



WHEN THE BLUEBIRD CALLS



HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN SERIES I
LEILAND DALE

When the Bluebird Calls

Heart of the Mountain

By Leiland Dale

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PUBLISHER

 **SILVER**
P U B L I S H I N G

CHAPTER 1

Sitting at his desk, Devon Reid looked over his shoulder and watched the rain pelt against his office window. The gloomy weather matched his current mood and mental state for the last few months.

Six years ago, Devon's mother was diagnosed with cancer. Although she spent most of that time in remission, the cancer returned 6 months ago. With his father's passing several years before, Devon was her sole surviving relative and the only family left who could help her during her sickness. He had no regrets being there for her when she needed him. He loved her very much.

He spent most of his time caring for his mother during these last few months. He painfully watched as she suffered through extensive chemotherapy. With her limited mobility, Devon had to bath her, feed her and constantly watch over her throughout the night. As an aftereffect of the chemo, the food his mother ate did not stay down for long either, so throwing up was an everyday occurrence. Devon would wake up in the recliner next to her bed and be there to support her whenever she woke. It tore him apart to see the pain etched in his mother's face and to see her wither away

as she lost more and more weight each day. Many nights he stayed with her instead of going home to Kevin, his partner of 2 years.

Unfortunately, Kevin just could not cope with Devon's absence. Constant arguments ensued which eventually lead to their break up. It was difficult. After being together for two years, he thought Kevin loved him for better or worse.

A few nights after the breakup, Devon sat next to his mom's bed as he held her frail hand and watched her take each labored breath. She turned to him and told him something he would never forget.

"He wasn't the one for you," she began as she took another breath to continue. "When a man comes along and looks at you as if you are his world...then you know you've found the one."

He looked at her as tears streamed down his cheeks.

She peacefully closed her eyes and slipped away with a smile on her face, as if she was privy to an answer of a riddle no one else could solve.

Devon closed his eyes and fought to contain his emotions as he vividly remembered that night four weeks ago. The sudden knocking on the door abruptly brought him out of his maudlin thoughts.

"Come in," he said then let out a deep breath to steady himself.

"I'm going to be leaving, Devon. Everyone's gone home already and we don't have any more appointments today." Tara, his assistant, smiled at him unaware of his turmoil.

"Thanks, Tara. I'll see you in the morning," he said with a forced smile hoping it looked convincing. "Just make sure you lock up behind you, please."

"Sure," Tara said as she softly closed the door behind her.

Looking around his office, he somehow found himself feeling out of place. His dark wood desk was bare except for his computer, some neatly stacked patient files on one side, and his gold nameplate with black letters on the edge.

Turning to his computer, Devon opened his email program to check his messages before leaving for the day. Scanning down the list, he came across an email from his realtor, Vanessa, in Bridger, Montana. He had been waiting to hear back from her, so he quickly opened it.

Dear Dr. Devon Reid,

As per our last telephone discussion, the current owner of the Bridger Veterinary Clinic, in Bridger, Montana has agreed to your latest offer. Please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make the necessary arrangements to conclude the purchase.

Kind Regards,

Vanessa May – MAY REALTORS

Devon pushed up his left sleeve and checked the time. It was just after 4 o'clock so he picked up the phone in hopes of reaching Vanessa at her office. He wanted to

secure the purchase of the clinic and needed to buy a house nearby. Then, he needed to find a local realtor to sell his current apartment and veterinary practice.

He needed to move. Running into Kevin on the streets and still hearing condolences for the loss of his mother was just too much for him. He felt horrible leaving Tara and his patients, but he needed a fresh start or he would drive himself crazy. He hoped Bridger, Montana would be his sanctuary.

CHAPTER 2

Trees surrounded Devon as he walked across the land at the edge of the woods. The place was magnificent. Tall trees lined the edge of the property, horses galloped around in circles in a pen off into the distance. A log ranch house sat not too far off in another direction with mountaintops peaking up behind it. The stables and the bellowing of the bulls always left him in awe of the place.

Devon stood there taking in the beauty of his surroundings when he distinctly heard the beautiful sound of a bird's call. Strong arms surrounded him from behind and Devon felt lips touch his cheek as beard stubble grazed his skin. He felt hard rippled muscles pressed against his back. The man's hands moved down slowly, undoing the button of his jeans and pulling down his zipper. He felt safe and protectively encased in the strong arms that surrounded him, holding him close.

