

Red Sage Presents

RENEGADE
& HIS
REBEL

TITANIA LADLEY

Three
Kinds
of
Wicked



An eRedSage Publishing Publication

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Renegade and His Rebel

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*Renegade and
His Rebel*

* * *

by Titania Ladley

To My Reader:

I've always loved a Calamity Jane heroine and the flabbergasted handsome hero set on taming her. Get ready for a shoot-'em-up romantic, very sexy western adventure with cowboy Renegade LaMarr and his spunky Rebel, aka Cassie Thatcher!

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 1

Montana Territory

1867

Rebel burst into the saloon and cocked her gun. Her pulse reverberated in her ears. She gritted her teeth and scanned the smoky room in search of her cowardly, deserting husband, Renegade LaMarr. *Where is that bastard?*

Aha. It didn't take long to spot that moose of a man over the guide of her weapon.

"You don't hightail it out of town this instant," she warned, her voice dripping with abhorrence while she kept the barrel aimed right at Renegade's handsome face, "I promise you, you're good as dead."

Over the top of the poker cards spread in his big bear-paw hand, Renegade shot her a look rife with irritation at the interruption. "Goddamn it, Rebel, put that blasted rifle down."

He growled as if she were some sort of annoying, snotty-nosed brat.

She took careful aim.

He noticed. "So help me if you don't, I'll—"

Boom, ping-ping, pow. Rebel peppered the room with bullets in an arc around her husband's head and wide-shouldered frame. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed patrons shove over tables to take cover behind the heavy timber. She heard the jingle of coins scattering across the sawdust floorboards. Harlots squealed and raced from the room in a flurry of skirts and lace. The player piano finally halted its tune, and except for the faint, quivering whimper of Hobo the town mutt cowering near the blazing hearth, the room was plunged in dead silence.

Despite the chaos and his brush with death, true to form, Renegade didn't so much as flinch one brawny muscle. His dark devil eyes glittered at her and sent a shiver of unease up her spine. Methodically—just as the big-headed ass did everything else in

his life—he tipped his felt hat at her and got to his feet. His spurs clinked against the planks. The poker cards fluttered to the floor when he relaxed his fingers and carefully inched his grip upward toward his weapons.

But Rebel wasn't to be distracted or alarmed. She'd waited too long for this moment. Her finger hovered temptingly over the trigger. This poor excuse for a husband would pay for abandoning her over five months ago. And, oh, how she longed to blow that smug look off the no-good son-of-a-bitch's arresting face. Nevertheless, she supposed she'd best just run him out of her town and make him snivel the whole way. And even if she had to do it with the last breath she ever took, she'd see that he never returned.

"Who in tarnation invited you back to Moose Junction?" She glared at Renegade through the curls of acrid smoke wafting up from her firearm. When he didn't reply—granted, she gave him very little time *to* respond—she answered her own question through clenched teeth. "Well it sure in blazes wasn't me."

"What the hell's up your craw?" Renegade asked in a lazy tone. He wrapped his long fingers around the ivory handles of the twin Colts holstered to his narrow hips. She heard the double click when he engaged the hammers.

"Uh-uh, pal. Don't you even *think* of drawing those cannons." She re-cocked the gun and glowered at him, aligning the steel notch with his heartless, burly chest. Even through the haze, she could see that the varmint still looked as alive and fine-looking as sin, and as menacing as a snarling mountain wolf. A soon-to-be dead one if he didn't cooperate. "You know doggone well I can shoot quicker than you can spit and holler howdy."

Renegade snorted with a lightning-quick flash of perfect white teeth. "Now, now, dearest wife, don't go waking snakes. Everyone this side of the Rockies knows you can't even hit a bull's hind end with a handful of—"

She sucked in a ragged breath and squeezed the warm trigger without so much as a single twitch of an eye. *Bang-zing*. The bullet skimmed the crown of his hat and sent it tumbling into a puddle of

spilled whiskey on the floor. With the Stetson gone, his shoulder-length hair shone blue-black in the evening sun streaming through the windows. The long glossy strands were scooped away from his smooth forehead, one that his wife had never once stroked or kissed. And thanks to his drifter's heart, she'd resigned herself to the fact that she never would.

To his credit, he recoiled and carefully stepped behind a wide support pole. His damning gaze and the barrel of his gleaming silver firearm aimed at her from behind the post. "Jesus Christ and mother Mary, have you lost your cotton-picking mind?"

"Get out. Now." He'd had the gall to return to Moose Junction, and now Rebel was so spitting mad that she had to fight the reflex to shoot his cowardly ass right out of his damn boots. The more she glared at him, the more her eyeballs stung with the urge to blink, but no way would she be taking her gaze off him. Not until that strapping, cold-blooded prick disappeared behind the mountainous horizon.

"This is *my* town, not yours."

"All right now, Rebel, that'll be enough," her father grumbled from behind the bar. "Put that cussed gun away before you kill someone." As usual, Tadd's displeased tone grated on her nerves. But with Renegade finally in her sights after slinking out of town months ago without a word, well, she could easily ignore Tadd. Uh-uh, no way in hell was her lousy father going to stop Rebel from getting her sweet revenge on Renegade.

"Butt out, Pa. You know very well a fool never bickers with a skunk," she warned, never taking her eyes off her lying, cheating, deserting excuse for a husband. "I'll stink up this whole falutin place of yours so fast with the stench of smoke, that pretty mirror of yours behind the bar'll be dust."

"I'm not bickering with you. I'm *ordering* you." Tadd stood tall and fine-looking in a fair sort of way, but a father he'd never been. After all, what kind of father would finagle a gambling opponent into marrying his daughter as a way to settle a debt owed him? Oh, darn right, Tadd would, just to rid himself of his embarrassing,

tomboyish daughter. Her pitiful marriage to Renegade was proof of Tadd's ruthlessness—a fact of her life, and just as real as the gold she'd discovered in a nearby mountain spring the very morning of her wedding.

Ha, and no doubt Renegade had finally caught wind of her gold strike. That must've been the reason her so-called husband had at last come slithering back out of the woodwork. If he hadn't been so goll-durned eager to skedaddle out of town the very night of the ceremony, she'd have gone and spilled the beans to him about the gold, a mistake that would've kept the scalawag here for all the wrong reasons.

Lucky for her, she'd kept her trap shut for once.

Tadd thumped white-knuckled fists on his bar and narrowed his pale blue eyes—eyes identical to hers, the only thing she'd inherited from him, thank goodness. “Now hell-fire and damnation, get out of my place before I send for the sheriff.”

“Want me to just haul ‘em both off to jail for ya, Tadd?” That came from the nasal-toned, brown-nosing local panhandler, Billy Thorne. Surprise, surprise. Scowling at Rebel with those bulging hazel eyes, he unfolded his gangly form and slammed his half-full jigger on top of the mahogany piano.

“Keep your weaselly nose out of my affairs, Billy,” Rebel warned.

Billy scoffed. “Affair's right, like you and that Trey fellow's been havin'. But you said that yourself, not me, Reb—”

Rebel shot the tumbler right off the piano, sending shards of glass flying.

Billy ducked and threw up his bony arms. “Christ *Almighty*.”

“You'll be seeing your maker all right if you don't shut your damn beak,” Rebel advised.

“She's right.” With his spurs jingling, Renegade strode out from behind the post.

The wide window framed his well-built, six-foot-four physique like a masterpiece of art. Rebel tried not to notice that. But blister it all, her eyes wouldn't obey her mind's orders.

“Everyone just butt out. I can handle my own wife.” Renegade glowered at Billy. “And nobody’s taking no one to jail.”

Under his long black duster, Renegade wore a crisp white shirt identical to the one he’d donned for their wedding. Just as she recalled, his smooth, tanned skin and smattering of dark chest hair peeped out from the open placket. She wanted to flex her fingers along his bulging arm muscles, which strained against the sleeves of his wrap just as they had on the day he’d embraced and kissed her in a cad’s promise of ‘til death do we part.

Well, she’d see to his death all right. He was putting her under his spell again, effortlessly, but this time she wouldn’t allow it. She’d just as soon kill the bastard than allow him to wheedle his way back into her heart. She tucked her smoking weapon close and slid a quick glance to the side to break his charm. But it didn’t work. The cursed memory of him naked and warm in her bed made her shiver in reluctant appreciation. Okay, so he was a breathtaking looker, but that didn’t make him a worthy husband or a respectable man.

“Coulda fooled me,” Tadd mumbled under his breath as he jerked a towel across his precious bar to clean the scattered mess of bullets, broken glass, and splintered wood. “You can’t handle her anymore ‘n I can.”

“My wife is no longer your concern, Mr. Thatcher.”

Rebel let out a hollow laugh. “Your *wife*? Tell me, LaMarr, how does a woman qualify as a wife when, for one, she hasn’t seen her husband in a coon’s age, and for two, when she’s only been bedded by her supposed husband just once in half a year’s time?”

A hushed murmur rose from behind overturned tables. Dozens of pairs of wide eyes peeped out at Renegade, awaiting his response with held breath. But Rebel didn’t need to hear his damn excuses. It had been a rhetorical question meant as a gut-stabbing, nail-him-to-the-wall insult, so she truly didn’t desire an answer.

Besides, no good reason could possibly exist for what the tom-fool had done to her.

Of all things, Renegade had the temerity to flush red, as if he

possessed the manners to express remorse—which Rebel knew he dang sure didn’t. But she refused to demonstrate any disgrace herself. After all, what had *she* done wrong? Obeyed her father by marrying the scoundrel?

Well, she didn’t give a yellow-eyed owl’s hoot what the townies thought. Not that her situation was a secret. Renegade had abandoned her within hours of their wedding almost a half a year ago, so everyone assumed, and rightly so, that the marriage had been consummated once. Still, she refused to fall prey to the people’s pity. Renegade’s desertion had been cause for celebration, a very good riddance. Plain and simple, Tadd had forced her into unwanted matrimony because he’d thought her unmarriageable. Well, everyone knew you couldn’t hitch a horse to a coyote. So the joke had been more on her father when, true to his character, Renegade had vanished directly after stealing her damnable virginity.

At the memory of Renegade’s commanding, big hands bringing her flesh to life, that recurring, traitorous warmth flooded her groin. She clenched her pussy muscles along with her jaw. *Don’t think about that night, you idiot, just don’t.*

“Whether I’ve had the pleasure of bedding you once or one hundred times,” he grumbled, “which, by the way, shouldn’t be aired here like dirty goddamn laundry, the fact is I’ve got a marriage license to prove you’re Mrs. Renegade LaMarr.”

“Yeah, well a single tumble in bed and a name on a piece of stupid paper doesn’t make it so. Pa’s name isn’t much better, but I’d as soon be as cold as a wagon wheel before I’d admit to being a LaMarr.”

Renegade’s eyes narrowed at the insult. He heaved an enough-is-enough sigh and took two slow strides toward her. Firelight from the nearby hearth cast devilish shadows and golden light upon his face.

Boom-ting, tinkle, boom. To warn Renegade off, she shot out a pane from the window behind him. Simultaneously, one Colt went zinging from his hand. The howl of the winter’s wind rushed in through the gaping hole, ruffling his long hair and sending a chill

through the room. A song of “Ooh!” rang out from the holed-up patrons.

Renegade looked down at his empty fingers, and then his dark gaze rose inch by inch to latch onto hers. He grinned, but the sentiment didn’t reach his eyes, which glittered with an eerie black frost that made her heart surge into her throat.

“Well, my *loving* wife, I’ve still got one more pistol left,” he snarled, “and I promise you, you aren’t going to—”

Bang.

The ensuing quiet in the room was palpable. Renegade’s egotistical expression vanished, but still, the stubborn cuss had barely flinched when she’d disarmed him of his last weapon. The sharp scent of burning ammunition and spilled spirits hung heavy in the air. She held her breath, awaiting his next move. Amid the faint sound of Hobo’s whimpers, a clock ticked from the corner of the saloon.

Renegade’s feet were planted in a wide stance. His nostrils flared. Empty hands now curled into fists, while the muscles in his square jaw twitched. “Well, well, that sure took balls. What you gonna do next, darlin’? Shoot my eyeballs out of my head?”

“Don’t tempt me.” She jutted her gun at him. “And don’t you call me darling!”

“Now, boy, that’s about enough,” Tadd said on a sigh. By *boy*, he of course referred to Rebel and her usual state of dress, a lad’s denims, boots, spurs, and duster coat nearly identical to Renegade’s. But Rebel didn’t give a cow’s smelly chip what everyone, and most especially her father, thought of her style. She despised those itchy, frilly petticoats, tight stockings, and poofy gowns. She’d dress however the hell she felt most comfortable, particularly now that she lived in her own home and had become her own boss. No more getting squashed under her father’s iron thumb. God, how she embraced the blessed peace and quiet! She’d finally been freed from his daily wrath reminding her of what a disgrace she was to him and the female gender.

“Can it, Pa. This is none of your dang business.”

“Oh, yes it is. If you don’t behave and mosey on out of here, I’m going to—”

She cocked the rifle and swung it around, aiming it at Tadd, instantly cutting off his warning.

“The second you forced me to say ‘I do’ to this miscreant, well, that was the second you no longer had a say-so in my life.”

“This is my saloon. I have a say-so in who can and can’t shoot the place up. Now take it outside or I’ll—”

“You’ll what?” she fired back, her voice a mite more shrill and shaky than she cared to admit. “You’ll shoot me? Well, go ahead, dear ol’ *Father*. You might as well. You’ve already ruined my life by roping me to this prick. Why not just shoot me and put me out of my blasted misery?”

Tadd gawked. The fire of insult briefly blazed in his eyes. “I’d never do such a thing, and you know it.”

“Then shut up and let me handle this my own way before someone *does* get hurt.”

“No one’s going to shoot anyone, goddamn it.” Renegade took three more steps toward her.

She swung the weapon back around, aiming it at his black heart. “Get back, you slimy lizard.”

His boot heel skidded on the sawdust floor. He held his hands up. “Whoa. Take it easy, Rebel.”

“Take it easy, my ass. I’ve been mad as a peeled rattler for going on six months now, so you’d best watch yourself. If you don’t get back, as God is my witness, LaMarr, I’ll shoot you. I swear I will.”

“Jesus Christ, do you have to call me LaMarr?” Renegade shoved a hand through his hair in that all-male way that used to make her feel fluttery inside. Repeat, *used* to. His next words came out none too tender. And it riled her all the more. “You know it’s Renegade, goddamn it.”

Yeah, she knew it was Renegade, all right. The coward’s name had been a toxin contaminating her brain for months, and a name she’d banned, guns at the ready, from Moose Junction. Still, *he* didn’t have to know that. He also didn’t need to know that if her

heart beat any faster over his return, she'd faint dead away. But doggone it, if her hands got any shakier, that bastard would be the one fainting *permanently* dead away.

Stand your ground, Rebel. Don't let him get to you. Don't fall for that sappy tone he always resorted to when he wanted something out of you. "Well, instead of Renegade, I prefer to call you a pisspot, son of a—"

"Cassie." Trey's deep, soothing voice approached her from behind. "Put the gun down, sweetheart."

Dang. When did he show up? His footsteps, soft as a cat's, inched closer. He circled his strong arms around her and guided the rifle upward so the barrel aimed at the ceiling. He'd only been in town and in her bed for a few weeks, but he had an uncanny, calming effect on her, like some sort of angel. The rage seeped out of her limbs on an exhaled breath, and she relaxed against the wall of Trey's chest. He'd called her by her given name, something no one in this hellhole ever did. It made her feel wanted and womanly for once.

Now *that* was a curious revelation.

