoon. Maggie must have heard what was going on and escaped. Hopefully, she’d run to get the sheriff. “I don’t know what

you mean. Can't a man take a day off without every nosy busybody in town trying to discover why? Maybe I just wanted to sleep." Apparently, Sadie hadn't seen his note on the front door as to why the bar was closed.

A clatter came from the direction of the back door, and Maggie's very angry voice drifted down the hall and into the saloon. *Double damn.*

Wearing only her shift and a thin robe, Maggie was shoved into the room by unseen hands—hands that, once Wyatt got a hold of them, might be wrenched off at the wrists for daring to touch her.

Maggie's irate gaze found his eyes and turned apologetic. She mouthed, "I'm sorry."

Through the door strolled a familiar figure. He held a small pistol and a large sneer encompassed his face.

Sadie laughed out loud. "Percy, where did you find our wayward girl?"

The thin, sour man who clerked at the hotel had a self-satisfied smirk on his face that Wyatt wanted to remove with his fists.

"She was running down the street in her under things like a whore. When I stopped her, she said you were robbing the saloon. She was headed for the sheriff's office, but I figured we could make another *arrangement* if I brought her back here to you."

"Thank you for returning her, Percy. I'll have a big reward for you once we find the money."

"No. I want half."

"Half of what?" Sadie frowned. The pressure from the barrel's end eased against Wyatt's skin a fraction of an inch. As much as he wanted to find an opportunity to snap the gun out of Sadie's fingers, he didn't want to risk any gunfire. He checked Maggie and gave her a once over. Her open robe exposed her chemise, and he noticed for the first time that she was also barefoot.

Percy sent Sadie a calculated smile. "I want half of the money you find in here."

“What if I don’t want to give you half? It’s *my* money.”

The hotel clerk lifted his chin defiantly, and Sadie quickly added, “What if I gave you a nice reward for helping out. I could also arrange for one of my girls to make regular visits to your room.”

Percy pulled another gun from behind his back. This one was much larger. He pointed it at Sadie, but kept his small derringer trained on Maggie. “I don’t want a *nice* reward or regular visits from a whore. I want half of the money. Or else I’ll shoot you and Ronald and set the other two free.”

Sadie shut her eyes tightly for a count of three before opening them with renewed anger. “Fine. I’ll give you half.”

Wyatt didn’t believe *that* for a second. She’d crossed whatever point of no return already calculated into this brazen burglary plan. Percy’s presence added the potential for stray bullets. Wyatt tried to reason through a scenario where he and Maggie escaped without holes riddling their bodies from the quick tempers in the room.

“Sadie, let Maggie and me go. You can search the saloon to your heart’s content. It’s not worth the price of our lives.”

“Bullshit. You’ll go straight to the sheriff.”

Percy piped up. “The sheriff left town a couple of hours ago headed up north. The deputy said he was after a horse thief.”

Unbelievable. Wyatt, suddenly distracted by the notion that the sheriff might find out about Wade, figured he had endured enough. It was time to get out of here.

“Percy, she’s going to shoot you in the heart the second she gets a chance.”

“That’s not true.” Sadie poked him in the chest again harder. It was all he could do not to grab her shotgun and snap it in half over his knee. “Ronald, get some rope from the back room. We’ll tie them up and then the three of us can search.”

Ronald complied and disappeared once again down the long hallway leading to the back of the saloon.

“And while we wait, why don’t you lower your gun, Percy?”

He nodded and swung the big pistol around to point at Maggie. The small derringer disappeared in his pocket.

“Ronald,” Sadie screeched, “what’s taking you so long? Hurry up.”

No sound came from the direction Ronald had gone. All of them turned toward the hallway entrance and watched.

The grandfather clock chiming and startled Sadie enough that Wyatt decided—do or die—to make his move. He grabbed the stock with both hands, tilted the gun upward from his chest, and shoved Sadie backward. She clung to the weapon even as she swayed off balance. She wrenched the gun sideways, pointed it toward the stairway wall and pulled the trigger. The resulting discharge reverberated up his arms, and the blast of buckshot hit the grandfather clock. With its face splintered, the clock stopped in mid-chime on its third bong, never reaching the fourth one, and glass sprayed the floor.

Sadie lost her balance, fell backward against a table and chairs, and got tangled up in the furniture. Wyatt quickly shouldered the rifle and turned toward Percy. His gun no longer pointed at Maggie, a familiar shape entered the room and placed his gun at the back of Percy’s head.