Devon felt a big, calloused hand wrap around his hard shaft while the other played with his balls. The stranger started stroking him, nibbling on his neck and shoulder. Devon leaned back against him. Somehow, this all seemed very familiar to him. His one arm snaked around the man's neck while he held onto the stranger's arm with his other hand. His cock glistened in the early morning sunshine from the cum running down his shaft. The hard ridge of the stranger's

cock pressing against his butt cheeks through his jeans had his balls drawing up against his body. His breath came in rapid pants as beads of perspiration ran down the back of his neck. Moaning loudly, Devon's pearly white seed spilled from him. He turned his head to kiss the stranger on the lips and again he heard the distinct call of a bird.

Devon woke with a start, sitting straight up in bed. He touched his stomach and found his chest covered with his release. The comforter and sheets lay crumpled at the end of the bed.

"What the fuck?" Dazed, Devon got out of his bed in a sleep-induced haze and walked into the bathroom. He grabbed the washcloth, wet it and began to clean himself. *Damn, this definitely isn't going to work.* Devon turned on the shower and set the temperature of the water. He slowly undressed and got in the shower. He stood under the spray of the water and let it run down his back as he thought about the dream.

For the past two weeks, he'd been haunted by the same dream. He always woke before he could see the stranger's face so he didn't know who he was, yet, he felt safe in his arms. And he couldn't understand why or how, but he felt the stranger was someone very special to him. He knew the dream had to mean something, but he couldn't figure out exactly what it was.

Devon headed into the kitchen, slowly made a sandwich, and poured himself a cup of coffee. *Thank God for the auto-timer!* Leaning against the kitchen counter, he ate his sandwich and drank his coffee as he looked around at the empty apartment. He'd managed to purchase a furnished home, so he was able to sell his existing furniture.

Most of his things were already boxed and ready for delivery to his new place in a couple of days. Other than toiletries, the only remaining items to pack were the coffee machine and the mug in his hand. There were boxes on the floor with his clothes by the front door that needed to be loaded into his in new black Dodge Dakota TRX4. Devon smiled as he remembered going to the car lot in the city and buying his new truck. It was the first thing he bought for himself as a way to mark the start of his new life.

He set his mug on the kitchen counter, then cleaned and boxed the coffee machine. Once he finished packing everything else, he washed his mug and packed that into the box too. Devon easily carried it all to his truck and headed out, ready for a fresh start.

Devon was glad to rid himself of this part of his life. It all reminded him too much of the pain he saw his mother experience and his breakup. He turned the key in the ignition of his truck, turned on the radio still tuned to the same station from the drive yesterday, and drove away attempting to leave the painful memories behind.

* * * *

After hours of driving, Devon finally pulled into the small dirt road in front of his new home. He sat in his truck as he looked at the log cabin with a wraparound porch on the small piece of land. The area around him was peaceful. Devon could see a forest of trees in the distance. An odd feeling of recognition came over him.

Getting out of his truck, Devon arrived at the cabin's front door in just three steps. After feeling the smooth wood under his hand, he unlocked the door and stepped

into the living room. The cabin had a homey look to it. The living room and dining room shared a large open space with a fully equipped kitchen on the wall opposite the front door. Devon walked into the kitchen and stood there looking out the window taking in the breathtaking view of the mountains. He felt at peace.

The bathroom was next to the kitchen, with two bedroom doors to the right. The cabin was beautifully furnished with a dark brown leather couch set and an oak dinner table with four chairs. Entering the bedrooms, he noticed they were sparse but knew it would look beautiful once he had everything unpacked. In the master bedroom, a stunning, handcrafted headboard and footboard encased a queen size bed in the middle of one wall with matching tables on each side. A coordinated dresser with four drawers decorated the wall directly opposite the bed.

Devon took a quick look at his bathroom. It had white tiles with a beautiful grey and blue pattern. The counter was a solid grey marble top that coordinated beautifully with the cabinets underneath. He touched it, feeling very pleased that he bought this cabin and thankful that Vanessa had recommended this property to him.

Since most of his personal belonging had not arrived yet, all he had with him was what he packed this morning. *At least he had his clothes.* Turning around he headed out to his truck, started unloading the boxes and carried them to his new bedroom. After he brought in the boxes, he first removed the framed picture of his mom and placed it on the side table next to the bed. Then, he began unpacking his clothes and other personal belongings.

Devon realized the task of unpacking took much longer than expected when he finished in the late night hour. He double-checked the coffee machine to make sure everything was set for his morning coffee the next day. Exhausted, Devon grabbed some pajama bottoms, an old t-shirt and his bag of toiletries then took a quick shower before heading off to bed.