But one she'd never admit to a soul.

Renegade's muscles tensed and his gaze riveted to Trey. Something almost territorial flashed in Renegade's eyes. It reminded her of a wolf eyeing his competition with lips curled back and fangs bared.

Holy stinking moles, is Renegade jealous?

Renegade blinked. "Who the hell's he?"

"Name's Trey Raphael," he replied, his voice overflowing with respect Renegade clearly didn't deserve. Trey gently tugged the rifle from her loosening grip.

Renegade loomed nearer, halting his smug stroll directly in front of her. He stood so close that she had to tip her head back to gaze up into his chiseled, hard features. Memories assailed her of that same face hovering above her in their wedding bed, contorted in ecstasy while he gently entered her. She held her breath and attempted to slow the galloping in her chest and the quickening

of her loins. But it was no damn use. His familiar leathery scent engulfed her, further enhancing the memory. But this time it became entwined with the wintry aroma of Trey behind her. The heat from Renegade's formidable body competed with that from Trey's, whose sinewy arms continued to encircle her from behind while his hands claimed her rifle.

An outlandish vision filled her head of being wedged between the two men while in a much more intimate position than a bar-room spat. But the fantasy abruptly vanished when Renegade drew a bowie knife and held the sharp tip against Trey's throat.

Rebel pulled in a sharp intake of breath and gulped amid the wave of gasps and whispers that erupted from the tavern regulars.

Renegade's order came with a guttural, deadly roar. "You son of a bitch, get your goddamn hands off my woman."

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 2

Renegade heard Rebel's gulp even as the heat of her petite body wormed its way into his thumping heart. Though he stood toe-to-toe with her, he didn't dare take his eyes off the man standing behind her—the one with his blasted arms around her, the son of a bitch who seemed to have claimed Rebel during Renegade's untimely absence.

Trey's black, fathomless gaze honed in on Renegade's knife and then locked onto Renegade's eyes with a gunslinger's precision. He didn't waver one bit as he gently guided Rebel around his big body and tucked her safely behind him.

"You can put the knife away. I'm unarmed." Trey's soothing voice belied the tension crackling in the air.

Renegade started to let out a sarcastic snort at the man's quiet arrogance, but Trey gently closed his big hand around Renegade's wrist. Rapturous warmth soaked into his hand and calmed the erratic drumming of his pulse. Though it was ludicrous, it seemed almost as if Trey's touch put him under a sudden sorcerer's trance. The seconds ticked by. Renegade attempted to glance down at Rebel, but Trey's lure proved so strong that he had to fight to drag his gaze away.

Renegade needed to re-gather his fury, but it slipped away. He clamped his eyelids shut and shook the strange faintness from his head. Trey released his wrist, and Renegade slowly lowered the knife in begrudging response and slid it into its guard. At the broken contact, a cold sensation suffused through his hand. He sucked in a breath. "Who the hell are you?"

"He already told you," Rebel snapped, peeping out from behind Trey's wide shoulder. "His name's Trey." For all the vindictiveness that dripped from her voice, she might as well have stuck her little tongue out, too.

That did the trick. Renegade barked back, "Do you think I've gone deaf? I heard that part. Who is he? Where'd he come from? And why is he suddenly the biggest toad in your pond?"

Rebel stepped out from behind her protector, her long black duster coat fanning around her in a fashion reminiscent of the wings of a raven. “He’s toad number one because he helped me to finish putting a roof over my head, something I can’t say for the likes of you. And in case you’re dunce enough not to realize it by now, you’re not allowed in my pond at all, LaMarr.”

Her eyes were like blue ice, her wrath like spatters of sleet. But he damn well knew if he took her to bed again, those eyes would warm to the shade of a mountain bluebell, and he’d easily be able to set her ablaze with his long-buried passion. Ah, yes, he would lay her back on a pillow and release the long braid of streaked blonde hair, spreading out its silkiness just as he did on their wedding night. His gaze trailed the plait’s thick path from her frail shoulder down over one breast, a breast he didn’t remember being quite so buxom. The white lad’s shirt she wore stretched taut over lush mounds separated by a deeply shadowed cavern of cleavage. Her nipples pressed against the fabric in an invitation to explore her peaks.

Jesus and all that’s holy, she looks so damn good.

“Where Trey came from, I don’t know or care,” she went on in that biting tone, “but as far as I’m concerned, it must have been heaven.”

Fighting a spontaneous erection, Renegade dragged his gaze from her heaving bosom to her pillowy, sassy lips. God, how the memory of that hungry mouth had haunted him during all those lonely months behind bars. Even now, he could still taste her syrupy flavor and vividly recall the power of their first kiss at the altar. It had shocked him like lightning and had made him realize that beneath the tomboyish mannerisms and garb, there lurked a woman he’d just sworn to love ‘til death did they part.

Ironically, what had kept him from giving in to the pain and famine and torture in that excuse for a prison was the memory of this saucy-mouthed hellion and her softly spoken promise of forever.

He took one more sweeping look at the palpable, sickening

affection emitting between his wife and that other fellow. Well, apparently their vows had meant nothing to her, and he'd been a fool to while away all those months with false hope and fantasies of once again unearthing the woman beneath the breeches. She'd gained more womanly curves during his absence, and now her shapely hips begged to burst from the confines of her snug male clothing. He'd always thought her harmlessly cute, but blast it all, she'd transformed into a voluptuous stick of dynamite set to explode his manhood.

"I'm from Pennsylvania," Trey offered hesitantly.

Renegade moved closer, his fists balled, and thrust his face forward so their eyes were an inch apart. "Right. From Pennsylvania. Well, by the time I get through with you, you're going to be on your way to hell."

Trey didn't draw back so much as a hair's space.

Rebel growled and started to launch herself at Renegade. "You bastard, I'll kill you myself," she snarled, baring a row of perfect white teeth. "I'll send you straight to your cursed grave, you son of a—"

"Cassie. It's all right." Trey stood his ground and crossed an arm over her chest to hold her in place. The fact that he used her real name grated on Renegade's nerves and had his pulse skittering with ire. "Let's just go on home."

"Home?" At the intimate word, Renegade jerked his head back so swiftly that his neck cracked. His temper branded his heart with resentment and an animal's possessiveness so fierce that it surprised even him. Unable to stop himself, he seized handfuls of Trey's shirt. Using his forward momentum against Trey's bulk, Renegade slammed Trey into a nearby post. Renegade lifted him off the floor and Rebel's rifle slipped from Trey's grip.

A wave of shocked murmurs echoed in the room before silence prevailed once again.

"She's *my* wife, and whatever place she calls home isn't going to be yours, too. Got it, *amigo*?" Of course, it was a moot question, so Renegade didn't wait for a reply. He wedged his hips against

Trey's warm, corded thighs to keep him from sliding down the pole. His breathing came ragged, and in the fight for air, Renegade caught a whiff of the man's clean, almost pure essence. It made him dizzy, the pleasant scent warring with the hatred burning in Renegade's gut.

Rebel's voice came from somewhere over Renegade's right shoulder. "Ooh, no how no way are you ever going to set foot in my house, you swine. Now let him go."

Trey looked down at Renegade. His calm was maddening, and his dark eyes sparkled with understanding and—Christ, was that pity Renegade detected in the man's expression? He had some gall.

"Yes, I agree," Trey replied in a soft, raspy tone. "It's your house and she's your wife. But you both need me for a time to help you straighten out this mess."

"What?" Rebel squealed.

"What?" Renegade echoed his wife, unable to believe his ears. His body trembled with the foreign sensation of jealousy and barely restrained rage at Trey's audacity. "Why you boot-licking wife thief. You've got to be one crazy bastard to think we need you to—"

Something hard jabbed Renegade's right side. Its concentrated round shape was cool enough to penetrate the layers of his clothing. Apparently, Rebel had her rifle back. But this time, she aimed it at Renegade at point-blank range, goddamn it. He suppressed a wince when she ground the barrel deeper into his flesh.

"You don't get your filthy hands off him, so help me, you brute," Rebel growled, "I swear I'll row your dead ass right on up Salt River and dump you directly into your grave."

"It's all right, Cassie. I'm fine." Trey never took his eyes off Renegade. He covered Renegade's knuckles with his warm palms, and that strange sensation of bliss washed through Renegade once again. "He's not a stupid man. He doesn't want a repeat of the last months of his life. He'll do what's right or risk the sheriff's punishment."

A repeat of the last months of my life? What did he know about

Renegade's crawl from the bowels of hell? Did Trey have something to do with Renegade's post-wedding abduction and incarceration?

The more Renegade stared into the tranquil eyes, the more his muscles relaxed and the gun's pressure on his back lessened. He didn't believe in ghosts or magic or any of that malarkey, but clearly, there was something odd about this Trey fellow, something almost magically mesmerizing.

He stared at the handsome, hard face so much like his own, that they could almost be brothers. But kin or not, Renegade intended to get rid of the competition and get on with his married life.

Rebel muttered, "Sure, whatever you say, Trey."

"Whatever *he* says? Is this some kind of goddamn joke?"

Renegade let go of Trey, jerking his hands back as if they'd been burned.

Trey crumpled to the dusty floor but immediately got to his feet composed and undaunted. "No. It's no joke. You really should calm down and—"

Boom-ting.

Renegade ducked when a bullet zinged by his ear. It wasn't Rebel's ammunition, for she stood too near. He turned and located the sheriff, his revolver propped on top of the swing-door of the saloon.

"Mr. LaMarr, I suggest you get a move on." A leathery giant of a man eyed Renegade through whorls of smoke. The scent of freshly ignited gunpowder hung acrid and thick in the room. "You touch Mr. Raphael or Ms. Rebel again and I'll have to put the next one in your rotten gut."

"Land's sake, it's about damn time," Tadd grumbled, swiping broken glass from the bar's surface into a bucket. "Thought you'd never get here."

"With all due respect, this isn't any of your business, Sheriff Benedict." Renegade squatted to retrieve the Colts Rebel had shot from his hands.

"Everything that goes belly-up in this town is my business."

Benedict pushed through the swing-doors and sauntered into the saloon, his gun still aimed on Renegade. "Now I suggest you get on out of here, or you'll be looking at the world through bars again."

"Again?" Rebel blinked, her blue cat's gaze bouncing back and forth between the sheriff and Renegade. "What do you mean, *again*?"

Ah, so she didn't know. It was just as he'd suspected, though he was glad to have that nagging curiosity satisfied.

Benedict shifted his stance and pulled back the hammer of his weapon. Renegade took mental note of the sheriff's twitching right eyelid and shifty gaze. "Nothing for a lady to hear of, Rebel, so don't worry your little breeches over it."

"But—"

"Trey, go on ahead." Benedict jerked his square jaw toward the door. "Take her on home now."

Renegade's nostrils flared at the second insinuation in the span of minutes that Trey belonged in Renegade's home. "You know damn well she's my wife and that's my house, Sheriff."

"Bull!" Rebel lamented as Trey guided her toward the exit, his hand firmly curled around her elbow. "You didn't even hammer one single goll-danged nail."

"Kinda hard to do when I'm locked up in a prison cell in Virginia City," he grumbled.

Rebel abruptly halted her steps. She jerked her arm free of Trey's hold and whirled back around. "You're lying. You haven't been in prison, and you know it. You're making excuses just so you can have my...." She let her own words trail off.

Well, well. It seemed his wife had some huge secret she didn't want him to know.

Tadd cleared his throat. "Uh, Sheriff, can you move this ruckus on out of here pronto? The little dickens's got my place in a hel-luva fix."

Benedict nodded, gesturing toward the door with his gun. "You heard the man. Out there. All three of you."

Trey's dark eyes fell on Renegade from across the distance. Renegade could swear his racing heartbeat slowed in response. "Come by the ranch tomorrow, east of town along the river, and we'll get this all settled."

"What?" Rebel gawked, looking as gorgeous and innocent as a cornered little alley cat. "No, Trey, that's not a good idea."

"It'll be all right." Trey cupped her jaw, his large hand dwarfing her face. He all but bathed her with an adoring look that had Renegade's gut burning. "It will. Now let's go, darling. I think we've overstayed our welcome here."

Darling?

Renegade held his breath, watching closely as her eyes went soft and limpid beneath the brim of her hat. She must have felt the same odd wash of rapture he'd experienced at Trey's touch. She nodded and her smile lit up the room, giving Renegade another glimpse of the beautiful woman behind the lad's clothes just before she left the saloon.

Trey tipped his hat and winked at Renegade, and then he disappeared into the light of the winter's waning sun.

Come by the ranch tomorrow.

Renegade stood there for one long moment, his gaze on the swinging doors, his hands resting on his holstered weapons as Trey's strangely welcoming words echoed in his mind. He could feel the townspeople's curious eyes upon him in the hushed room. But Renegade had never cared what anyone thought of him, and he wouldn't start now. The important thing was this all-consuming desire to learn the nature of this mysterious man's hold on Rebel and how he fit into her life. Renegade couldn't dwell on why his body had also responded to Trey—against his will.

His jaw tightened. He retrieved his Stetson off the floor, curled his fingers around the ivory handle of one weapon, and started across the saloon, his spurs clacking on wood. "Fuck tomorrow," he whispered, jamming the hat on his head. "I'm going now."

The sheriff tracked Renegade's every move, but he ignored Benedict and emerged into the biting chill of a January evening.

He took the three steps down from the boardwalk and strode to the center of the snow-packed lane. White clouds of vapor swirled out of his nostrils and mouth. He searched the perimeter for her, momentarily blinded by the sun setting between two soaring mountaintops. Light reflected off the thin glaze of ice atop the snow, blanketing the village in a muted orange glow.

Slowly, he pivoted on his heels, scanning the trail snaking past the livery, the bakery, and the general store. Finally, he spotted their wagon. Rebel held the reins with her back to him. But Trey's head was turned to watch Renegade over his shoulder. He lifted his hand behind Rebel's back and gestured for Renegade to follow.

Renegade's pulse beat drum-like in his ears. *Thump-thump, thump-thump*. Despite the chill of the evening, sweat trickled down his spine and soaked the waistband of his denim trousers. Renewed fury rippled up his body at the arrogance of the man, inviting Renegade to visit his own home.

"Damn you. She's *mine*." He raced across the road, snow spewing up from his boots, and launched himself into the saddle of his waiting steed.

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 3

With her back to Trey, Rebel stirred the stew in a fine pucker of temper. The gravy sloshed from the pot onto the log wall. “He’s a blackguard! A cad! A spineless, low-down dirty guttersnipe! He abandoned me *on my wedding night*. Why did you invite him out here tomorrow? Why?”

Trey didn’t respond.

She shook too much spice into the bubbling mixture. “I’m telling you, you’re asking for trouble. You had no right. If we get some hassle out of him, it’ll be all your fault.”

Rebel slammed spoons and iron lids at the woodstove. Though she was famished, the hearty scent didn’t distract from the anger and nausea that ate away at her gut. *Dash it all, he’s back!* She never thought to see the day. She’d resigned herself to widowhood and had even taken another man to her bed. Well, why the devil not? She’d figured if Renegade wasn’t dead, he was traipsing across the countryside, bedding every woman in his path. So why didn’t she have the right to take a lover? She’d fretted over his well-being so much that after nearly six months of seeing hide nor hair of him, it was easier to think he must be dead.

And all the while Renegade had really been alive and in *jail*?

She snorted. Probably got what he deserved. Most likely bedded some woman whose husband was a little bit too influential, or maybe he reneged on one too many gambling debts.