Wade.

With a flick of his wrist, Percy’s gun sailed to the floor. Wyatt twisted and pointed the rifle in his hands back at the instigator of this whole situation, Sadie

“I see you’ve done some redecorating since I left this morning,” Maggie flew into Wade’s arms. He kissed her forehead and released her as Sheriff Vanguard, Deputy Cross, and Joe Stanton appeared right behind him.

“Hi, Wyatt,” Joe said. He turned to Wade and squinted his eyes with amusement. “I didn’t want to interfere in your business, but I saw Maggie in her night clothes running down the street before this fool,” Joe punched Percy’s shoulder, “stopped her, pulled a gun, and pushed her toward the saloon again. I figured something wasn’t right

so I went to the sheriff right away.”

“Thanks, Joe,” Wade said.

Joe nodded and smiled. His gaze went to Wyatt, but he only grinned wider.

Sadie sat up, tossed a chair off of her lap and into the dilapidated grandfather clock, breaking the rest of the glass front. “I always hated that stupid grandfather clock.”

She twisted around and noticed Wade for the first time. Her gaze went from Wade to Wyatt and back again. “So there *are* two of you? I thought Ronald was daft.”

“Vanguard, I’d like to report a couple of intruders in my bar.” Wyatt motioned for Sadie to get up.

“Sheriff, there has been a grave misunderstanding here.”

“Save your breath, Sadie I don’t particularly trust you right this moment, and speaking of graves, Wade and I just found one up north and investigated it. We dug it up and guess what we found?”

The blood drained out of Sadie’s face, giving her a gray pallor. “I don’t know anything about a grave up north.”

Vanguard pulled something small out of his jacket. “We found this pocket watch on the body we dug up. It was located in the green vest pocket of the man’s clothes. The inscription on the back says it belonged to your former partner, Henry. He’s likely been dead for six months. Guess he didn’t run off like you suspected.”

Sadie’s lips pressed together flat, and she shrugged. “I wouldn’t know anything about that, Sheriff. Henry just disappeared one day, with all of my money, which you’ve never found, by the way.” She frowned and drilled an angry stare at Vanguard.

“He didn’t have any money on him, just a big hole blasted in his chest.”

“Serves him right for stealing from me.”

“No man deserves to get murdered, let alone over money. And I don’t like killers living in my town getting away with it.” Vanguard returned her ugly stare with one of his own scowling gazes.

“What makes you think I murdered him?” Sadie sneered and crossed her arms. “I’m a lady. Besides, how could I have lifted all those heavy rocks to cover the body?”

Vanguard’s gaze sharpened. The gun he trained on her lifted a notch. “How did you know he was covered with rocks? All I said was that we dug him up.”

Chapter Thirteen

“Were Joe Stanton and Sheriff Vanguard surprised to find out that the two of you were twins?” Maggie asked as they cleaned up the saloon. She had wanted to help them clean up the mess of shattered glass strewn about, but they didn’t want her to cut herself so she waited on the steps.

“The sheriff said he knew all along,” Wade said, as he swept glass into a pile next to the bullet-ridden grandfather clock. “But didn’t mention it because we weren’t wanted by the law.”

Wyatt laughed. “He checked to see if we were wanted by the law?”

“Yep.”

Maggie asked about them for a different reason. “Do you think they suspect the three of us are a trio?”

“Does it matter?”

She shrugged and rested her chin on one open palm. *Do they think I’m a whore like the rest of the town does?* That was her real question. She didn’t care about those who already had a negative opinion of her, but friends of Wyatt and Wade did matter.

Wyatt, half-dressed still wearing only pants and standing behind the wooden bar cleaning up broken bottles, stopped what he was doing and sent a concerned gaze over to where she sat on the steps. “Joe knows we got married. He’s genuinely happy for us. And even if he thinks the three of us are involved, he’d never say a word.”

Maggie stared back, watching the way Wyatt’s muscles rippled across his still shirtless chest. Now that the three of them were back together again, she was very interested in getting them both into bed.

Wade set the broom against the wall next to the glass shards and wood splinters. “Vanguard doesn’t care what happens between us in our personal life. He’s more worried about lawlessness and murderers in town. Given what Sadie likely did to her partner, Henry, his plate is pretty full right about now.”

“What about your plate, Wade? Is it full or do you have some time to spend with me on a honeymoon?” Maggie looked away from Wyatt and fixed her stare on Wade. He still wore his traveling clothes complete with dusty pants and boots. His cowboy hat rested on the newel post next to where she sat perched. She grabbed it and put it on her head.