Lying in bed, Devon began to think of all the things he needed to do the next day. He had to get up early in the morning to start his first day at the clinic. He knew it would be a long day, but he welcomed it as the start of a new life. With that last thought, Devon drifted off to sleep.

CHAPTER 3

Devon felt anxious when he arrived at the clinic the next morning. He always felt a bit uncomfortable meeting new people. That was why he chose to be a veterinarian in the first place, minimal human contact.

He walked into the clinic and approached the reception desk. A young man, about 28 years of age, sat behind the desk and greeted Devon with a shy smile.

“Hi. How can I help you?”

“Good morning. I’m Dr. Devon Reid, the new veterinarian,” he said and saw a slight flush creep into the young man’s cheeks.

“Oh, hello! My name is Jordan. We spoke on the phone a couple of times.”

Devon already seemed to like this young man. He was hopeful they would work well together.

“I’m glad someone is taking over from the old doc,” Jordan continued. “He’s not as young as he used to be. Come with me and I’ll show you around.”

Devon followed Jordan as he showed him around the clinic. He soon found the surroundings very familiar and quickly settled in.

Devon sat in his new office thinking about his first day at the clinic. He relished the thought of how well the day had gone. He met many of the town folks, who brought in their pets for a checkup. Devon quickly discovered most of today's visits consisted of people bringing in their pets as an excuse to meet the new town vet. The town folks treated him like one of their own. He truly felt welcomed.

He walked out of his office to the front desk where Jordan was deep in conversation with a good-looking young man.

"Umm...excuse me, Jordan, do we have any more appointments for today?" He glanced over at the young man then back at Jordan.

Jordan quickly glanced down at the appointment book. "Nope. Mrs. Norton was the last one for the day." Jordan smiled then turned to the good-looking young man. "Oh...Andrew, this is Dr. Devon Reid, the new veterinarian." Jordan then looked back at him. "Dr. Reid, this is Andrew, my brother."

Devon held out his hand in greeting and was overwhelmed with the steely grip of the young man's hand in his. The wild and feral look in Andrew's eyes made Devon very uncomfortable.

"Hi. It's nice to meet you." Attempting a smile Devon turned and faced Jordan. "Well, then I think we're done for the day."

Jordan's brother turned around and walked towards the door, "I'm going to be off. See you later Jordan. It was nice meeting you, doc." Andrew said, gave him a nod in his direction as he headed out the door.

"I'm going to clean up the desk and then I'll be leaving as well, if that's okay? I have a date tonight." Jordan looked at him with a beaming smile.

"Oh...That's fine. I need to get home anyway. I still have some boxes to unpack and we're not housing any animals at the clinic right now anyway." He smiled at Jordan shyly, feeling his cheeks heat up. "Besides, if there's an emergency my number is on the door."

Jordan started cleaning up the front desk and stowed away some files. "Thanks. I really appreciate it. I'll be done in a minute and I'll lock up behind me."

Devon walked back to his office and sat at his desk. *Thank God the first day went off without a hitch.* Picking up the stack of files from his desk, Devon walked over to the filing cabinet in the corner of the room and filed them away. Grabbing his keys from the edge of the desk, he walked out of clinic, closed the door behind him and headed home.

CHAPTER 4

Greg Elliot stood at the edge of the land and watched the horses gallop in the pasture. Smiling, he recalled spending much of his childhood working on the ranch his family owned. He truly loved this life.

His smile soon faded as he remembered the day his life changed. Greg thought of the day when Joseph, one of the ranch hands caught him having sex in the barn with Will, one of the other ranch hands who he had been seeing on and off since the age of sixteen.

Greg was on his knees sucking Will's hard shaft when they heard a noise. When they looked up, they saw Joseph standing there. Quickly they pulled apart and got dressed just as Joseph ran out. When Greg came running out of the barn his father was standing on the front porch.

"I won't have a *faggot* for a son! Get off *my* land! *Now!*" Greg could still remember how loudly his father shouted at him.

His father disowned him at that moment, and chased Greg off the land with a hunting rifle. He didn't even have time to take his belongings. He looked over to where Will stood, watched as his father shouted at Will, and knew Will had lost his job. He

wondered what Will was going to do now. With sadness heavy in his heart, Greg got into his pickup and drove off with nothing but the clothes on his back to the only place he thought might accept him.

Greg heard about The Mountain Hart Ranch while working on his family's ranch. The mention of the gay friendly ranch always resulted in bigoted comments. Just thinking about the time he worked with his family made Greg feel sick to the stomach – having to hide who he truly was and living in fear of having his secret revealed.