Rebel pressed a palm to her pitching abdomen. None of that really mattered at this point. He was back and obviously more alive than ever. Blazes, what should she do now? On the one hand, she longed to put a bullet through his liver, but on the other, something inside had leapt to life when she’d heard the rumor that he’d returned. Sure as the sky was blue, she’d found him sitting at a poker table in her father’s saloon, as nonchalant and arrogant as in old times. That had been as bittersweet and confusing as all Sam Hell.

“Why has he come back? And why in tarnation was he in jail?”

Trey remained silent.

She whirled around in a huff. Trey crouched before the roaring stone hearth, thoughtfully placing another log on the fire. “Trey, are you listening to me? Why did you do such a foolish thing? What if he—what if he tries to kill you for sleeping with me?”

Trey slowly unfolded his long, muscled legs until he stood with his broad back to her. He rested a bent elbow on the mantle and pondered the dancing flames. Rebel longed to wrap her arms around his trim waist and soothe the mysterious demons that seemed to have been riding his soul since she’d first met him weeks ago. But it always ended up the other way around, with him comforting her instead. He glanced over his shoulder at her.

“How could you have invited him here?” This time, she lowered her voice a few octaves. Trey had that effect on her. With merely a look, he could have her thinking clearly and rationally. And that was a feat in itself. “That’s just plum dangerous—not to mention it piles on the agony and leaves me in a fine fix.”

At last, he turned and faced her full-on. His straight blue-black hair scooped away from his forehead and fanned his wide shoulders. Land’s sake, he was a looker! Desire struck her for the thousandth time as she studied his calm, dark gaze and the sharp angles of his handsome face bathed by firelight. His wide shoulders and strong arms threatened to burst from the white linen shirt. He slid his hands in the pockets of his breeches and rocked back onto his boot heels, thoughtfully regarding her from across the cabin.

In a short time he’d taught her many things like patience and tolerance and keeping her unruly temper in check. She pressed her lips together. Well, obviously, she’d bucked her lessons earlier today, but she had that infuriating Renegade to blame for that blunder. Still, the most important thing Trey had taught her was how to rejoice in her womanly independence despite the disapproval of her father and the entire town. And Trey encouraged her to reach out to him both emotionally and physically. Many a time, Rebel had explored the thick, soft texture of that hair, the firmness of his body, and she’d even had repeated opportunities to memorize every inch of his fascinating cock. Her cheeks heated at the thought, but

emboldened by his prior tutoring, she allowed herself to sigh over his manhood's power and how it could make her open with eagerness in celebration of her womanhood.

When Renegade had abandoned her after satisfying her damnable virgin's curiosity and leaving her on permanent fire, she'd thought love would never come about in her lifetime again. No man in all of Montana Territory had even an inkling of interest in a boyish woman. So she'd silently fretted over where she would ever find another man willing to hitch himself to a tomboy wife. Yet all the while, Renegade's exciting lovemaking had haunted her dreams, arousing something sinfully deep in her loins, leaving her awake, aching and unfulfilled.

Then in the midst of a blizzard, Trey had swaggered into her life, and her heart had reignited. In one breathless night of love-making with Trey, she'd become the woman her husband hadn't taken time to learn existed behind all her guns and lad's clothing.

"It will be all right. I promise." Trey's deep voice soothed her, just as surely as his touch and his loving gaze. His eyes holding her spellbound, he sauntered across the cabin and reached for her hand. Passion rippled through her at his firm yet gentle touch. He plucked her hat off, tossed it aside, and led her to the bearskin rug sprawled before the heat of the fire. Gliding his big warm hands around her hips, he molded her pelvis to his rising manhood and planted a tender kiss on her forehead.

Rebel moaned aloud at the intimate contact. She wrapped her arms around his waist and stared up into his mesmerizing eyes, now as glittery and black as freshly mined coal. She never liked to admit it, but it was true that he bore a striking resemblance to Renegade—in every way but his heart and gentlemanly manners. Where Renegade could be harsh and arrogant, Trey had proven himself humbly self-assured.

Yet at times there was a shadowy side to Trey that did resemble Renegade. It emerged in the grim set of his mouth and the worry lines that creased his forehead when he sat deep in thought. Though she wasn't sure how she knew, Rebel had no doubt his

demons would not endanger her like those that rode her husband.

My husband.

She groaned and pushed the inconceivable thought aside. With her cheek pressed to Trey's chest, she relished the familiar flex of his muscles against her skin. She closed her eyes and drew in his scent. He smelled of home, of winter and smoke and pine, three of her favorite aromas in all of Montana.

"If you say so," Rebel whispered.

He released the tie on her braid and then unraveled the strands in that loving way she'd come to know over the last few weeks.

"Do you know how beautiful you are?" He caressed her spine with one hand while combing the other through her long hair, now tumbling around her shoulders and back.

She nuzzled her face in the clean-smelling crook of his neck. "You're the only person who's ever said that to me."

Chills trickled down her body from scalp to rear. His exploring touch was always the precursor to that same heavy, tingling sensation in her womb she'd yearned for since Renegade had first touched her and brought her womanhood to life. Already, her labia and clit were deliciously warm. Very soon, her quim would be damp inside and out with her juices. If Trey didn't first explore her passage with his long fingers, lazily stirring up her musky scent, she knew he would slip into her with a ferocity that could make her climax within seconds. Or maybe he would drag out her tortured pleasure by gliding his wet tongue through her slit and tasting her cream. *Whew!* She shivered with delight at the thought of her legs spread wide for him, her hips bucking against his rough, stubbled jaw and glazed mouth.

Her loins quickened, impatient for relief. She closed her eyes and released a slow breath to soothe the erratic beating of her heart. She breathed in deeply, anticipating what would come. He unfastened her shirt and brushed it off her shoulders. It fell forgotten to the rug, leaving her breasts bared and the tight aching nipples exposed to his commanding gaze.

He toed off his boots and kicked them aside. She mimicked his

move, and her chilled toes curled into the soft fur of the rug. His warm palms dragged down her arms until his fingers met hers, entwining with a passion and a message all their own. He simply adored her. Ever since that first night when he'd made love to her and given her relief from the pain of Renegade's abandonment, every fiery kiss, every doting look, every murmured word of affection spoke of his tenderness for her.

Trey lifted her hand and sucked her fingers into his mouth one by one. An inferno surged through her hand and in her blood. Her heart fluttered when he swirled his tongue around her index finger. Sucking, nipping, licking. He watched her over her knuckles, his black-as-sin eyes holding her in a trance that molded her heart like clay and urged her to surrender to his touch. Without removing her fingers from his mouth, he reached down with his free hand, unfastened her holster, and set the belt aside. He didn't have to tell her what to do next. She unbuttoned her denims one-handed and nudged them down over her hips. The fabric piled around her ankles, and his gaze went darker still when it honed in on the pale curls at her apex. Her breath quickened and her pussy swelled with heavy, achy excitement. Legs quivering with anticipation, she obeyed his silent command and stepped out of the puddled garment so that her naked body stood unhindered before him.

"Mmm, look at you." He kissed the tip of her finger before holding her hands out to her sides. His gaze heated every inch of her flesh. "You're all woman, a complete treasure beneath the mask of male toughness you typically wear."

She frowned. "It's not a mask. It's how I protect myself."

"It's all right, Cassie." He traced her bottom lip with his thumb, his eyes following the trek of the gentle motion. "You know I understand."

And she knew he did.

He drew his shirt over his head. His sinewy torso was cast in long shadows, every taut, smooth muscle flexing powerfully. Emblazoned upon his chest was a familiar but mysterious tattoo of a red heart shackled in black chain links. The links trailed over his

shoulder and snaked down his muscular arm. She'd been shocked the first time she'd kissed the ink and it had brought her to climax. But this time, she wanted to savor him, and to be savored *by* him, so she would take her time and squirrel away that delicious delicacy for much later.

Next his trousers came off. "You've never had anyone to keep you safe and let you be you. But you will from this night forward."

"You've already let me be me. You have for several weeks now." Her hungry perusal dropped to his impressive erection. The long, veined shaft jutted upward against his rippled abdomen. His full sac drew up so tightly with desire that she could easily see the outline of the inner spheres she'd explored on many occasions. She clenched her groin muscles and warm cream trickled from her passage.

He stepped closer, his sturdy, corded legs flexing with the movement. He cupped her jaw with his hand, and she noted with shocked surprise that it trembled. "You have your husband again. From now on, he will be the one to keep you safe. To love you."

Rebel blinked. *What the hell is he talking about? Is he leaving me?* Panic ripped through her gut and snatched her breath from her lungs. The fire in her womb instantly snuffed out. "No. No, you don't understand. He's a drifter. He's here, but he won't be staying. He never does. And he never could."

His warm fingertips slid into the loose hair at the nape of her neck. He rubbed the base of her skull. His gaze bore into hers, his pupils so dilated that she couldn't determine where the irises began. Lust sparked back to life in her loins. She fought to keep her eyes open when a combination of rapture and dizziness seized her. The more he caressed her neck, the more aroused and giddy she became.

"He *will* see the woman that you truly are." His dark slash of eyebrows inverted downward, shadowing his eyes for a brief moment. "He has to."

Her gaze was drawn to his lips, now full and pursed with indecision as he studied her face. Animal urges tore through her. She

wanted to forget his words, to be ravished by him until dawn. But a seed of doubt sprouted in her mind, delaying the romantic moment and resurrecting her ire. “I don’t think he’d be stupid enough to take you up on your strange invitation tomorrow, but I swear, if he does, I’ll draw my rifle so fast he’ll—”

“Hey. We don’t need to talk about him right now.” He tipped up her chin and captured her mouth in a devastating kiss that struck her center like a bolt of lightning. Dragging his moist lips back and forth over hers, he murmured against her mouth, “Make love with me instead.”

It was just what she wanted to hear, exactly the distraction she needed from the disconcerting topic of her husband’s recent arrival.

Trey claimed her, heart and soul, with the kiss alone. She breathed heavily and opened her mouth wide to accept his generous passion. He tasted of wine, intoxicating and sweet, as his tongue delved past her trembling lips and teeth to spar with hers. His kiss drugged her with its power as that familiar lust spilled into her blood. His fingers massaged her shoulders, and then glided down to mold and knead her buttocks. He teased her rectum with the faint swirl of a fingertip. Sensual yearning ignited deep inside her ass. Even as one hand continued to entice her derriere, the other slipped between their bodies, and he palmed one breast, now and then tweaking her nipple between his thumb and forefinger. Simultaneous sparks of desire ignited at both spots, blazing a trail to meet at her core.

Clinging to his hard, strong body, she kissed him back with a fierceness that surprised her. She must have him now, and she let him know it by rising on tiptoe to arch her body into his, rubbing her taut bud over his stiff cock.

Trey knelt gloriously naked and manly before her. Her chest ached with affection. His eyes demanded more while his hand wrapped snugly around hers and tugged her down to the floor. Amid a tangle of limbs, they tumbled onto the bearskin rug with a kiss so searing as to rival the flames burning in the hearth. Rebel gave in, letting herself drown beneath Trey’s practiced touch. But

as always, in that moment of hot-blooded capitulation, it was Renegade she saw before her, Renegade who loved and worshipped her.

Renegade, Renegade....

In her fevered mind, it was her husband who slipped inside her and wrought a scream of joy from her throat.

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 4

Winds as bitter as Renegade's heart whipped his coat behind him. He stood beneath the night sky, his boots shin-deep in snow, staring at the expansive hand-hewn log home she'd built without him. The steep roof cut against the backdrop of the Rockies. The stone chimney's smoke painted the mountains and the half-moon with a gray stroke of mist. He pulled in a deep, cold breath. Beneath the pungent odor of ash and pine, he detected the appetizing scent of a gamey stew. Had she cooked for Trey, too?

Renegade clenched his hands. So he'd made a mistake. That, he knew. He'd turned tail and run on their wedding night. What man wouldn't have gotten cold feet when faced with marrying someone more a lad than a woman?

He sighed. But that wasn't exactly the honorable thing to do, a fact he'd had plenty of time to mull over in the last few months. Still, to give himself credit, he'd had a change of heart that fateful night. Her innocent kiss alone had possessed the power to reach out and grab him by the cock and stroke him like no other woman before her. The more miles he'd galloped away from her, the harder his shaft had become at the memory of her damp snugness. He would never forget her surprised little moan of eager pleasure after he'd breached her maidenhead and allowed her body time to accept him. Her all-consuming passion had not been what he'd expected from a boyish girl. Nonetheless, he'd forced himself to ignore the tenderness that had assailed him at the woman he'd unearthed, and like the varmint she'd called him, he'd fled from his own wife. By marrying her, his debt to her father had been repaid. But his manhood had confirmed and finally accepted what his heart must have known all along. A feminine creature lurked beneath those damn breeches and that manly hat, a woman so vibrant and unique he couldn't see his future without her. Somehow, the past years traveling the territory in search of quality livestock and horses for his ranch situated well outside Virginia City had seemed completely dull in comparison to a life with that spitfire.

But the last thing he'd expected was to whirl his horse around to return to her, only to have his world go black and awaken in a rat-infested jail cell.

His mouth thinned. No trial, no explanations, and no mention of what he'd been charged with. Now that he'd escaped and returned to Moose Junction, he had his suspicions, but for the moment, it was time to make up for the newlywed months they'd both missed.

And time to get that other man out of his house and out of her life.

Behind him, Renegade could hear the rush of water and the occasional groan of ice chunks battling their way downriver. An owl hooted in the distant forest, while up there beyond the sparkling panes of glass, held within the warmth of his home, resided his wife—with another man.

Every now and then, if he tipped his head just so, he could hear the clatter of pots and pans and two low voices, one deep and soothing, one womanly yet contrary in tone.

That was his Rebel, ornery and yet as vibrant as gold.

With his eyes on the heavy oak door, he hiked up the sloped yard and through the deep drifts, snow crunching beneath his boots. Tethering his stallion to the railing of the covered wrap-around porch, he looked up and caught a glimpse of Trey passing by the window. His rich black hair gleamed in the firelight. Renegade's firelight.

Damn him for taking over my life.

The welcoming orange glow within the house's sturdy walls lured Renegade up the six stairs to the wide covered balcony. He stood there for several moments shivering as though he still hungered down in the damp, dank cell. Except he'd escaped hell and finally found his way to the gates of heaven.

Only one particular fiend barred him from entering.

Shaking the horrid memories from his head, he lifted a fist to rap on the door. But an unfettered moan of ecstasy from within had him halting the knock midair. "What the...?"

Renegade took three shuffling sidesteps along the outer wall

until he reached the multi-paned window. As intimate murmurs reached his ears, he cautiously peered around the window's frame.

A growl rumbled from deep in his chest at the sight that met his eyes. Rebel stood before the hearth enfolded in Trey's embrace. He released the tie in her braid and lovingly combed his fingers through the shimmering tresses. The mass tumbled down her slim back, reaching her hips in a cascade of gilded platinum. Renegade swore under his breath, his gaze glued to the feminine, silky mass. He vividly remembered what it felt like to tangle his hands in the strands and to bury his nose in its thickness. Even now, he could almost smell the fresh scent of her while in the throes of lovemaking.

And it killed him to see another man taking that same liberty with *his* wife.

When Trey's hand moved in a lover's caress beneath her hair, Renegade's heart picked up its pace, his pulse now thudding in his ears. He inched closer to the window, shocked by the voyeuristic hard-on that tented his jeans. Holding his breath, he leaned nearer to the glass for a better view. She still wore her usual button-down lad's shirt and breeches. Trey reached up and slid the shirt from her shoulders. It dropped to the bearskin rug, leaving behind glimpses of milky white flesh and unmistakable curves. Renegade released a puff of air that briefly fogged the glass.