He and Wyatt traded uncertain stares before Wade said, “My plate isn’t so full that I can’t stop for a honeymoon.”

“Good. Then I think the three of us should spend time together before you head back to your northern property. Today’s my wedding day after all. While the first part was lovely,” she glanced at Wyatt and smiled, “the middle part was unnerving, so I’d like to finish off the evening with two men in my bed.”

Wade’s mouth fell open a little before he caught himself and shut it. “Is that a fact?”

“Yes. It is.”

Wade nodded. “I agree that a woman’s wedding night should be special, and I always aim to please you, so what did you have in mind?”

Maggie leaned back and allowed the rise of the fourth stair to dig into her skin beneath the chemise and robe she still wore. “I told you about my first husband and his proclivities so it shouldn’t be a surprise to you that I have a vast knowledge of creative sexual positions already in my head.” She paused and looked at first Wyatt then Wade to ensure she had their undivided attention. “I’d like to try one of them out.”

“Which one?” Wade and Wyatt asked in perfect unison. Their forceful, wide-eyed gazes were intently focused for the next words

out of her mouth.

“I’d like for you both to make love to me at the same time.”

They remained as still and silent as a museum sculpture for several seconds, digesting her scandalous words.

Wyatt finally broke the silence. “Upstairs or downstairs?”

She grinned. “Husbands’ choice.”

The corner of Wade’s mouth lifted in a half smile. He pointed his chin in the direction of the upstairs bedroom once. “Why don’t you go on upstairs and we’ll be up in a few minutes to take care of all your inquisitive desires.”

“Why don’t you both just come with me right now?”

“Let us finish up. We need to move what’s left of the grandfather clock outside.”

“Do you really have to do it right now?”

Wyatt shrugged. “Maybe not, but we do need to prepare a little for this adventure you’ve got planned. Run on upstairs and we’ll be there soon to gratify you completely.”

Maggie started up the stairs. “Perfect. Don’t take too long, now.”

“We won’t,” they said in perfect low-toned harmony once again.

Upstairs in the first room she’d occupied since knowing these two amazing men, Maggie stripped out of her clothing for a second time today. She was more than delighted Wade would be joining them on this special day. It was the one aspect that would make her wedding day perfect—especially since the attempted burglary scared her so much earlier.

She hated to see the grandfather clock destroyed. The sound of it through the night usually calmed her nerves. But not tonight.

Maggie waited on the bed with as much patience as she could muster. Her nipples hardened the moment she heard the sound of boot steps on the stairs. Apprehension colored her attitude because *she* asked for what was about to happen. Both of them at the same time. One in front and one in back. A thrill rode up her spine in eagerness.

Fiery excitement spiked in her veins and made her skin tingle

from face to toes.

She'd been dreaming about being with both of them since she knew two of them existed.

The door handle turned, the door cracked open a few inches, and her heart flipped over with instant anticipation.

Wyatt stuck his head in the half-open space. "Ready for us?"

She pointed to her naked body. "Very ready."

He grinned and entered with Wade two steps behind. They closed the door and put a chair beneath the door knob. When her eyebrows furrowed in question, Wyatt explained, "Just in case anyone else tries to get in today."

"You don't think anyone will, do you?"

Wade, pulling clothes off as fast as he could, shook his head. "Of course not, it's just a precaution. Now about your previous request." He finished undressing, approached the bed, and sat down on one side. In his hand was a small tin, which he placed on the nightstand. His naked hip slid against hers, and the heat of his flesh warmed her hot body as he turned to face her, his cock already hard for the pleasures about to ensue.

She smiled. "Yes?"

"You sure you understand what happens in this scenario?"

"Absolutely. I can't wait to feel you both inside of me."

Wade pulled his shirt off, kicked his boots aside, stripped his pants off, and walked to the other side of the bed. "Get in the center of the bed on your knees."

"Have you ever done this before?" She twisted until she could lift up onto her knees and fairly vibrated with desire for her immediate future.

"Maybe, but don't worry about that now." Wade leaned forward and took one of her nipples in his mouth. The suction drilled a pleasurable path all the way down to the center of her pussy. Her core contracted, and a rush of moisture coated her lower lips.

Wyatt climbed onto the bed and settled behind her on his knees.