When Greg was forced to leave, he headed for The Mountain Hart Ranch with hopes they would have a job and a place for him to stay. When Greg arrived and spoke to the owner of the ranch, Seth Hart, he took Greg in with open arms as if he were a member of his family. Greg loved working at the Hart Ranch. Although he didn't flaunt his sexuality, there was no need to hide who he was.

Greg was shaken from his memory when a hand landed on his shoulder.

"Good morning."

Looking to the side, he watched as Seth leaned forward, his arms resting against the wooden rail.

Seth tilted his head towards the horses, "How are they doing?"

"Morning, boss." Greg smiled over at Seth, "they're doing pretty good. I am a bit worried about Lady Luck. She's about to go into labor any day now but it looks like she might have a bit of problem. I suspect it's because the foal's head is facing the wrong direction."

Seth turned and faced Greg, "Old Doc Robinson has retired and sold his practice."

"Yeah, I heard," Greg grunted. He heard the new veterinarian was young. That didn't sit well with him. He didn't need an inexperienced vet hanging around and potentially harming an animal.

"At least it's not Lady Luck's first time. Best to take precautions instead of risking her health and have the vet aware of her situation so he's available during her labor if there's a problem."

"We'll also need to make arrangements with the new vet to come out here once a month."

"Yeah. He arrived two weeks ago. I'm surprised you haven't run into him yet," Seth replied. "I heard he's good. He's built up quite the reputation in town already."

We'll see about that. "I have to go into town to order more feed from Bridger Supplies and pick up a couple of things." Greg turned and looked back out at the grazing horses. "I'll go by the clinic and make arrangements for the new doc to come out here."

"Thanks. I'll be heading out to check on the pastures." Seth turned and headed towards the main house. "Let me know what the doc says when you get back," he yelled over his shoulder.

"Will do boss." Greg turned away from watching the horses.

Getting into his truck, Greg slammed the door, irritated at the prospect of having to meet the new veterinarian. Starting the engine, Greg sped off towards town.

* * * *

Driving down the main road, Greg noticed an unfamiliar young man talking to Andrew Pierce. When Greg arrived in Bridger years ago, Andrew was the only person who was antagonistic towards him. He was curious *who* this guy was talking to Andrew. Didn't seem like a normal, casual conversation. And, considering Andrew's lack of social niceties, he was surprised he was having an actual exchange with anyone. He snickered to himself when he noticed the stranger was doing most of the talking and Andrew just stood there silently. Finally, someone who's giving him a dose of his own medicine.

Arriving at the feed store, Greg parked his truck and walked into the general store section. "Hello Patrick. I need to place another order for some more feed for the horses," Greg said over his shoulder while walking down one of the aisles to collect some other supplies he needed. "Can you double my last order and let me know when it gets here?"

"Sure thing." Greg could hear Patrick flipping through his records. "The order you placed the other day should be here by the end of the week. There's been a little bit of a delay."

Greg walked towards the cash register. "That's fine. I'll come by at the end of the week to pick up the order." Greg placed the supplies on the counter and pulled out his wallet from his back pocket. "We still have enough feed right now."

Greg paid for the supplies and left the store. Walking down the road towards the clinic, he passed some of the town folks sitting outside the diner having coffee. Through the diner's large window, he saw the town mayor sitting in the far corner as Wesley Carter stood behind the counter serving a few customers.

"Good morning ladies," Greg tilted his head as a sign of respect towards them and continued walking. Greg didn't like the hustle and bustle in town so he never stopped to chat. He favored the peacefulness of the ranch.

The people of Bridger weren't against homosexuals, in fact it was the total opposite. Most of the people living in this small town came from broken families and many were banished from their homes after revealing their sexual preference.

Thinking back to the time he spent on his family's ranch, he thought of his brother Jasper. Even though Jasper was a few years younger, they were extremely close. He remembered how they used to go down to the stream that ran at the edge of the ranch, strip down naked, swing on the tree branches hanging over the stream, then fall into the freezing water. Those were good times. Greg always felt sad about the loss of his relationship with his brother.

Although Greg was the quiet one of the two, he always looked out for Jasper and protected him. At school, kids would corner his brother and mercilessly teased him,

but Greg was always there to stop them. When his father chased him off the family ranch seven years ago, Greg never got a chance to say goodbye to Jasper. *He just wished he knew what his brother thought of him now.*

Greg was so lost in thought he almost walked past the veterinarian clinic. He opened the door and stepped inside letting the cool air from the air conditioner wash over him. Walking towards the reception desk, he noticed the waiting area was empty. He saw Jordan sitting behind the desk looking down at some paperwork.