His eyes widened when she slid her pants over her hips and down her legs. She had been thinner on their wedding night, though still feminine and extremely desirable. Their wedding kiss had hinted at the woman beneath the lad's costume, and his later prison fantasies had conjured up the tantalizing memory of her lean nakedness. Yet, somehow in his absence, she'd blossomed and become even more shapely than he recalled. Yes, he'd seen evidence of her lush womanhood in the saloon earlier this evening, but nothing could compare to the flesh-and-blood sight of her boyish shell being shed before his very eyes.

"Jesus," he swore beneath his breath, devouring her firm, sloped ass and the backs of creamy, toned thighs.

Trey didn't waste time. His hands were there, cupping and mas-

saging the twin globes of her rear, pulling them apart until Renegade got the most erotic view of her small puckered anus.

“Goddamn it, get your hands off my woman!” His voice rumbled across the river’s canyon.

But Rebel and Trey seemed not to hear him.

Even as he hungered to watch his wife blooming like a delicate flower before his eyes, he rapped his knuckles against the window-pane to halt the tantalizing sight. Tense, he started toward the door to end the maddening, seductive scene, but something stopped him. He didn’t know if it was the irresistible sight of Trey playing with her ass, or watching her climb up Trey’s big body like a starved kitten, but some warm, strong force held him rooted to that spot. While the two made love inside the warmth of Renegade’s home, they didn’t appear to notice him standing directly before the window gawking at them. It was as if he dreamed it all, as if he were a ghost unable to reach into the world of the vibrant living.

Wind whistled around the eaves, rustling Renegade’s hair and coat, but the chill couldn’t possibly cool the odd, heated mixture of fury and lust that thrummed through his blood and constricted every muscle in his body. He planted his palms on the cold glass, trembling from boots to crown as Trey disrobed. Trey’s body shone powerful and fit in the firelight, the flexed mass of muscles defined by the play of light and shadows. When Trey angled toward the window, Renegade saw a curious tattoo of oval links snaking up his left arm and crossing over to entwine around a heart on his chest. The marking made the man seem even more masculine. But Trey’s impressive, long cock poised in anticipation of passion achieved that undeniable quality far more.

Renegade’s own shaft went harder, the fabric of his pants tightening across his groin. He reached down and stroked himself to ease the heavy ache. Wicked images filled his head of Renegade and Trey ravishing Rebel together, steeping her in all-male attention and bringing her to the very brink of feminine sexual madness. Renegade had had his fill in the past of promiscuity and hedonistic pleasures. Still, the fantasy with Rebel and Trey shocked him. This

was his one and only wife, yet the idea of immersing the tomboyish, innocent woman in that sort of carnal awakening proved so tempting that he could think of little else.

Now he watched the scene with a hunger for more, his temper banked by the heat of his rising ardor. It was with that yearning that Renegade hungrily watched Trey kneel naked before Rebel, coaxing her down before the fire in a tangle of limbs and passionate kisses. When she opened her legs wide for Trey, urging him to claim her, Renegade experienced a sudden popping release. Not to be left out, he bolted from the window and burst through the door, the ravenous wolf determined to join the wild pack in sin and carnal obsession.

At the moment the tip of Trey's cock slipped through her wet folds, Rebel's eyelids fluttered open to the distant sound of footsteps crossing the front porch. Just one more second and Trey would be completely inside her, filling her to the very tip of her womb with his enormous shaft. But the fire blazing between her thighs was suddenly extinguished by the booming crash of the door against the wall. A blast of winter's air whooshed in. The flames of the fire danced and the last traces of her ardor disintegrated. She gasped, scrambling to crawl away from Trey and toward her holstered pistols, her rifle, anything to aim at the intruder who dared to burst into her home unannounced.

Arm outstretched, she reached for her Colt and closed her quivering fingers around the gun. In one practiced move, Rebel rolled onto her back, pulled back the hammer, and aimed at the strapping torso looming in the doorway.

"Cassie!" Trey called out. "No, don't—"

Boom.

She fired the gun, cutting off Trey's panicked command.

In the instant the bullet exploded from the barrel of the gun, she realized the intruder was Renegade. He jolted, the shock in his dark eyes revealing the stark certainty of his mortality.

Rebel let out a bloodcurdling scream even as Trey appeared to

soar through the air like a winged angel in flight. Her scream died down as she gawked at the sight before her. It was as if Father Time had slowed the clock to a creep. Her eyes easily tracked the bullet in its journey across the room toward its target—Renegade’s heart.

With his arm extended in pursuit of the bullet’s path, Trey moaned, “No!”

Renegade’s gaze locked onto hers from across the room. His arms rose in the measured manner of her slow dream state to block the shot. Through Renegade’s splayed fingers, she caught the fleeting glimpse in his eyes’ dark depths of a gripping emotion, one that transcended the man she’d always assumed him to be.

Was it... was it really love? But how could that be?

True, he’d sworn his husbandly allegiance to her before God, the preacher, and the judge of Moose Junction, but that didn’t equate to love. He’d left her, plain and simple. But wait. She got shakily to her feet. Renegade had been in jail. The truth of his claim slammed into her chest like the bullet continuing its long, arduous journey toward Renegade even as Trey continued to glide horizontally and feather-like through the room.

Though she didn’t find her answers, she looked deep into Renegade’s soul and allowed him to chip away at the fortress she’d erected around her heart. Instinct told her there was more to his story, and the ache behind her breastbone told her to believe in him and to give him the chance to prove the love she thought she saw shining in his eyes.

Trey’s fingertips skimmed the bullet, now a mere inch from Renegade’s shirt. Rebel’s pulse reverberated sluggishly in her head, while the shadows cast by the fire performed an unhurried, pump-kin-tinged dance. Her thoughts were the only thing that seemed to move in real time, but in her dreamy state, her voice would not dislodge from her throat to warn Renegade of impending death, and her limbs refused to move. She chewed on her lip, somehow painfully aware that Renegade’s mortality hinged on what conclusions she came to within the next split second.

Cassie, you can't change the past, but you can alter your future.
It was Trey's voice, but his mouth was not moving.

Her gaze shifted back to Renegade's pleading eyes. Maybe he hadn't meant to hurt her. Maybe there was a perfectly logical explanation for his abandonment of her. She drew in a shuddering breath.

Driven by something unnamed in her gut, she raised a hand as if to touch his handsome, whiskered face from across the room. "I'm sorry, Renegade, I'm so sorry. I don't want you to die. Goddamn it all to Sam Hell, but I need you to stay and be my husband."

Dizziness washed through her. The room spun as she stumbled to a nearby ladder-backed chair. She whimpered and clutched the top rung to steady herself.

When she opened her eyes, things had sped back up. Trey tumbled to the floor, his chiseled chest rising and falling with his labored breathing. He stared up at the beamed ceiling, temple dampened by tears and sweat. His arms were outstretched at his sides, and she watched in wonder as his left fist quaked. He let out a pained cry and slowly uncurled his fingers.

Renegade collapsed to his knees with a curse, his gaze on the bullet. It rolled from Trey's unscathed palm and clinked onto the floor.

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 5

“Renegade! Trey!” Rebel’s bare feet slapped on wood as she rushed across the room. Racked by guilt, she crumpled to the floor at Trey’s other side. Reaching over his chest, she hooked her arm around Renegade’s neck and drew him down with her so they huddled over Trey. She squeezed her stinging eyes shut, rocking and breathing in the mixed rugged scent of them, and savoring the warmth and hardness of Trey’s body against her breasts and Renegade’s shoulders beneath her arm.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine,” Trey rasped.

“Thank you.” She raised her head and kissed Trey’s open mouth. Overcome by emotions of gratitude, she squeezed him tightly and relished the strength of his big body. Her eyes overflowed, her chest ached, and of all things, her loins throbbed with desire.

For both men.

She shoved the wayward thought aside and tried to draw air into her lungs. She looked into Trey’s glazed eyes and proclaimed in a breathy voice, “I don’t know how in tarnation you did it, but thank you for stopping that bullet.”

“Jesus Christ, man, she’s right.” Renegade swiped his hat off his head. Long dark locks tumbled around his face and shoulders. He plucked up the bullet and gaped at it. “I don’t know what’s happening here, but you just saved my goddamn life.”

“You still deserve a bullet right in your black heart, LaMarr.” She reached across Trey and framed Renegade’s strong, bristly jaw in her hands. The gesture felt good. It felt right. Relief overwhelmed her and she impulsively sealed her lips to Renegade’s stunned mouth for a brief, smacking kiss. “But I swear, I never meant to—I’d never—I thought you were an intruder.”

He turned his face into her palm and caressed the tender flesh with his lips. “It’s all right, darlin’. I understand.”

“But *I* don’t understand. I can’t believe you’re back. Why?

Where have you been?”

His dark eyes glittered. He tilted his head and shrugged. A strand of dark hair fell across his brow. “It wasn’t my choice to be gone. I was in jail.” He narrowed his eyes. “If you want to call it that.”

Trey groaned and Rebel felt him shiver, but she ignored him, now focused entirely on her husband. The more she stared at Renegade, remembering how he’d abandoned her, the more her relief at not having killed him faded. The magic of their intimate moment vanished, and her long-simmering resentment erupted to a full boil. And drat it all, now her eyes burned with another round of tears. The half-year of pain and frustration drove her to her feet. She was uncaring of her nakedness.

“Humbug! No one gets put in jail on their wedding night. You’re hornswoggling the whole blazing thing, and you know it.”

His nostrils flared. “Blast it all to hell, Rebel, I am not. I’m telling the God’s awful truth.”

“Then what could you possibly have done that day to get yourself locked up—and in all my born days, all the way down in Virginia City?”

Renegade shot her a level stare and rose to his full height. He turned, marched to the door, and slammed it shut.

Rebel started at the clap of wood against wood, her breasts bouncing with the move, the nipples aching from a mixture of latent desire and the cold burst of air. But damn it, naked or not, she wasn’t born in the woods to be spooked by an owl. No, Rebel Thatcher wasn’t a fool, and she wasn’t going to back down just because her legs threatened to haul her across the room and into his arms. She was elated that Trey had stopped the bullet, but now she was planning an all-out interrogation once and for all. She deserved to know why Renegade had left her, and why he’d suddenly come back and turned her heart upside down.

Renegade pressed his forehead to the door, his shoulders rising and falling on a long sigh. He slowly spun back to face her, his spurs scraping on the wood floor. “I married you.” His lips thinned,

and murder flashed in his inky eyes. "That's what I did wrong."

What he did wrong? His words stung like a swarm of angry bees. Rebel needed something, anything to cling to. She snatched a quilt from a nearby chair and enfolded it in her arms, crushing it to her midriff, forcing back the tears. "You wretched bastard. Get out of my house. Now."

"No," Trey whispered, still in a moaning stupor on the floor.

"Can it for once, would you, Trey? You're barking at a knot here, and you dang well know it," she snapped, never taking her eyes off her husband. And God help her, he stood there handsome and defiant, a giant in the space of the room, his broad shoulders squared and his muscular upper body sheathed by his dark duster coat. *Don't look at him, Rebel. Don't. Think about Trey instead.* "But even though LaMarr here's a no-account scamp, I don't want to see him dead. Still, it would be a downright sin to Moses to believe Renegade's bull and welcome him home."

Renegade swaggered closer, his spurs jingling. He stopped when the toes of his boots brushed Trey's flaccid forearm. He unfastened his holster and tossed it aside in that I-dare-you-to-make-me-leave manner of his. His chest swelled against the fabric of his shirt with his exaggerated breaths, and his eyes bore into hers with dark, relentless heat.

"I'm not going anywhere." Renegade shrugged out of his coat and hurled it into the corner. He swept her up and down with that hot, assessing gaze, and even through the blanket she held, the heat of his stare caressed her in the most intimate of places. "I'm sorry I wasn't here to help you build this home, but I wanted to be more 'n anything in this world. Fact is, this is my home as much as it is yours."

"The devil it is!" She clutched the quilt tighter and backed toward the fireplace, hoping its warmth would thaw the chill in her heart.

"Cassie," Trey said through chattering teeth. His eyes, so like Renegade's, beheld hers with such painful, beseeching emotion that she gasped. "He's telling you the truth."

“Butt out, Trey,” Renegade growled. “You don’t know crap about me.”

“On the contrary.” Trey’s body still trembled and his lips were now purple. “I know that her father presented her as an embarrassment, and you left here on your wedding night with cold feet. But with each mile you galloped away from her, your feet warmed. You knew she wasn’t your average woman. She could whip you in a gunfight, or hogtie a dozen cattle in the time you could rope half that. You realized after making love to her on your wedding night and then abandoning her, that you might love her one day, regardless of the breeches she wore so proudly—no, *because* of them. You saw her as the most intriguing, challenging, perplexing woman you’d ever met, and you decided in that moment that you wanted to be her husband.”

Renegade stood there speechless, staring down at Trey with wide, expectant eyes.

“That’s as hard to believe as a bobcat tied down with a piece of string, Trey,” Rebel said with a scoff. “How in the dickens do you know such things?”

“If I told you, you wouldn’t believe me.” Trey attempted without success to pull himself to a sitting position.

“Give it a whirl,” she growled.

“It’s hard to explain.” He released a long breath and glanced down at the tattoo snaking around his arm. “But I’ll admit, when I arrived here a few weeks ago, I knew the two of you were on the outs. I just didn’t expect to find Renegade gone. It took some nosing around to discover where he was and how he’d gotten there.”

Renegade finally found his voice, and boy, was it ever a bark of disbelief. “You’re crazy. My abduction was a mystery to everyone in this town. Hell, my own wife didn’t even know where I’d gone.”

“Abduction?” Rebel echoed with incredulity.

“Yes,” Renegade snapped back. “As difficult as it might be for you to believe, I didn’t leave here freely.”

Trey finally dragged himself up to a standing position. He swayed before Renegade with his magnificent, naked body silhou-

etted against Renegade's clothed one. "It's true, Cassie, he wanted to return to you, yet he couldn't." To Renegade, he added, "However, it wasn't a mystery to everyone."

Renegade's jaw clenched. "What do you know? Were you part of the kidnapping?"

Kidnapping? Rebel shook her head and blinked. "No. This is the most cockamamie story I've heard in a coon's age."

Trey went on. "Now look, we don't have forever to straighten this mess out. The fact is, I just know things. I'm not what you think I am." He glanced at Rebel. She caught a glow in his gaze, one of ethereal proportions that took her breath away. "Cassie, just trust me. He truly was returning to you when he was abducted and then imprisoned in Virginia City. The whole truth is, he did nothing wrong and nothing illegal. Except to marry you, just like he said."

She slapped a hand on one hip and fluttered her lashes in disbelief. "How can *that* be illegal?"

Trey fisted Renegade's shirt to keep from collapsing. His perspiring body glistened by the firelight. Unmindful of his half-hard cock bent at an angle against his hip, Trey forced Renegade to meet his stare, though he spoke to Rebel. "Not really illegal. But the gold, Cassie. Think about it. You discovered gold the morning of your wedding, and that changed everything. Renegade's abduction was part of a scheme to keep him away from you and your new fortune."

"Are you saying...?" Her mouth fell open.

Renegade's eyes widened. "*That's* why they held me in that hellhole?"

"Yes." Trey nodded, his limbs trembling harder. "But I didn't uncover that secret until well after I arrived here." His knees buckled and Renegade swept him up against his body. The sight of two strong men in such close proximity, one unclothed, the other with an unmistakable erection in his trousers, left Rebel breathless. The blanket slid down her body and fell to the bearskin rug forgotten. Her pussy muscles clenched against a sudden flood of desire.