His hands gently gripped her upper arms, and his lips traced a tingling path along the sensitive skin on the back of her neck. His cock pressed deeply into her butt as the hair from his legs tickled the backs of her thighs. Her body arched in reaction to his touch, seemingly without any effort from her.

Wade skimmed his knuckles over her other breast as he continued to suckle her lucky nipple but soon slid his free hand down between her thighs. The first stroke of his fingertips on her clitoris made her suck in a loud, spontaneous mouthful of air.

Maggie placed her hands on Wade's shoulders to keep from falling over. The dizzying bliss of their combined attention swarmed her senses. Wyatt's hands slid down to frame her hips as his seductive assault of her neck continued.

She reached a hand down between them to stroke Wade's cock. He moaned, and the vibration tickled her nipple as he sucked. Behind her, Wyatt moved his hand down to her pussy and slid two fingers deeply inside. He slowly pulled his fingers away from her pussy to her rear hole and rubbed her slick essence across the puckered space.

Still nibbling her neck, he inserted one finger and then a second into the tight-ringed pleasure center between her butt cheeks. Her clit throbbed, ready to come, as both Wade and Wyatt deftly fingered her.

Wade continued stroking her clitoris but slid two fingers inside her pussy as Wyatt moved his fingers seductively in the tight space of her virgin derriere.

The musky scent of sex perfumed the air. Each breath Maggie took engaged her sexual senses even more deeply than the one before.

Wyatt pushed closer until his chest caressed her shoulder blades. He kissed her ear and whispered, "Are you ready for me?"

Unable to speak, Maggie nodded her consent. She was more than ready.

He abandoned her briefly to retrieve the tin he'd brought into the room. He opened it and scooped a portion of the contents onto his fingers before slathering some sort of ointment generously on his

thick cock. Another scoop went between her already-wet butt cheeks in preparation of penetration.

Her pussy clenched on Wade's fingers as Wyatt's cock brushed against her butt cheek.

Wyatt placed the tin back on the night stand, turned, and grabbed her hips. With a flat hand to the center of her back, he pushed her forward slightly and pulled her cheeks wide with slick fingers. The moment his cock touched her rear hole, Maggie climaxed. Wyatt worked his wide cock deeper and deeper into the virgin space as waves of satisfaction rode through her body. His single, long stroke inside the dark and naughty space between her butt cheeks burned a little as she stretched to accommodate his girth. Her orgasm pulsed against Wade's embedded fingers.

Once he was fully seated, Wyatt pushed out a long breath against her back. "Are you okay?"

"I'm great. You feel incredibly big, but so very good." Maggie pushed backward, and a stab of pleasure laced with pain greeted her move.

Wyatt slipped his hands to her shoulders as Wade released the nipple he'd been licking. Maggie leaned back against Wyatt's chest. Wade's fingers slipped out of her pussy as she moved. He quickly put them into his mouth and sucked on them as if they were a treat.

She motioned him closer. Wade put a hand on his cock and stroked the length a couple times before moving forward. His cock rested hot against her belly, but he didn't try to enter her pussy. Taking her face in his hands instead, he kissed her on the lips and licked his way gently inside her mouth. He teased her with the seductive kiss for several seconds before his hips shifted and his cock slid between her thighs to stroke the entrance of her pussy. Three seconds later, he maneuvered his cock deftly into the opening of her slick pussy.

Releasing a breath she didn't realize she held, Maggie moved her body to aid him. She wanted him deeply ensconced, just like Wyatt.

Wade continued the sultry kiss as he pushed his cock inch by agonizingly pleasurable inch into her body. Once he was fully seated, he pulled out again halfway and pushed inside even farther and paused.

Doubly penetrated with twin cocks, Maggie felt the stirrings of another powerful orgasm. Wade's hands slid to her breasts. He massaged the tips and slowly moved in and out of her pussy with his wide cock. The friction sent tendrils of pleasure zinging through her body.

Wade fucked her pussy with steady strokes, just as Wyatt pulled his wide cock out of her rear hole part way. The stinging pleasure of the movement made her groan in satisfaction. The pressure of his journey back inside the dark space sent her arousal into a new level of bliss.

Maggie closed her eyes and let the sensations take over. Wyatt moved slowly in and out as Wade maintained a faster rhythm. With both of them inside her, she thought she'd never feel anything so marvelous.

Wade stroked a thumb over her nipple and moved one hand down to her clitoris to rub as he pumped his cock harder and faster inside her pussy. Maggie quickly climbed to a pinnacle of ecstasy. The pleasure overload of being sandwiched between these two amazing men sent her soaring over the edge of oblivion.

She arched her back and screamed the walls down with her second orgasm. Wade fairly growled at the exact same time and plunged his cock deeply into her quivering pussy. Wyatt pressed his forehead to her shoulder, shuddered against her back, and pushed his cock into her puckered hole one last time before groaning loudly.

Suspended between them, Maggie wanted to sing with delight. She wanted to scream again in joy at her good fortune in finding two such perfect men.

Wade kissed her mouth before withdrawing. Wyatt also carefully slid his cock from her backside. After they cleaned themselves up and

delicately washed between her legs, they snuggled on either side of her.

This was only the beginning of their lives together. She couldn't wait to find out what was in store for her now.

With Wyatt and Wade as her husbands, she looked to the future with anticipation. The life she'd had in Philadelphia came with some lovely aspects, but it certainly wasn't perfect. With the other side of pleasure came a dark uncertain harsh reality. She'd learned firsthand about the precarious nature of living in the elite circles of wealthy Philadelphia society. There she knew the rules and had experienced what happened when they were as broken as the bullet-ridden grandfather clock downstairs. Back home, choices were taken away when infractions occurred.

Married to Wyatt and Wade, she pondered what would be expected of an ex-debutant turned wagon-wielding prairie wife turned homeless vagrant in a matter of a few months. She didn't cook. Cleaning wasn't close to a strength. In Philadelphia, she'd been good at spending money on frivolities according to her father. If only that were a profession, she'd be an expert. There had been no luxuries on the way here in the wagon or the money to purchase any.

Her life had taken so many turns it was a wonder she could still stand without falling down. Being tethered to something solid like a marriage only concerned her to the extent that she had nothing to offer in the way of a dowry. It was an element of her past so ingrained in her mind, she wished she had something of value to give these two wonderful men in return for the happiness they'd brought her.

Dark thoughts intruded on her bliss, and she contemplated a few truths. She didn't bring anything monetary to this unusual marriage. They didn't seem to care, however, it bothered her a little. She turned her head first to the left and watched Wyatt sleep and then to the right to see Wade doing the same thing.

Was this real? A part of her wondered if she were dreaming about the perfection of this new life to shield the dark reality of the Wild

West.

Maggie dozed off and on in a restless sleep, but couldn't stay in any kind of deep slumber. After a couple of hours of staring at the ceiling berating herself for failing to acquire a useful profession, she extricated herself from bed.

Very quietly, she slipped her robe back on and noiselessly moved the chair blocking the door. She sneaked out of the room with the intention of thinking up a way to contribute to this lopsided relationship.

There was still the ticket from her mother waiting at the train station. Perhaps if she traveled back home as a woman now married to rich gold miners, she could persuade her father to part with her generous dowry. The irony was that since she no longer needed it for survival, likely her father would be finally willing to part with it.

For as much as she loved Wyatt and Wade, she also wanted to bring something, anything, to their lives.

The first thing Maggie noticed, as she traversed the second story hallway, besides all the left over furniture and trunks strewn along the way, was the shadow of the ruined grandfather clock at the base of the staircase. Poor thing. She hated to see something so beautiful ruined.

Maggie stopped and opened one of the dusty trunks wondering if anything of value remained inside. The faint scent of cedar drifted out of the first one, which was stuffed to the rim with quilts. Lifting the lid of another square box next to the trunk, she discovered many candle stubs and various wax-coated candle holders strewn about the bottom.

She opened each of the remaining few trunks and found more of the same. Next, she explored each of the rooms and made a grand discovery at the end of the hall in the form of a very large bedroom. *This* was the room the three of them should be sharing.

Galvanized by the thought of making the large room their new honeymoon suite, Maggie returned to the hallway with the intention of dragging the quilts and candles to her new large space to decorate.

She started to pass the staircase, but descended to the grandfather clock. Could this lovely time piece be repaired? Likely not.

The wood's surface was pockmarked and splintered, the face was filled with bullet holes, and the hands were permanently set to four o'clock. She reached out and stroked the only unblemished part of the clock located at the top corner of the curved wood above the face. She traced the intricate carving and noted two more things she couldn't do. Carve or repair clocks.

She felt a small bump in the wood behind the façade and pressed against it. A loud clunk sounded, and a hidden door opened below.

Maggie squatted down and ran her fingers along the new door, cleverly hidden by the intricate etching on the lower side of the box.