"I suspected it had to do with Rebel, but I didn't know about her

gold.” Renegade shook Trey and demanded, “Damn it, man, how do you know all this?”

“What about asking how I stopped the bullet?”

“Good question,” Renegade sneered. “How *did* you stop the bullet?”

“The same way I was able to assist you in breaking out of that jail and luring you back here where you belong.”

“What?” Rebel rubbed her brow with her fingertips. God, her head was spinning like a cyclone. “Trey, you never left here.”

Renegade gawked. “You’re one crazy bastard. You weren’t there. I broke out on my own.”

“I never *physically* left here,” Trey said.

“No, this can’t be.” Yet how could she refute his claim when she’d just witnessed his bizarre bullet-stopping talents with her own eyes? And she’d felt his mystical powers every day since he’d arrived.

Trey shrugged and smiled at Renegade in that calming way of his. “How do you think the key appeared on the floor outside your cell in the middle of the night? We both know it couldn’t have been the guard—the one who made a habit of beating and starving you practically to death.”

“No.” A shudder rippled up Rebel’s spine. “This can’t be.”

Renegade shook his head fervently. “No way you could’ve known about that key, or the abuse for that matter.”

“Exactly. I knew about the key because I put it there, in a sense. But I was starting to worry when it took you a week too long to arrive.”

“I got detained by a band of hostile Indians. It took me some time to convince them I was just passing through and meant no harm. Then once I arrived here, I set out to learn who’d done this to me. Figured a good place to start was where it all began in the first damn place. The saloon’s poker table.”

“Oh, my God,” Rebel whispered.

It all fit. Trey’s tranquilizing looks, his magical touch, and the unbelievable way he’d flown through space and stopped that bullet

from exploding in Renegade's chest. Trey had not only shown her how to be a woman for her husband, but he'd freed Renegade and miraculously saved his life—three times now if she included her own armed confrontation in the saloon. She didn't know *what* Trey was, but she knew he was special and he'd apparently come here on a mission to repair their marriage. And Renegade, well, he'd had a score to settle before he could safely reclaim his bride, which explained why she'd found him in the saloon after his arrival rather than on her doorstep begging her forgiveness.

Rebel sought out Renegade's gaze. The anger and skepticism in the dark pools vanished, replaced by acceptance and awe. She swallowed a lump of her own disbelief. Sakes alive, she'd been making love with a supernatural being while her husband had watched. And Lord help her, but it was the most exciting thing she'd ever experienced in her life.

"Okay, well, if you found it so important to bring me back, then why have you been sleeping with my wife?" Renegade challenged.

"Simple." Trey bathed Rebel with a look of sheer adoration. "Because she's irresistible. And since Fate dictates that you two belong together, I couldn't afford for you *not* to see her as I do—a beautiful woman hiding beneath a hard exterior—just in case you still had reservations deep down. You can't get cold feet again. If *you* don't claim this gem-in-the-rough, someone else most definitely will."

"I—this is—" Renegade's teeth clattered when he snapped his jaw shut. "Damn."

"I understand your confusion, but I'll do whatever I have to in order to right a wrong." Trey fixed his gaze on his tattoo before he shifted it to a distant spot across the room. "More than one wrong, that is," he added cryptically.

"What are you, some kind of a ghost or something?" Rebel asked.

Trey smiled. "If only it were that simple. But let's just say I have many journeys through time yet to take, and leave it at that." He gripped Renegade's shirt. "In the meantime, could you, uh, help

me to lie back down? Slowing time and halting bullets in midair can be pretty exhausting to a wretched soul such as mine.”

“You got it, pal.” Renegade swept Trey up in his arms, carried him to the hearth, and laid him upon the bearskin rug at Rebel’s feet. “The blanket,” he said to her.

She knelt at Trey’s side and wrapped the quilt snugly around his trembling form. “Trey, are you going to be all right? Should I send for the doctor?”

“No, no. There’s nothing a doctor can do to help me.” He sighed. “Just need some rest. And some loving warmth. It’s god-damn cold out there in your world.”

In your world. As if he came from another?

Renegade dropped to his haunches beside Rebel. He readjusted the blanket, tucking it in tighter at Trey’s sides. Firelight danced on both male features, and Rebel thought she’d never seen anything more picturesque and touching in her life than one man caring for the other.

Trey closed his hand around Renegade’s and guided it to Rebel’s bare knee. Renegade’s palm upon her flesh branded her as his, while the sight of Trey’s hand spread over Renegade’s knuckles seemed to somehow relay the message that he would be handing the reins back over to Renegade. Just an hour ago, that thought would have panicked her, but now, she rejoiced in what it meant.

Thanks to Trey, she had her husband back.

“Go ahead, Renegade,” Trey rasped, his eyes glittering by firelight. “Get those damn clothes off and make love to your Rebel.”

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 6

Ah, to touch her skin at last. And damn, but there had been something so very erotic about Trey's hand guiding Renegade's fingers up Rebel's thigh. At the moment, Renegade didn't care about all the bizarre things Trey had revealed. He simply hungered to make love to his wife again. And for some odd reason, he wanted Trey there during the act, the man who'd protected her during part of Renegade's absence and had been instrumental in bringing them back together.

Maybe it would be best not to think on that one too much.

Mellow firelight glazed Rebel's milky white flesh, so very satiny smooth, just what Renegade needed after months of hell without her. He leaned nearer and inhaled the clean, smoky fragrance of her hair while his free hand skimmed up her bare back and tangled in the soft, thick mass at the base of her neck.

"Renegade...." She'd been sitting back on her heels, but now she came up on her knees, thrusting her hips forward. Her eyelids clamped shut and her plump lips parted on a sigh when Trey moved Renegade's hand further up to cup her apex. Her head fell back on a feral mowl, and her compact little body trembled when Trey urged Renegade to circle her damp entrance. He pushed against the back of Renegade's finger until Renegade slid it inside her opening and was sheathed by her slick heat.

Rebel twitched. She cried out, and her sweet musky scent wafted up, laced by the earthy aroma of burning wood.

Renegade's mouth watered. "Mmm, I want to taste you."

He pumped his finger in and out of her. Trey's hand still rested lightly on his wrist, and he could feel the invitation pulsing in Trey's touch. Trey wanted to join in and make love to both of them, not just to Rebel. Never before had Renegade been so tempted to indulge with another man. But he hesitated. He didn't know how far he could push things with Rebel before they came apart as a couple. It was all still too new and risky.

Her inner muscles clamped around Renegade's finger. She let

out a whimper and nodded then her head fell back onto his shoulder. Her ample, coral-tipped breasts rose and fell with her panting breaths.

Renegade located her hard clitoris and wrought a strangled cry from her when he ringed the silky bud with his thumb. His cock strained against the thick fabric of his denims with the need to finally get inside her. He unfastened the constraint of his pants and freed his shaft as he walked on his knees, shifting behind her, never breaking his finger's rhythm or his wrist's contact with Trey, whose gentle touch seemed to be urging Renegade to pleasure his wife. But even if Trey had taken away his hand, Renegade would not remove his finger from his wife's warm and willing body. He had waited too long to get there as it was. He longed to fill his free hand with her breast, so he settled between her calves and grazed his palm over her ribs, up and under one full-moon, fleshy globe.

"Yes." She tangled her fingers in his hair.

Renegade gently tweaked and twisted the areola, hungering to taste the tight pebble at its center. Hell, he wanted to sample every inch of her, to devour her and claim her entirely as his wife. As if his thought brought about his wish, he looked down over her delicate shoulder along the beautiful slope of her breast and hardened nipple. His eyes met Trey's in another one of those heart-stopping, profound moments that seemed to exist only in Trey's presence.

"The two of you look magnificent together." Trey's deep voice was thick with arousal. His pupils were big and round, his eyes glazed by lust. He slid the blanket off his body, exposing his naked, fit build. It instantly inflamed Renegade's libido, a surprise given that he'd always spurned those sorts of rare invitations from men. Feeling reckless now, he let his gaze wander to Trey's cock. It was long and as hard as stone... and it had been inside Rebel many times. The thought stirred a niggling of jealousy inside him, and yet at the very same time, it excited him beyond comprehension.

"Just where you belong, in each other's arms," Trey murmured. "You inside Cassie, and her spreading wide, welcoming you into her body and her heart."

Trey's words soothed the envy and made Renegade's cock go much harder with wicked desire. Even so, Trey hadn't mentioned himself in that scenario. Did he only want to watch them? Fine by Renegade, but he suddenly needed to clarify it with his wife. If Renegade could help it, there would be no more regrets in their future together.

"What do you want, Rebel?" Renegade whispered.

She froze and the seconds ticked off between them, but then she angled her head and spoke against his mouth, her breath warm, her lips moist and supple, her tongue flickering and eager. "I want my husband to claim his bride."

"Mmm, then I will," Renegade growled into her open mouth.

Wild need seized him. Fueled by her brazen plea, he circled his tongue around hers, tasting her sugary flavor, cocooning his cock within the valley of her upper buttocks. She moaned when he increased the pressure of his thumb, and his clothed balls grazed simultaneously over her tight anus.

"Renegade." His name erupted from her throat like a lover's song. But he caught the note of regret hovering beneath the surface.

He dislodged his finger from inside Rebel's passage. "What is it, darling?" He nibbled on her earlobe. Maybe she sensed Trey's silent offer, too. Or maybe Trey's presence was a reminder of Renegade's forced abandonment. But something was making her hesitate.

She shuddered, grinding her ass into his cock. "I wish..."

He hooked a finger beneath her chin and turned her face, forcing her to hold still and look in his eyes. The limpid pools stole his breath from his lungs. "Go on. It's okay."

"I wish I would have known you left against your will." She held his gaze and lifted her jaw in a show of bravery. Still, her voice shook. "I might have done things differently. I mean, I didn't want to hurt you with Trey, but I thought you regretted our marriage, or worse, I thought you might be dead. Meantime, Trey helped me to get over the pain. And while I'm so glad to have you back, I... I'm sorry, but I don't want him to go. I can't deny I enjoy

his company and his...”

Renegade jolted at her revelation. That was not what he’d expected her to say. The heat in his loins fired up at her innocent yet frank words. It appeared his rebel had gathered her courage to confess the rest of her thoughts after all. Though for some reason, her admitted indiscretions with Trey didn’t bother him anymore. In fact, it thrilled him to high heaven that Trey lay before them watching them make love for their second time, and that Rebel seemed to want him there.

Might this be an omen of the type of marriage he would have with her? Damn, he could only hope.

Rebel must have thought Renegade’s stunned silence meant she had angered him again. She sighed and turned her face away from him. “Never mind. It’s selfish of me. I wish I could undo it, but water’s long gone and rushed under the dang bridge. I feel horrible, yet I can’t change my feelings for both of you.”

His heart swelled at the implication of her dual desires and sincere regret. But Renegade understood the unusual circumstances she’d been thrust in. He didn’t blame her for giving herself to Trey. She’d believed Renegade had willingly abandoned her, and besides, Trey was a magnetic god of sorts, so Renegade could easily see how the innocent Rebel he’d kissed on their wedding day could have surrendered to Trey. He couldn’t change the past, but he could enjoy their future together. And in the present, he was so goddamn hard at her confession he simply wanted her however he could get her.

His head spun. Her words and her expression tugged at his emotions. Her tear-filled eyes blazed by the firelight like diamonds upon a clear fathomless lake, and staring into the bright, sex-glazed pools made him feel as if his lungs were being squeezed, his heart surging with pride. Yes, he had to admit that after being in prison for so long, he had planned to be alone with his wife tonight, and to watch those ice-blue eyes darken with the heat of her second surrender to him.

But he hadn’t counted on this turn of events. His prior wishes

paled in comparison to this unique night and what it could mean to their future. No matter what choices they were about to make, they would never be parted again. Not if Renegade had any say in the matter.

“Sweetheart, it’s all right.” He kissed her temple and cheek, tasting the salt of her tears. “I understand now. Besides, what you’ve done isn’t so bad after all. I mean, look at us. As a result, we’re sharing something very intimate, something very few couples have. And no matter what we decide to do tonight, I detect a thrilling life ahead with the most exciting hellcat I’ve ever known. A man couldn’t ask for more.”

“Do you mean it?” Her voice and eyes lit with hope.

“You bet.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “I’ve got you back. My wish has already come true.”

Renegade glanced down to see Trey grinning up at him. “Well, I, for one, don’t see any reason why she can’t still have her wish.”

Rebel gaped down at Trey. “You don’t?”

He gallantly, lingeringly kissed the back of her hand just below her wrist. “My lovely vixen, Cassie, remember what kind of man is in your presence, one who stops bullets. Your every wish is my command.” He sat up, his muscles bunching and flexing with the move, and twined his fingers in hers. His other hand still lightly circled Renegade’s wrist.

Rebel hissed. “Ooh, your hand, it’s so hot.”

“If you wish for it,” Trey said, “I can warm you both by my hands, heal any lingering pain in your hearts, and show you naughty fulfillment like you’ve never imagined. A marriage you’ve never imagined. However, if you wish for something else, I can grant that, too.”

That was as clear an invitation as any man could give. And suddenly, Renegade wanted it. He wanted Trey to join in their love-making. Some powerful surging instinct told him that Trey’s participation could not only heal the past, but guarantee their future.

Rebel turned a questioning look on Renegade. Her eyes were full of doubt. “Do you want that?”

Did he? Which part? The “naughty” suggestion, or the “something else” offer? Truth was, he and his bride had each experienced other lovers, only now, they could do that together if they chose to cross that exciting line. Either way, it didn’t matter, they would still have each other. Their marriage would be solid. So it wasn’t the final decision that intrigued him, but rather her desire to give him her complete surrender either way that made his cock go stone hard.

But he was certain there was one thing neither of them had ever experienced. Three-way lovemaking. In this, they were equally virginal. Trey’s offer proved to be the most carnal of promises that could lead to an unconventional yet thrilling marriage. But was it what he wanted?

Yes.

He met Trey’s eyes and nodded once. Trey smiled and seemed to exhale a pent-up breath.

Renegade nuzzled the soft skin under Rebel’s ear. “I love that you’re not a typical woman. I’m not a typical man, either. So we’re equal, and that makes us right for each other. But there is one thing we can do together that neither one of us has done before, something that I believe could strengthen our relationship. And that’s... make love with a third person. Trey.”

She twisted to face him, her eyes wide. “You mean it?”

He kissed her once lightly. “I do. But only if you truly want it. I don’t want to cause you any pain. You’ve suffered enough. From now on, only pleasure.”

She smiled. “Only pleasure.”

“I’ll take that as a yes,” Trey said. He ducked his head and snaked out his long tongue, laving her nipples in turn while his other hand massaged her quim in heated circles. The sight of Trey worshipping her from the front while Renegade gave her attention from behind was more than any man’s libido could withstand. Hot blood rushed through Renegade’s veins and ignited in his groin in anticipation. He kissed and nipped her sweet-tasting neck and her smooth shoulder. His hands were everywhere, molding her heavy

breasts, tracing the womanly curves of her waist and hips, seeking to learn and memorize her all at once.

As he explored his wife's lush body for the second time, it amazed him that a vixen could so easily hide behind a lad's disguise. How had he not seen it from the start? Why had it taken that one innocent yet impassioned wedding kiss to even begin to stir his interest in her? What a fool he'd been, and yet he thanked his blessed stars that he'd not opted to send a messenger to his Virginia City ranch to retrieve the money to pay off his gambling debt to Tadd Thatcher that day. His holdings, including the ten-thousand-acre ranch and sawmill he'd built with his own hands, were most likely worth far more than her gold discovery. The debt had been a mere drop in the pail, yet he'd agreed to marry her anyway.