She widened the door a little farther and peeked inside the dark space.

What *was* that inside there?

Chapter Fourteen

Wyatt woke up early the next morning before dawn had broken and noticed that Maggie was gone from their bed. He sat up and slipped from beneath the soft sheets, fragrant with her scent, as Wade stirred. He reached for his pants from the floor where he'd discarded them from the evening before.

When he saw the chair gone from the door handle, he got a little worried. "Where's Maggie?"

Wade opened his eyes and lifted his head. "I don't know. Maybe she had to use the facilities out back, which I'm thinking isn't such a bad idea right about now." He rolled out of bed and grabbed for his trousers.

"That's where I'm headed. Wait your turn. I'll be back in a few minutes." He finished pulling his pants up and fastened them opting to go barefoot to the privy.

Wade bounded out of bed. "Not if I beat you to it first."

"Don't bet on it." Wyatt opened the door and sailed down the hall, noticing something different about the hallway. Each of the trunks were open and several were empty.

Wade pushed his back. "Get going already."

"Look at the trunks. They're all open...and empty."

"Probably Sadie did it when she was here yesterday trying to rob us." Wade tried to squeeze past him, but Wyatt blocked his path.

"No. When we went to bed last night, they were all closed."

"Well, then maybe we have some ghosts. Sadie's partner Henry will haunt us from this day forward because I discovered his body under a pile of rocks on the way to our property."

“Very funny.” Wyatt was about to punch Wade, but then he saw something very unusual. It looked like a trail of gold coins leading from the head of the staircase to the other end of the hallway.

“Do you see that?”

Wade squinted and then laughed. “Are those gold coins on the floor?”

As Wyatt walked to the end of the hall, to follow the path of coins, he noticed something different about the grandfather clock downstairs. “Look at the clock.”

There was an open square door built into the carved decoration around the bottom of the clock that he’d never noticed existed. The discovery of a secret compartment amused him as did the addition of a single coin placed in the center of each step.

Wade pointed to the steps. “There is where the trail of coins starts. Shall we follow the route and see what treasure we discover?”

Wyatt nodded and led the way. He opened the door wide and was greeted by the musty scent of cedar.

Sprawled in the middle of what looked like several quilts piled on the floor, Maggie lay flat on her back as naked as the day she was born amidst more gold coins strewn haphazardly around her body.

From her long dark hair spilled across the colorful blanket to the dark curls gracing the juncture between her open thighs, Wyatt couldn’t believe their good fortune in finding such a perfect wife. They had discovered a genuine treasure.

* * * *

The sound of voices echoing beyond the door intruded on Maggie’s impromptu nap. She yawned, released a long sigh and stretched. She arched her spine and extended her limbs on the make-shift bed she’d fashioned using the quilts in the hallway trunk and waited for Wyatt and Wade to join her. Lanterns aglow with single flames graced the tables lining the spacious room and lent a warm

glow of intimacy to the space. It was the perfect setting for romance.

She couldn't wait to tell them about her remarkable find.

After opening the grandfather clock's secret panel, Maggie discovered a small, dilapidated leather satchel with a leather cord drawstring closure containing a nice stash of gold coins. She hadn't even stopped to count how many there were. Instead, she simply pulled the satchel out of the hiding place, left a trail and decided to do a little decorating.

The voices in the hall quieted, and instead, she heard footsteps heading her way. The door opened and both of her gorgeous husbands stepped inside. Dressed only in their trousers, both Wade and Wyatt displayed wide eyes and inquisitive expressions. She knew she'd gained their attention.

"It's about time you two got here. I've been waiting to show you the sizeable treasure." Maggie had only used a small portion of all the coins in the bag for her marked path.

Wyatt laughed. "You're already a sizable treasure all on your own. Especially without your clothes on."

"I agree," Wade added.

Maggie laughed. "You two are the sweetest men I've ever known. Why don't you join me, and I'll show you more."

They didn't move, but exchanged a glance, and both seemed very happy. "I can see everything, honey. What else do you want to show us?"

"Guess what I found in the bottom of the grandfather clock."

Wade closed the door behind them. "Is it, by chance, a number of gold coins?"

Maggie laughed. "Yes. I suspect it's the gold Sadie's partner hid. What do you think?"

Wyatt approached until his toes rested at the edge of the quilts. "I believe you've solved the mystery of the missing money. What led you in here?"