He could only conclude that she must have had a hold on his heart from the start without his knowledge.

Now that Trey pulled his hand away from her pussy, Renegade hurriedly finished disrobing and urged her down on all fours. He forced Trey to lie back down perpendicular to her. She now had her knees on one side of Trey, and her hands on the other. Renegade's gaze devoured the curve of her ass and the feminine indentation of her spine as it made its gentle way up her back. Her glossy hair spilled forward over Trey's far hip, and her full breasts swayed, nearly brushing Trey's twitching shaft.

Yes, he must've known all along why he'd allowed himself to be duped into marrying a hoyden hellion such as Rebel. His instincts had told him that Cassie, the shimmering gem now bent invitingly before him, was buried beneath Rebel's rough exterior.

He dragged his hands down her back, lightly scraping his fingernails as he went. "You're beautiful, Cassie."

Trey folded an arm behind his head and watched them while he lazily played with her breasts.

She swung her glorious mane around and caught Renegade's gaze over her shoulder. "Mmm, I like it when you call me Cassie. But keep it between me and you."

He grinned and leaned forward to capture her mouth with his.

“You’re damn alluring either way, but nothing would make me happier than to have the real Rebel all to myself.”

“I can leave if you’d like to be alone.” Trey made a play of starting to rise.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Cassie warned, shoving him back down on the rug with a firm hand. “He means later down the road, don’t you, Renegade?”

“Yes. Tonight’s different.” Shadows and flickering light danced over her derriere, making her damp labia glisten. Renegade could stand it no more. He gripped his cock and rubbed the head around her wet vaginal hole. “Tonight, Rebel transforms into the sinful Cassie with the attentions of *two* men.”

A feral noise formed deep in her chest and erupted into a howl of pleasure. She laid her cheek on Trey’s rippled abdomen and poised her lips near his cock. Her small hand curled around the base, and she arched her back, thrusting her rear upward toward Renegade.

“Easy, sweetheart.” Renegade used every bit of his self-control to keep from plunging all at once into her tight sheath.

She whimpered and drew her tongue in one long lick up Trey’s shaft. He hissed before letting out a tortured groan. A log shifted on the fire, and the flames sputtered and danced. Silhouetted by the rising flames, Rebel slowly took Trey into her mouth. Renegade thought he’d never seen anything more risqué and yet innocent. Now there was no holding back. He felt as if he’d explode if he didn’t get inside her soon.

Renegade planted one hand on the floor between Trey’s legs and used his other to circle his cock around her pussy, wetting her outer folds with her own juices. Unhurriedly, he eased a half-inch inside, wrenching a muffled moan from her. Sweat beaded on his brow as he fought the urge to bury himself in her depths in one stroke. Instead, he pushed into her tight pussy with measured control.

“Are you all right?” he whispered in her ear. “You’re sure?”

She nodded frantically, her head bobbing up and down on Trey’s penis. Trey’s eyes were closed, and his handsome face and sinewy

chest glistened with a sheen of perspiration.

Renegade had never been more aroused in his entire life. He knew he wouldn't be able to withstand the torture much longer. He pulled out and palmed his cock, half-slick with her cream, before rubbing the head over her rigid little clit. Then he pressed just the head back inside her canal. "Damn it, I've got to have you. Are you ready?"

She released Trey's shaft with a smacking kiss. "Yes, oh God, yes." Before Renegade realized what her intent was, she tilted her hips forward and plunged backward. All in one motion, he was sheathed in her snug dampness.

She hitched in a breath before letting out a beautiful, melodious moan. Her muscles rippled around his cock as she started a quick rocking motion on him. She sucked Trey deep into her throat while expertly stroking Renegade with her pussy. The sweet scent of her woman's arousal wafted up and made him giddy with lust. His balls slapped against her inner thighs with each penetration, and it was then that Trey's large, warm hand closed over his sac and massaged him.

No man had ever touched Renegade there before. The carnal shock of it would have brought Renegade to his knees had he not already been kneeling to make love to his adorable, tigress wife from behind. Renegade reached around and found her pearl, the back of his fingers now and then brushing the heel of Trey's hand where he continued to milk Renegade's seed from his sac. Aw, what the hell? He let himself enjoy it, basking in the blissful, simultaneous sensations of her slick inner walls encasing him while a large, rough hand palmed his balls.

Cassie moaned around the bulk in her mouth, clearly enjoying the attention Renegade bestowed upon her clit. He increased the pressure and rhythm. His finger swirled in time with his hips as he thrust in and out of her core. Trey's fingers moved faster on Renegade's scrotum, pulling enough to give just an edge of pleasure-pain when Trey suddenly arched his head back and howled. His body twitched in ecstasy. Renegade heard Cassie slurp, and Trey's

seed shot up and coated her tongue and open mouth.

Their climaxes were like a house of cards falling, one tumbling into the other. Cassie was next. She lifted her head, clamped her eyes tight, and whispered the most beautiful words Renegade had ever heard in his life. “Renegade, oh Renegade. I’m... I’m about to—blazes alive, I’m so glad you’re back!” Her sweet, hot release rippled around his cock, stroking him off and soaking him with her cream.

Trey gave Renegade’s sac one last circular rub forcing his orgasm to climb. It rose to a level of bliss Renegade had never reached before now, the waves building higher with each passing second. He buried his face in the crook of Rebel’s neck and inhaled the clean, smoky scent of her hair as he clutched her small form to his chest. Then when the rapture became nearly unbearable, ripping through his loins in an explosion of utter pleasure, he kneaded her breast and gently bit down on her neck.

“Me too, my little Rebel,” he rasped, and the two of them collapsed on top of a gasping but grinning Trey.

Renegade lay on his side to catch his breath, and studied the way the yellow-orange glow of the firelight bathed her stunning profile. He traced her lips with his thumb, and combed his fingers through her long hair.

“You’ll be taking my name now.” Renegade worshipped her upthrust breasts and dusky nipples with his gaze. “You know that, don’t you?”

The corners of her mouth curved up ever so slightly. She turned her back to him and tucked herself into the curve of his body. “I reckon.”

“You reckon? Is that all you’ve got to say on the matter?”

“Well, sure.” She angled around to gaze into his eyes, and once again, Renegade was struck by the stunning beauty of them. “I reckon I got designs on you now, husband. Jail or not, you’re never getting away from me again. And if that means I’ve got to go by Cassandra LaMarr, so be it.”

Trey let out a guffaw. “Well, I do like Cassie better.”

“Yeah, well I like Rebel,” Renegade retorted. “And I want her back in her boy’s clothes.”

Cassie sat bolt upright, her lovely breasts bouncing with the move. “Really? Why?”

“Now, now, wife, don’t go waking snakes. I meant when we’re outside that door.” He lifted one mound in his hand and languidly tweaked the nipple. His fingers traveled over skin as soft as rose petals until he reached her supple backside. He explored the shadowed valley and traced the curves of her luscious derriere. Her eyes went all liquid and her mouth parted with renewed desire. “That way, no one else’ll know what a gorgeous wife I have. They’ll keep their paws off.”

She shivered and stuck out a pouty lip. “But I enjoy having the attention of two men at once.”

“Of course you do, you little minx.” He closed his hand around Trey’s bulging, tattooed bicep. The inky art tingled against Renegade’s touch, but he no longer marveled at the unusual things surrounding Trey. Instead, he tugged on Trey’s arm. “Come a little closer, man. She needs our warmth.”

Trey pulled the quilt over their naked bodies. “My pleasure.”

Within minutes, Rebel and Trey dropped off to sleep, one stunningly beautiful, the other as handsome and untamed as the broncos Renegade bred on his ranch. Ah, but this was such heaven to finally be here with Rebel after those months of abuse and false imprisonment he’d endured. There were days he thought he would die there and never see her face again, and yet others when he’d vowed to break free and find the person who’d done this to them. Though he’d had his suspicions, learning that she’d discovered gold the day of their wedding all but confirmed his hunch. His poker game today had been the start of his own investigation. Only this time, he’d been determined to, in a sense, win back the months he’d lost with his Rebel.

He fixed his gaze on the yellow moon and craggy horizon framed by the very window he’d been peering through earlier tonight. Snowflakes started to fall and gust across the cloudy sky.

Beyond the whistling of the winds, he heard a lone wolf howl far up in the hills. Its wounded yet defiant cry sounded a lot like he'd felt the past six months. Another wolf joined it, and yet another. The pack was staking their claim on their territory, just like Renegade. Soon, very soon.

For a long while, he lay there mulling over the day, thinking of his wife and how lucky he was to be back here with her. Gradually, as if drugged by laudanum, he fell asleep to the lull of the crackling fire and their even breathing. He dreamed of her, of their life together. But now and then, he groggily awoke to misty images of Trey slipping from Rebel's arms. Renegade's mouth wouldn't move. His limbs were as heavy as timber. Too weak to fight the delicious drowsy lure, he tumbled back into slumber, hoping like hell he'd only imagined Trey leaving.

Trey reluctantly crawled from the warmth of her arms, slipped on his boots, and jammed his legs into his breeches. He fastened the fly while staring down at Renegade and Cassie. The fire's embers cast ethereal light on their entwined sleeping forms. They were beautiful, a stunning couple clearly meant for each other. Relief swelled in his soul because he had brought them back together and had shown Renegade the true woman beneath the tough exterior.

The corners of Cassie's full pink lips tipped up, and she sighed and snuggled closer to her husband. Affection surged through Trey. He squatted and gently raked his fingers through pale tresses like spun silk, locks long enough to lift to his nose. He closed his eyes, inhaling his final whiff of that fresh, familiar scent he'd become accustomed to over the last weeks.

"I'll miss you, Cassie," he whispered low enough not to awaken her.

His gaze shifted to Renegade. He was a darkly handsome fellow with piercing, enigmatic eyes. He perused Renegade's narrow hips and his manhood, now lying flaccid near Cassie's hip. In the heat of passion, Renegade's cock had been impressively large, his balls

swollen and heavy in Trey's hand.

"Mmm, yes," he whispered. "I think I'll probably miss you, too."

One of the most erotic experiences of Trey's existence had been massaging Renegade's sac and watching his shaft become coated with Cassie's cream as it slid in and out of her pussy. Trey grunted at the memory and reached down to rub his throbbing cock through his jeans. Pensively, his gaze shifted from Cassie's full breasts with the soft, pink nipples to those kissable lips now parted in blissful sleep. Ah, to feel her breasts brushing his side while that talented mouth sucked him off and Renegade fucked her from behind....

Now *that* had been true euphoria.

Trey let out a wistful sigh and got to his feet. It was time to move on to his next mission. If he succumbed to the temptation of staying longer, he could blow it all. He pressed his lips together. No, he couldn't allow that. His ultimate goal, to right all the wrongs he'd set into motion long ago, loomed dauntingly ahead of him in time and space. Cassie and Renegade represented only one couple in a slew of many more to repair.

That familiar tingling sensation bloomed on his upper arm along the ringed tattoo. One link lit up, going from black to flaming orange. He hissed in a breath as the ring that symbolized Renegade and Cassie disappeared in smoke. The remaining links—representative of other preordained couples—were a painful reminder that his mission had not yet ended.

He pulled his shirt over his head and located his hat and coat on a peg near the stove. Crossing the room to retrieve them, he inhaled the gamey scent of the forgotten stew on the woodstove. His stomach growled in protest when he turned from the mouthwatering pot of soup and donned the coat. There wasn't time to indulge. Besides, once he passed through the portal into the next time period, his body would recover.

So that was that. He jammed on his hat and breathed deeply the scents of pine and the home-cooked food she'd lovingly, albeit haphazardly, prepared for him. The intoxicating aroma of their

lovemaking also clung irresistibly to the air.

He kissed his palm and blew her a kiss. "Goodbye, my sweet, feisty Cassie." His tone sounded melancholy to his otherworldly ears. He didn't relish leaving this time in history, yet he was more eager than ever to get on to the next task.

Trey slipped through the door and quietly pulled it shut, trading cozy warmth for the biting night air. He strode down the porch stairs and into the yard. A freshly fallen carpet of snow crunched beneath his boots while still more flakes tumbled from the heavens. Trey dug into his coat pocket. *One final gift for Renegade and Cassie.* He tacked a single piece of paper to the trunk of a white pine tree.

"Trey?"

Cassie. He spun around. She stood naked in the open front door, silhouetted against the soft glow of the firelight within. Renegade stepped up behind her and wrapped her shivering form in a quilt. Trey's immortal heart leapt to life at the becoming sight the two made, her standing there with her long gilded blonde tresses covering the outer blanket while Renegade, still naked and darkly handsome, drew warmth from Cassie by embracing her from behind with his strong arms and pulling her flush against his front side.

Trey trudged through the snow. He stopped at the bottom of the stairs and gazed up at them, mesmerized, one foot on the bottom step and his hand gripping the railing. He longed to climb the stairs and slide back into that cocoon of heat and love and sexual energy with them. He'd induced them with a magical sedative to prevent an emotional leaving and yet Trey couldn't help but be glad they'd resisted its allure and he'd been given the opportunity to see them one last time. Still, he shouldn't dally much longer. Reminding himself of that, the need to press on again waged a battle against his selfish desires to indulge one last time.

He gave a mental shake of the head. No, he must go. Now.

"You were going to leave without saying goodbye?" Cassie asked, her husky voice a curious mixture of understanding and scolding.

Before Trey could respond, Renegade, shivering behind Cassie, offered, “You’re welcome to stay as long as you like. No need for you to leave in the middle of a freezing-cold night.”

“I... I’m sorry,” Trey murmured, feeling somewhat chastised. “I thought it best to avoid...”

“Come here,” Cassie ordered, holding out a hand. When Trey hesitated, she stomped her little bare foot on the threshold and demanded, “Trey Raphael, get your hind end up here, or as God is my witness, I swear I’ll put a bullet through your heart.”

“Doubt that’ll work,” Renegade put in, squeezing her tighter. “Any man that can stop bullets in midair most likely can prevent one from blasting his own heart. Not to mention that spirit thing—bullet’ll probably go right through him unharmed.”

“Shut your trap, LaMarr.” Cassie angled around and shot Renegade a scathing yet playful look. “It was a figure of my own stupid speech. You know I’d never shoot him.”

“Well, you shot me,” he grumbled pointedly. “Or leastwise you tried.”

At that, Cassie let out a bubbly laugh and stretched up on tiptoe, her back still pressed to Renegade. Over her shoulder, she smacked a kiss on Renegade’s compressed lips, making him smile like magic. “The shots in the saloon? I missed on purpose, you scoundrel.” She patted his cheek. “You have this affection that’s currently filling my heart, to thank for your life.”

Renegade snorted, teasingly swatting her derriere through the blanket. She squealed, attempting to avoid the love-pat, but when his hand made contact, her eyes widened, and Trey saw that familiar light of lust glint in her pale eyes. It was apparent the two had many more wicked adventures to explore in their bed.

Watching them like this made it all the harder for Trey to leave. Already, blood filled his cock, and that delicious swirl of heat curled in his loins. But no, he must save it for his next mission...

“I, uh... I really must be going now.” Despite his original intentions to remain detached, Trey climbed the stairs and stopped in front of her. It was ironic that they stood in the very same position

they had in the saloon, only this time, Renegade held her from behind while Trey was the one disjointed.