She shrugged. "I couldn't sleep so I wandered around the saloon

last night trying to be useful. I found this huge room and decided the three of us should live here together. Would that be all right with you?”

Wyatt clapped a hand to the back of his neck and released what sounded like an amused sigh. “I don’t have any problem with that, with the exception of there not being a bed in here, although I see you’ve improvised one.” He ran a foot along the edge of her stack of quilts bed, but didn’t step on to it.

“Yes. This will work for now, but one of these days, we’ll need to buy a really big bed.” Since she had their rapt attention, Maggie decided to see if she could arouse them. She slowly licked her forefinger and touched one pert nipple. Swirling the pad along the entire surface of her areola as they watched caused a gush of wetness to erupt between her legs. A spasm of longing drilled through her core.

She wanted to be a seductress for them. “Maybe you’d both like to join me now on my pallet.” She sucked her finger back into her mouth and then rubbed it over her other nipple.

Wade groaned and walked closer until he stood on the quilts. Beneath the waistband of his pants, Maggie clearly saw his stiff cock about to emerge. She cast a glance at Wyatt who exhibited a similar hard staff beneath his clothing.

“Will you both join me here? I’d truly like a recreation of last night’s...activities. I’m not ready for my honeymoon to be over quiet yet.”

Without saying a word, Wade fell to his knees, bent at the waist and took her unoccupied nipple into his mouth as she continued to rub the other one. The dual stimulation sent another rush of moisture coating her pussy lips.

“You’re hard to say no to, honey.” Wyatt walked onto the quilts and sat down opposite of Wade. He slid his hand between her thighs and stroked her clit once. “And you’re so wet, how can I possibly resist you?”

“I don’t want you to resist.” Her voice sounded husky to her own ears. Arousal permeated all the way to her bones.

Wade sucked hard on her nipple, and Maggie groaned in pleasure.

She removed her hand from her nipple and slid it beneath Wyatt’s waistband to grip his hard cock. He inhaled deeply the moment she wrapped her hand around his stiff flesh, but he didn’t stop stroking her clit.

The sensations rippling through her body were sublime, but she had definite ideas about what she desired. “I want you in my mouth, Wyatt.”

His hand stopped moving between her legs. “What?”

“You heard me. And when I bend over, perhaps Wade could enter me from behind.”

Wade released her nipple with a smack and grinned. “I’m game.”

They shifted positions and brushed gold coins out of their path. Maggie bent over and planted her mouth on Wyatt’s wide cock. He hissed a low curse between his lips and grabbed her head to guide her up and down. Wade stuck two fingers into pussy and gathered her substantial cream. Slathering it between her butt cheeks and across her rosette, he readied her for his cock.

Maggie sucked on Wyatt’s cock with a steady rhythm as Wade slowly worked his dick into her rear hole. Once he was fully seated, he stroked in and out in, the dark pleasure of his movements caused her to pause sucking.

Wyatt lifted her head and caught her gaze. “Your mouth feels amazing, but I want to be inside of you.”

She nodded. Being filled completely by both men was a pleasure beyond her imagination. She wanted more.

Wade pushed his cock all the way inside her tight hole and pulled her upright so that Wyatt could thrust his cock inside her pussy. She couldn’t wait. The sensation of being filled by both of her men completed her.

Wyatt kissed her mouth gently before pushing his wide cock into

her pussy. Wade brushed his mouth along the back of her neck, igniting her arousal even further. Wyatt slid his cock in and out of her pussy a few times before Wade began to move his cock in and out of her rear hole.

Sandwiched between them as they loved her made Maggie feel like she'd finally found her place in the world. These two men, her husbands, obviously cherished her and showed her in the way they made love to her.

"I love you, Maggie," Wyatt whispered. His hips pushed against hers as his cock stretched her pussy with each stroke. He slid his hand between them and rubbed a finger across her clit. The moment he touched her, Maggie climaxed.

Panting and moaning her release, she wrapped one arm around Wyatt's neck and put the other one behind her to stroke Wade's hip.

Wyatt thrust inside her harder until he stiffened and groaned. He pulled her close as Wade continued thrusting faster and harder between her cheeks.

"Sweet Jesus!" Wade pushed deeply one last time into her rear hole. Seconds later, he collapsed against her. His fast, hard breathing caressed the back of her neck. Combined with his whispered, "I love you, Maggie," repeated over and over, it made her smile. The musky scent of sex mingled with the heavy fragrance of melted candle wax in the room as the three of them recovered.