Unable to resist one last touch, he lifted a hand and cupped her jaw. It was warm and as soft as rose petals. Trey released a wave of his entrancing warmth and sexual energy, allowing it to travel into Renegade as well. The smile simultaneously faded from their faces while their orgasms took flight. Cassie's eyelids fluttered and she sucked in a breath of surprise. Renegade moaned, his dark eyes two spectacular pools of all-male rapture.

"Goodbye," Trey whispered.

His gaze met hers. Time ticked on. Trey hurriedly ducked his head and covered her mouth with his. She opened for him, her lips two supple, sugary pillows. He could taste traces of the orgasm's lust in her kiss, her tongue a hot blade of desire sparring with his. He drank of her passion. Carnal thirst sliced through him, lancing his soul and nearly bringing him to his knees.

Then, almost as if to torture himself further, he tore his mouth from hers and hooked his hand behind Renegade's neck. Renegade's limpid eyes flew wide when Trey gave him a searing, obsessive kiss over Cassie's shoulder.

"Please don't go, Trey," Cassie begged, her arms slipping around his waist even as he and Renegade finished up their delicious kiss. She pressed her cheek to Trey's chest and the familiar, loving gesture nearly brought his immortal heart to life. Her words were muffled, and he could hear the tears starting to erupt in her voice. She shook, attempting to suppress her sobs. "Not yet. Just one more day. *Please*."

"I can't stay any longer, darling," he groaned, wrapping his arms around them both. Trey nuzzled his face into the crook of Renegade's neck. The faintest aroma of their lovemaking wafted up to entwine with Renegade's scent of leather and smoke, and Cassie's clean, womanly essence. "I'm sorry, so sorry."

"C'mon, man, what's the rush? Come back inside and let's all warm up," Renegade coaxed, stepping backward and drawing them over the threshold.

“No.” Trey untangled himself from their groping arms. “I-I want to, really I do. But I can’t.” He held Cassie’s hand as he took two steps toward the stairs.

She sniffled. “Will you ever come back and visit us?”

“I... I don’t know.” Trey sighed and released her hand. He looked up at the falling snow. Soon, he wouldn’t feel it anymore. He’d be thrust right into the environment surrounding the next couple, the next mission. It might be in the stifling heat of the desert or the cool of a fall night in another country. But he wouldn’t know until he took the next leap.

“We’ll miss you,” she whispered as a big fat tear slid down her porcelain cheek.

“I’ll miss you too, sweetheart. Both of you.” *But I miss my one true love more.* He turned and descended the porch stairs.

“But wait. We want a chance to thank you for bringing us back together,” Renegade mumbled in a gruff and rushed tone.

Trey started to indulge in one more look over his shoulder, but he stopped himself at the last possible second. Goddamn it, he couldn’t look back anymore. It just wouldn’t do him or them any good. Or his quest to finally see his love again. Best to just get it over with.

“Remember your love for each other,” he threw over his shoulder as he retraced his boot prints in the snow. “That’s what you can do to thank me. And for the love of the gods, don’t muck it all up like I did,” he growled under his breath.

He kept walking down toward the tree where he’d tacked the note. His boots crunched in the snow. The biting winds thrashed his coat around his hips. Once he knew he was out of their view, he closed his eyes in preparation for the time-striding ahead of him.

Goodbye, Cassie and Renegade.

“But, Trey, wait. You can’t—” Cassie’s contrary but sweet, sniffling voice was the last thing he heard before he plunged into the next realm.

Renegade and His Rebel: Chapter 7

“I’m ready.” Cassie snapped the door shut behind her and rushed onto the porch fully dressed and prepared to go after Trey. Her stomach twisted into knots. She’d last seen him walking across the yard. The falling snow and the low-hanging limbs of a white pine had seemed to envelope him, as if he’d vanished before their very eyes. Where had he gone? And did he think that just because she’d allowed Renegade into their home, that Trey was no longer welcome? Is *that* why he’d tried to steal away in the night while they slept? After the glow of their lovemaking had worn off, perhaps he’d lain there feeling like an intruder?

She pressed a palm to her abdomen, barely noticing the chilly winds and falling snow whipping around her. God, it sickened her. She never wished Trey to suffer that lonely, unwanted feeling, especially after he’d been there for her and taught her to finally let a man into her life—no, he’d been there when she’d *needed* a man for once. He’d shown her how to be a woman and to express herself as such, and now he’d apparently gone out into the cold, dejected and most likely feeling like an interference in their marriage.

Renegade leaned on the railing, elbows propped on the raw wood, staring down at the river’s snowbound banks. His profile was shadowed by the brim of his hat, his brawny body pelted by the snowstorm. Slowly, as if awakened from a dream, he turned to face her.

“All right, let’s get—” He cut himself off, gawking at her. She thought of a raven when his duster flared around him, abruptly stopping its swirling flight when he jolted. His eyes were wide. They glittered beneath the cabin’s inner light slanting through the window panes. A thrill of excitement rippled up her spine. The raw sexuality and danger he exuded proved to be a potent stimulant, even amid the chaos of Trey’s disappearance.

“What? What’s wrong?” she asked, hurriedly donning her wrap and hat.

“You’re...” His gaze raked her from head to toe and back again,

finally settling on her breasts straining against the bodice of her garment. Her nipples promptly hardened in response. “You’re wearing a dress. I’ve never seen you in one before.”

Was that disapproval in his tone? She swallowed, unsure how to react. Nerves leapt and lurched in her stomach increasing the queasiness that had settled there at Trey’s absence. Sakes alive, why had she put the blasted dress on? It had been an impulse, a case where she’d basked in, and finally embraced, her femininity. She’d been loath to break the delicious spell of it even after Trey had left, but now, based on Renegade’s reaction, she could see she’d taken it too far. Her face flamed with mortification. She suddenly longed to rip off the girly garment and slide back into her breeches. It would certainly be warmer, and an easier ride into town.

“I, uh...” Drawing the cloak snug around her body, she tried to suppress the irritation that abruptly replaced the unease. Clearly, her husband thought her more a lad than a woman. And maybe he was right. “Fine,” she huffed, whirling away from him. “I’ll go change back into—”

He caught her elbow before she could reach for the door latch. “Oh, no you don’t.”

Rebel glanced down at his big hand, then back up at his hard, handsome face. “Get your damn hand off me.”

Snow blustered under the porch overhang and battered their faces. She watched as plumes of condensation shot from his nose, while fat flakes caught upon his dark eyelashes and whiskered jaw. Rebel didn’t even notice the biting cold. His warmth overshadowed it, nearly palpable and heating her blood, causing their prior explosive lovemaking to run through her mind again. She squeezed her thighs together when a trickle of wetness escaped her passage. It was a thrilling, new sensation, for her denims were usually there to soak up the evidence of her secret wantonness. But to have it dribbling out and soaking her bare pussy made her realize there could be definite advantages to wearing the dratted feminine garments.

“Keep the dress on.” His deep voice rumbled out in a sensual assault upon her ears. He took another visual dip into her cleavage.

“I like it. You look absolutely stunning.”

“Stunning?” she echoed. “Why, that’s ridiculous. I-I just thought I’d wear it because...”

“Because?”

“Because.” She forced down a lump of humiliation, but the words tumbled from her mouth anyway. “The way you and Trey made me feel in there, like a complete woman for the first time in my life. I... I just didn’t want to let go of that feeling yet.”

His mouth curved up in a devastating smile. He slid his arms around her and brought her up against the firm wall of his chest. Even through the thicknesses of the gown, the heated evidence of his rising desire probed her damp mons.

“To me, you *are* a woman.” He lazily caressed her mouth with his in a circular motion that made her lips tingle and her apex clench. “You just needed a little persuasion to bring it out. In fact, you’re the most gorgeous, sexual woman I’ve ever met.”

“Bull,” she murmured into the kiss, sliding her arms up to twine around his neck.

“Uh-uh.” He drew back, pinning her with his lusty gaze. “It’s not bull. And I have a mind to show you just how beautiful you really are to me.”

She untangled herself from his big body. Her heart pounded and her cunt throbbed at the intent of his words, but that would have to wait. “We need to find Trey.”

“I reckon you’d normally be right,” he allowed, turning to plant his hands on the porch railing. He sighed and looked up at the distant mountains then down to the ground. “But there’ll be no finding him. He’s gone for good.”

“Gone for good?” Her gaze wandered down the steps and out over the sloping yard where she’d last seen him. She located Trey’s boot prints again and followed them, along with another fresh set next to his. Most likely Renegade had traipsed out in the snow searching for Trey while she was doing her dang womanly primping. Both sets of footprints led away from the house toward the towering, low-branched evergreen, but she didn’t understand how

that indicated Trey would never return. “LaMarr, I’m fixing to sock you one if you don’t spit it out. How do you know he’s gone for good?”

Renegade dug behind the lapel of his coat. “Two reasons. One, his footprints end just down there by that tall white pine.”

“What do you mean, they ‘end’?” She narrowed her eyes and leaned out over the railing. That was when she saw it. Indeed, Trey’s retreating footsteps didn’t continue. They abruptly stopped at the tree’s overhang, as if he’d been sucked up into thin air in mid-step. She pressed her lips together. “Wait. Never mind, I see.”

“Strange but true, just like with the bullet,” Renegade muttered. “And sedating us so he could leave undetected.”

“Yes, and just like with us,” she added, shifting behind him to wrap her arms around his waist. Fuzzy affection swelled in her heart. She understood now. “Renegade, I think I believe him. He came to Moose Junction a few weeks ago strictly for us. To bring us back together.”

“I think you’re right,” he replied softly. He turned and faced her, pulling his hand from inside his coat. “But it was also for this. I found it tacked to the tree trunk.”

She looked down at the weathered piece of paper he held between his thumb and forefinger. He thrust it toward her. Her hand shook. She took the document, unfolded the crisp paper, and read its message.

Rebel let out a gasp. “Why that ornery, lily-livered son of the devil.” She shoved the note into her pocket and took the stairs two at a time. “Come on, husband. Let’s skedaddle on into town and settle this score once and for all.”

“Right behind you, wife.”

“Goddamn it,” Tadd growled. “If you don’t put that blasted gun down, I’ll—”

Boom, ping-ping. Renegade’s Colt smoked in his hand. Tables turned as bullets peppered the saloon. Late-night gamblers took cover, diving behind overturned tables. The jingle of falling coins

sounded amid screeching harlots high-tailing it from the laps of drunken cowboys.

“You *pig!*” Rebel bellowed.

Tadd peeked out from behind an oak barrel, a spout of ale now arching from a fresh bullet hole. “What the hell’s gotten into you?” he demanded, pounding his fist on the side of the keg. “All in the span of one day and night, you’ve completely ruined my saloon. By golly, Rebel, I’ll see that you pay for every cent of repair if it’s the last thing I do on this earth.”

Renegade engaged the hammer of his second weapon. The click of it echoed in the hushed quiet of the room. “Got yourself in a real fix, Mr. Thatcher, huh?”

“Rebel’s the one what’s in a fix,” Tadd grumbled. “And it looks like you’re gonna be paying the piper right along with her.”

“No, I *am* the piper, and I’m hell-fired and madder than a cornered rattler. So you can bet your boots you’re not going to get the chance to do anymore damage.”

“Me? Damage? She’s the one who—”

Bang. Renegade blasted another hole in the keg. Ale spurted across the room. He blew the smoke from the barrel of his weapon before aiming it at Tadd again. “You’re the one who’s done the damage, and your hours are numbered. The sheriff’s been notified.”

Rebel grinned when, as if on cue, Sheriff Benedict pushed through the swing-doors and entered the tavern, spurs clicking on wood, both gleaming silver firearms loaded and aimed hip-level at Tadd. “Mr. Thatcher, you’re under arrest.”

“What?” Tadd gawked.

Since learning of Renegade’s plight, Rebel had mulled through suspicions about his abduction and who could have been responsible. But the note said it all. She rushed over to where her father huddled and, lifting her cumbersome skirt off the floor to prevent staining from the ale, she drew the paper out of the pocket of her mantle and held it up.

“Does this look familiar?”

Tadd blinked. His long face went as pale as the snow. He stut-

tered, “I-I... I’ve never seen it before.”

“Bull. Don’t forget I used to work for you.” She shoved the note closer to his nose, recalling how he’d manipulated his hired doxies into playing mother to her, and allowed them to issue some downright abusive discipline when they thought her out of line. But he’d also forced her to clean, bartend, and do saloon repairs, as well as performing upstairs maid duties and office bookkeeper. Therefore, she was privy to some things others weren’t. “I recognize the paper. You ordered it special from the general store to keep your books and do your inventory.”

“Let’s go, Thatcher.” The sheriff gestured with his gun for Tadd to give himself up. “Off to jail with you.”

Tadd ignored the document. Instead, his blue eyes bulged at the sheriff, making a lame attempt at innocence. “What for?”

“For hiring out a kidnapping on Mr. LaMarr, for plotting to have him murdered right after his wedding to Ms. Rebel here, and for conspiracy to have your own daughter murdered. Quite a list of offenses you’ve got there.”

“No.”

Benedict took two steps closer to her father. “Yes.”

Tadd cowered. Benedict was a giant of a man, and though he could be a gentle bear when unprovoked, he could also be as intimidating as an irate moose when goaded. “I didn’t do nothing,” Tadd insisted, his voice a quivering song of panic.

“How about I read the note to your patrons?” Rebel asked, holding up the paper to decipher Tadd’s handwriting.

“No.” Tadd got to his feet. He shook his head vehemently, his eyes glittering rodent-like.

“Too bad.” Rebel cleared her throat and read, “‘Billy, the gold she discovered this morning should be rightfully mine—and yours if you help me. Get rid of her husband. Once it dies down in a few months or so, she’ll encounter a little ‘accident’. You’ll be paid once it’s all taken care of.’”

“No, I didn’t write that. It’s not my handwriting,” Tadd insisted, backing away from Benedict. “I would never...”

“Hogwash,” Renegade interjected, arcing around and taking up position on Tadd’s other side. “Cassie claims she’d know that chicken scratching of yours anywhere.”

“It’s no use, Thatcher. Billy Thorne’s already in custody,” the sheriff informed Tadd. “He confessed that you hired him to dispose of Mr. LaMarr after you’d learned of Ms. Rebel’s gold discovery. Only Billy didn’t tell you he couldn’t bring himself to actually kill a man. Instead, he had Mr. LaMarr imprisoned in the mining camps in Virginia City where he was unlawfully forced to perform slave labor until he was able to escape. According to young Billy, you thought Mr. LaMarr was six feet under all this time. That is, until he strolled into your saloon this afternoon and all the ruckus began.” Benedict snorted. “Bet that was a mite of a surprise to see a dead man walking.”

Rebel shivered at the rabid hatred glowing in her father’s eyes. She’d been the victim of his evil many times over, but to think he’d actually paid to have her husband kidnapped and killed, and intended to do away with her, too, just to get his hands on her gold? It made her feel sicker than a bout of yellow fever.

“How could you do this to me, Pa?” Rebel demanded, fighting off nausea. “God’s sake, I’m your daughter.”

Even though his sins were apparent, she couldn’t stop her heart from aching at what could have been, if only he’d loved her. But all she could do was watch him reduced to the pathetic mole that he was as Benedict and Renegade disarmed him and hauled him toward the door.

Tadd’s big body shook. He angled his head around and bel-lowed, “You were no daughter. You became a gun-toting, disgraceful hellion after your whore of a mother passed away. All the work I put into raising you alone, I deserved every ounce of that gold you found.”

Renegade growled, drew back his fist, and socked Tadd one in the jaw, sending his head back with a snap. Tadd’s hat flew off. He groaned, slumping in between the sheriff and Renegade.

“Jesus, that’ll be enough, Renegade,” Benedict grumbled, haul-

ing Tadd up in his arms.

“My apologies, sheriff.” He shifted his gaze to Rebel. “Sorry darlin’, but I just can’t stand by and listen to him talk so blame viciously about you and your mother.”

A din of low ahs and ohs sounded throughout the room.

Rebel had never known her mother, but nonetheless, her heart twisted in her chest at Renegade’s attempt at chivalry. No one had ever said such a sweet thing to her in all of her twenty-three years. Tears stung her eyes. She sucked in a shaky breath laden with the scent of gunpowder and ale. She barely noticed her father’s ram-bunctious shouts of injustice as Benedict dragged him out of the saloon and off to jail.

A wild impulse seized her. She sprinted across the space and launched herself up in Renegade’s arms, legs straddling his hips beneath the flurry of her skirts. She wound her arms around his neck and kissed him with a fervor more intense than she’d ever bestowed upon him and Trey combined. Her father’s indiscretions and the cold, empty life she’d lived with him were finally forgotten, over, done with forever. In its place, love swelled in her heart, so much so that she like to died from it.

“Thank you,” she murmured against his soft, moist lips. “Thank you for being so good to me.”

Renegade’s wide, stunned eyes slowly narrowed with a decided gleam of lust. He reached up and tenderly brushed a stray lock of hair behind her shoulder. She could smell the leathery, rich scent of him, and when he hitched her up a little higher, she gasped at the heat that probed her pussy.

Heedless of the curious onlookers, he buried his nose in the crook of her neck, working his way up to her fitfully beating pulse. Her eyes fluttered shut as she rode the delicious wave of desire it wrought from her when he whispered in her ear, “I’ve finally decided I do like you best in a dress.”

It wasn’t the words of endearment she’d expected to hear. Her heart sank with dejection and her temper flared anew. She wriggled, attempting to free herself from his iron-tight hold. “Let me

down.”

He chuckled, the baritone note rumbling in her chest. One of his hands splayed over the back of her head, pulling her nearer so he could finish whispering, “Because now, on the ride home, I’ll be able to get inside you much easier.”

She’d been about to release a breath of exasperation, but now she held it within her lungs at his wanton declaration. Rebel took a moment to let the fire finish its blazing run through her blood before replying, “Mmm, I suddenly have a hankering to mosey on in and see the Moose Junction tailor. I do believe I’ll go the whole hog and order a new wardrobe of gowns, along with all those cussed frilly things that go with them.”

They rode home together upon his massive steed. Rebel straddled her husband, her bulky skirts covering Renegade’s legs and trailing down the sides of the mount. He jerked her closer and ground her bare mons against his freed erection.

“Mm, yes, just like that,” he rasped. His face was shrouded by the gray muted shadow of his hat brim. Still, she could detect a sparkle of lust in his dark eyes.

“Oh, God.” She crossed her arms behind his neck. A moan escaped around the tightness in her throat when the horse’s gait pitched and shifted her body, causing her damp pussy to slide in random motions over his cock. “I’m definitely starting to warm to the idea of fussy fashions.”

He chuckled, lifting her so her entrance poised over the crown of his shaft. “Nothing like seeing your derriere jiggle in those tight denims, but I’ve got to admit, easy access is a mite more tempting to a man in need.”

His shoulder muscles flexed beneath her upper arms, and his warm breath fanned her cleavage above the low neckline of her gown. Big hands gripped her hips under her cloak, guiding her womanhood to him. A tingle shimmered along her clit and spread to her limbs when the horse stumbled in a drift, causing the sensitive nub to slam against his corona. She slid her palms around and

dug her fingertips into the firmness of his broad shoulders, bracing herself for the onslaught of bliss. It loomed near, that mind-blowing sensation of being filled and made whole. Her pulse quivered in anticipation and her loins quickened, further dampening her canal. Plumes from their panting rose into the small space between them, their breath entwining, spiraling upward into one.

She threw her head back to stare at the cloudy night sky, ready, so blazing ready to take him into her core. Above, the half-moon cut its way through the clouds. An owl's call echoed through the cedar-scented forest. Snow-dappled treetops swayed in the aftermath of the storm's wrath, the soft swish an oddly appropriate song for their licentious lovemaking upon horseback. The snow had stopped falling, leaving behind a thick blanket of white and an arctic chill to go with it. But Rebel welcomed the cold. It blasted up her skirt and soothed the boiling of her blood. Yet having her legs wrapped around her husband in such a wanton position instantly reignited the inferno the winds appeased.

She thought of Trey for a brief moment, aware this wouldn't have been possible without his intervention. Knowing herself as she did, she was certain if Trey hadn't been in Moose Junction upon Renegade's return, she would never have believed her husband's cockamamie jail story, and she feared she might have shot him dead in the saloon before she could lasso in her volatile temper. She would definitely miss Trey. He'd peeled those first layers away to unleash her womanhood, and he'd brought Renegade home to her. But it had been Renegade who'd held her heart captive from that one sizzling moment his lips had met hers in the church months ago. Perhaps she'd been too stubborn to admit it before his arrival, but the important thing was, she embraced it now.

Thanks to Trey.

Rebel shook her head, focusing on Renegade, on the dangerous look of him, on the physical and emotional power he wielded over her. Their eyes locked in that split second before he claimed her.

"I love you," she whispered. "And I'm so happy you're finally home."

Her insides melted at the twinkling reflection of love and deep abiding emotion in his eyes. Before he could respond with words she already knew he felt, she ducked her head beneath his hat and, famished for his flavor, she slammed her mouth into his. Fire and Sam Hell, but he tasted of heady whiskey and a rogue's sin. The power of his passionate response caused her toes to involuntarily curl within her boots. She moaned into his mouth, their tongues engaging in a warm, slick skirmish of raw desire.

But truly, Rebel figured they both were winning the battle, for he growled back with equal ardor, his tongue and lips vibrating to her core. She clamped her lids shut, her eyes going cross behind the shutter of them when, in that maddening methodical way of his, he slowly, bit by bit, guided her downward, sheathing himself with her drenched pussy.

"Ah, my hot-blooded little Rebel..." he murmured against her mouth.

She twitched and released a strangled cry. He shuddered, kissing her faster, harder, deeper. His fingers dug into the flesh of her rear, pumping her up and down his rod, slicking its entire length. Her inner muscles contracted around his thick hardness, spilling her cream around the base of his shaft. The fragrant juices were everywhere, leaving the crotch of his gaping denims sodden, smearing her inner thighs, soaking the thatch of sparse curls at her apex.

Then Renegade took up where Trey had left off. His hands glided around in a sensual slide. He swiped the cream over her buttocks and asshole preparing it for his next move. Trey had introduced her to the tingly wonders of touching her there, but never had it felt as fiery and euphoric as it did now with her husband exploring it. He circled her anal ring with his fingertip, gradually increasing the pressure until he breached the tight entrance. She gasped in shocked rapture, knowing full well there wasn't a clitoris there, but amazed at the similar sensations it wrought from her when that naughty area was explored.

But that was only the beginning of his sweet assault. He shifted slightly forward, rocking his own hips so he could guide hers,

swiping her sensitive hole around the horn of the saddle.

“Feel good?” he asked, tearing his mouth from hers to burn a trail of kisses and nips down her neck to the top of one breast.

“Man alive, does it ever.” She shivered, not with cold, but with the scorching rapture of her weight bearing down on him, being filled by him to her very womb while he rubbed her rear around the saddle horn. She recalled the shape of the saddle’s hogtieing feature. It had been designed about two inches in length in order to securely rope livestock. To keep the end of the lasso from slipping off during the frenzied process, it was also slightly bulbous at the tip... like the head of a cock.

“More, faster,” she pleaded in a breathy, wickedly deep tone that sounded more like the harlots in the saloon than Rebel Thatcher—no, Cassie LaMarr.

She gyrated her hips and massaged her clitoris against his pubic bone, urging Renegade to pick up the tempo even as their mount began a trotting gait. “Please,” she whispered, tightening her legs around him.

Renegade made an animal grunt of agreement, capturing her mouth in a voracious kiss. His fingers burrowed into the flesh of her hips, his biceps strained against the sleeves of his coat. The big span of his hands held her firmly, guiding her pussy in a violent dance upon his twitching cock. He lifted her higher, rammed himself deeper, and it was then, when the rhythm picked up and each penetration became more fierce, that her now dilated anus came down upon the wetted saddle horn.

Rebel let out a muffled scream at the intense pleasure of the double penetration. She sucked a breath through her nose, starving for the icy air to cool her blistering heart and her smoldering lungs. The horse snorted and tossed its head at the sudden noise, pitching the lovers more precariously than before.

“Hold on, darlin’,” Renegade murmured, so she tightened her arms around his neck, her feet struggling to get some leverage on the horse’s rear.

With each pitch and toss of the steed’s movements and every

deep thrust of Renegade's cock into her soaked cunt, the saddle horn slipped further into her rear. It was the most deliciously sinful thing she had ever experienced, and she couldn't help thinking that it was Trey taking her from behind while Renegade filled her quim. The lascivious fantasy tempted her closer to release. But it was Renegade's next words that pushed her over the precipice and sent her soaring.

"You'd love that to be another man fucking you, wouldn't you?" He pumped her in a frenzied tempo, his breath warm and sweet against her panting mouth. "Filling your tight little ass from behind with his big prick... like Trey's, while I fuck your pussy."

It was as if his words were the catalyst to his own release. His head dropped back, his eyelids closed. He let out a wolf's howl, and the warmth of his seed filled her womb and spilled out to bathe and slicken her labia. His shaft twitched inside her even as her inner muscles began to ripple, stroking him more, while her rectum contracted around the saddle horn. For the longest time she remained suspended in nothingness, the bliss washing through her blood, preventing her from drawing in her next breath.

As if sensing the storm was over, the stallion slowed to a walk. Rebel relaxed then, her head falling forward to rest upon his shoulder. His arms cradled her, pulling her closer so her rear came away from the saddle and her breasts pressed into his chest.

"Ah, I love you," he declared huskily, petting her hair and her back.

She sighed. Tears welled up in her eyes. "No one's ever said that to me before."

He kissed the tip of her nose. "Well, it won't be the last. I knew it a long time ago, and I'll be saying it thousands of times more to come." He dragged his lips along her jaw and nibbled at her earlobe. "You were all I thought about. I couldn't wait to get back to you. You are the sexiest, most passionate rebel this side of the Rockies, wife, and you're mine. All mine."

That word wife made her shiver with elation almost as much as his confession of love. She raised her head and stared into his

fathomless eyes, recalling their spat in the saloon earlier that day. Grinning, she toyed with the lapel of his coat. "Well, my husband renegade, then do you still think I can't hit a bull's hind end with a handful of—?"

Renegade stiffened, drawing sharply on the reins. "Shh." He tightened his hold on her while setting his free hand on the butt of his weapon.

"What?" She glanced around noting they'd arrived at the ranch.

"Someone's coming."

Her face flushed, remembering her risqué position. She wiggled, attempting to remove herself from his half-hard shaft. If they were about to engage in a gunfight, she blame sure didn't want to be anchored at such a disadvantage.

"Well what in blazes are you waiting for?" she thundered, adding a whack to his shoulder to emphasize her words. "Get me off of you and help me to turn around."

"Howdy."

Rebel flinched. Her head came up at the deep voice. It sounded like velvet scraping over gravel.

Renegade held her closer and replied ominously, "You're on private property, mister."

"I mean y'all no harm. Just passing through looking for a hot meal and a warm bed for the night. Name's Scout Carson."

Rebel strained her head around, mesmerized by the tone and curious as a cat to put a face to such a charming voice. Muted moonlight slanted through a break in the night clouds, swathing the stranger in silver. He sat tall on a massive black stallion, his wrists crossed nonchalantly over the horn of his saddle, his wide shoulders straining within the fringed brown hide coat he wore.

Long strands of honey hair blew around his strong-boned face. He tipped his hat, nodding at Rebel, and replied, "Ma'am." He winked at her with the gesture, and even in the dimness of twilight, she caught a glimpse of startling green eyes beneath the brim of his black felt Stetson.

"What's your business here?" Renegade demanded in a com-

manding tone.

“Bronco buster. Just headed south to Virginia City. I’m told there’s enough bronco work there to last a cowboy several seasons, not to mention I’d like to get in on all that gold fever.” He smiled, and a row of perfect white teeth glowed in the emerging lunar light. “A man sure could use a nugget or two of the stuff, ya know.”

Rebel thought of the gold she’d found on the banks of the river not a stone’s throw away. She had more than she could use in two lifetimes, but she wasn’t a fool. She’d keep her trap shut about the likelihood of more in the Moose Junction mountains. Instead, her attention focused on his profession.

“You break broncos?” she asked, trying her best to ignore the compromising position she remained in.

“Yes, ma’am,” he assured her in that baritone voice that sent shivers up her spine. “Best in the West.”

An idea occurred to her. She leaned in and whispered in Renegade’s ear. “I’ve got three wild mustangs corralled a ways up the hillside. We could, uh, maybe use a professional to break them in...”

To Scout, Renegade said, “Excuse us for one moment.”

Scout nodded politely, whistling a tune while Renegade and Rebel conversed in private.

Renegade whispered back, “Are you sure it’s not that you’re wanting to break *him* in?”

She gasped, leaning away from him to search out his shadowed expression. To Rebel’s surprise, he had a teasing gleam in his eyes. Her loins quickened, not just at the movement of his cock inside her, but at the delicious prospect that had practically fallen in their laps. She thought of their lovemaking with Trey, then the wayward fantasy she’d dreamed up only moments ago.

She chewed on her lower lip. “I got to admit, it sure was nice having Trey here with us. Two men...”

He winked at her, and she thought how exciting it was and how womanly it made her feel to have two different men offer her that flirty gesture within moments. The corners of Renegade’s mouth

lifted in a devastating grin. His cock convulsed inside her, a non-verbal way of offering his agreement.

“Well, Mr. Carson,” Renegade drawled. Beneath her skirts, he finally lifted her from his manhood and set her across his lap to face Scout. “It just so happens my lovely wife and I have a fresh pot of stew on the stove and a fire blazing in the hearth. Would you like to join us for a bite to eat, and maybe rest your head for a spell?”

Scout cheerily replied, “I’d be much obliged, sir.”

“Got ourselves one problem, though,” Renegade added.

Scout’s body tensed, as if to brace himself for the worst. “What would that be?”

“We’ve only got one bed,” Rebel put in before Renegade could respond.

Scout’s stunning emerald gaze raked her from head to boots peeping out of the hem of her gown. A flood of cream dampened her inner thighs. Her heart fluttered behind her breastbone like a caged butterfly, waiting for his next words. Renegade gave her waist a squeeze of triumph when Scout licked his lips and replied with a southern burr, “Well, it does get mighty cold up in these here mountains.”

“It’s a big bed,” Rebel clarified, feeling positively wicked. Renegade ground his erection into her hip at the very moment she overtly scrutinized the bulge in Scout’s breeches. “Big enough for... three.”

Scout studied Renegade then his heated inspection delved into the valley between Rebel’s breasts. At the hungry touch of his gaze, her nipples tingled and tightened against the soft fabric of her bodice. His eyes finally rose to meet hers. He beamed, “Ma’am, I got to confess, I sure was hoping you’d say that.”

About the author:

Though she also writes in many other genres, Titania Ladley (aka Roxana Blaze) has always had a soft place in her heart for naughty historical romances. For more stories by this bestselling erotic romance author, please visit her at <http://www.TitaniaLadley.com> or at her alter-ego's site, <http://www.RoxanaBlaze.com>.



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