"I love you both so much." Maggie absorbed the delightful warmth of their body heat and knew she'd never be happier than in the arms of her two men.

Epilogue

The Campbell's Valley train station platform was decidedly quiet as Maggie, Wyatt and Wade departed for a new adventure far away from the town where they'd met months ago.

Maggie placed her hand on Wyatt's arm and squeezed. She'd looked forward to this day for months. Wade stood on the opposite side of her, wearing a hat to help conceal his features from any nosy townsfolk.

They had managed to keep the fact that they were twins a secret from all but a privileged few in town. The sale of the gold ore had yielded more than they expected, and after plotting for a long while about where they'd travel next, all three had decided a journey to the southwest would be best.

Maggie was anxious to be on their way to their new destination, but Sheriff Vanguard had just arrived a few minutes ago to see them off. As one of the few who knew the brothers' secret, he had been tight-lipped and hadn't revealed it to anyone.

Even when Sadie's accusations during her murder trial gave light to Wyatt having a twin brother, Vanguard made sure everyone dismissed her allegations as crazy. She was convicted of killing her partner and sentenced to hard labor. In two separate trials, Ronald and Percy were also sentenced to jail time for their part in the robbery, but would serve a lot less time than Sadie.

The secret of where the treasure she sought was never revealed during her trial, even though Wyatt informed Sheriff Vanguard they'd discovered it and where. Vanguard told them, since it was on their property, whatever was found belonged to them.

The sound of the train's whistle signaled that that the train was about to depart. A burst of excitement rode up Maggie's spine, and she almost couldn't contain her enthusiasm for the coming journey.

"Enjoy your new part time occupation as miner, Vanguard," Wade remarked with a grin. "I hope you're up to the physical task."

"I know you think I'm an old man, but I'm not. I've still got plenty of fight in me. Don't you worry." Sheriff Vanguard stroked his chin and winked. "Can't believe you're really leaving it all behind."

Wyatt shrugged. "After you've spent a couple of months working both the mine *and* your regular duties as sheriff, you'll discover why we're seeking a quieter and less stressful life."

Vanguard laughed. "That may very well be." He cocked his head to one side. "Still, the saloon won't be the same without the two of you."

"Joe Stanton will do a good job of running things." Wade inched the brim of his hat lower on his brow when a few more townspeople stepped on to the train platform.

"Thanks for the generous gift." Vanguard had an oddly grateful look on his face. Wyatt and Wade had transferred the title of land to both him and Joe for keeping their secret. There was still more gold ore to be mined, but her husbands were ready to retire from the grueling work of mining and owning a saloon. She didn't blame them.

"Hope you'll still think so once you've spent a few back-breaking weeks there."

Vanguard cracked a rare smile and nodded. "If you're ever back this way again..." He didn't finish the sentence.

Wyatt stuck his hand out. "Not likely, but thanks."

Wade also shook hands with the sheriff just as the train whistle blew a long loud warning for the second time. Maggie almost jumped in the air with excitement. She couldn't suppress the grin that erupted.

Vanguard tipped his hat to her. "Take care of these two."

"I certainly will. Thank you, sheriff."

Maggie resisted the urge to leap on the train laughing uproariously and instead climbed the three tall steps into the passenger car hall with as much grace and decorum as she could manage.

The one year anniversary of being disowned and kicked out of her parents' home approached, but she no longer thought of it as a bad event. Her life had changed dramatically, but now she'd staked her claim with Wyatt and Wade.

Seated on either side of her, each brother grabbed one of her hands and squeezed.

Heading into the Double Chance Saloon for a stiff drink the night she arrived in Campbell's Valley was likely the best decision she'd had ever made.

Maggie took a deep breath as the train swayed and moved forward. "New perfect life, here I come," she whispered with glee.

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

There are rumors that Elle Saint James used to live in Intercourse, PA where she devoured gothic novels filled with seductive heroes seeking redemption from feisty heroines. This was where her erotic writing imagination was developed.

Others are convinced Elle Saint James spends her afternoons supervising the cleaning of her personal dungeon and her nights directing the delicious torture that goes on there. Fortunately, her slaves take dictation, enabling her to write while otherwise engaged.

However, neither of these scenarios is entirely true.

The majesty of the Rocky Mountains, as well as her gorgeous husband, serves to inspire Elle Saint James' dark and deliciously sexy novels. She writes for those who are not afraid to take a walk on the wild side and explore more erotically charged sexual adventures in reading.

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