"Hey, Jordan. Is the doc in?" Greg leaned against the desk as Jordan looked up at him.

"Yeah. He's in the office. Do you want to see him?" The expression on Jordan's face had him wondering what it was about the doc that made everyone think he was such a great person.

Just as Greg was about to answer, the office door opened and the most gorgeous man Greg had ever seen walked up to the reception desk with his head down looking at what must be a medical file in his hands.

"Jordan, would you please...." The vet stopped in mid sentence as their gazes locked on each other. Greg's breath caught and his mouth went dry as he stared into those hazel colored eyes. The sadness reflected in them brought out his protective instincts. He wanted to grab the man and hold him close.

"Doc, this is Greg Elliot. He's the foreman up at The Mountain Hart Ranch." Jordan was looking at the vet with a slight blush tinting his cheeks.

Greg extended his hand in greeting and stammered. "Umm...It's nice to finally meet you, doc." Never in his life had he ever felt so tongue-tied. There sure was a first time for everything. The softness of the doctor's hand in his made Greg's cock instantly take notice. A knot formed in Greg's throat and beads of perspiration trickled down his neck.

"Hi, Greg. It's nice to meet you too. You can call me Devon." Greg watched as Devon swallowed, took a deep breath, and noticed a beautiful rosy tint blooming on his cheeks. His name on Devon's lips sounded like music to his ears.

"Umm...I...uh..." Greg shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot. His cock was straining against the zipper of his jeans. *Damn. Since when was he this unsure of himself?* Greg was unable to take his eyes off Devon, "I came to make arrangements for you to check on our horses once month. We used to have a standing arrangement with the previous veterinarian. I didn't think it right to just assume that you'd do it too, with you being new and all."

Greg felt like a teenager with a crush. Jordan eyed them speculatively, smirking at them. Greg felt an instant attraction towards Devon. He just couldn't understand why he had this funny feeling inside that made his heart turn over.

Devon turned to face Jordan with his cheeks still a nice pinkish hue. "Please call Mrs. White and confirm her appointment for tomorrow and here's the file of our last patient." Greg watched him, lust spreading through him. "Follow me to my office, Greg. Let's see what we can do."

Greg followed close behind Devon. The jeans molding Devon's ass tightly kept Greg's eyes riveted as his cock grew harder by the second. He held his hands in a tight fist at his sides to stop himself from reaching out and grabbing the man. The urge to do so was overwhelming and the need inside him to find out what Devon would taste like was nothing he ever felt before.

Devon moved behind his desk and sat in the chair. "Have a seat."

He sat in the single couch while trying to calm his senses. The stark white of the room was like a blinding light to his eyes. Looking around, Greg noticed nothing was out of place. His name plaque proudly displayed at the edge of the old oak desk, and everything neatly arranged. Devon was obviously very meticulous.

Devon looked flushed all of a sudden, "Umm...so you wanted to make arrangements?"

"Oh, yeah. We normally have a veterinarian come out to the ranch. Anyways, we would like you to come once a month to check up on our animals to make sure they're healthy. Doc Robinson used to come out every month." Greg couldn't believe he was blabbering like a withering idiot. "We also have a mare that's close to giving birth but she's a little older than normal. So I thought I'd come around to ask if you'd be available if anything went wrong with Lady Luck," Greg asked as he shifted in his seat uncomfortably trying to hide his hard-on.

Devon was smiling as he looked at him from under his lashes with his head slightly down. He had a beautiful blush tinting his cheeks, which made him all the

more attractive to Greg. Devon had the body of a swimmer. From where he sat, Greg could see the muscle definition of Devon's chest under his shirt. Greg's eyes kept going back to Devon's full and luscious lips. They were the perfect shade of pink and begged to be thoroughly ravaged. *Wow.*

"Then umm...I'll have Jordan schedule a monthly visit to The Mountain Hart Ranch," Devon stammered. Greg could see his hands shaking slightly. *At least he wasn't the only one feeling something.* "Here's my cell phone number. Give me a call when Lady Luck goes into labor," Devon said as he handed him a business card.

Their fingers touched when he took the card from Devon. A shock of electricity stunned him, and his breath caught in his throat as their eyes locked.

Pulling away, Greg took the card and put it in his front shirt pocket. Greg got up from the chair intending on leaving before things get out of hand. "Thanks." Greg turned away and headed for the door. Before turning the knob, he paused and turned around. "It was nice to meet you, Devon," Greg said as he gave a slight nod, then opened the door.

As he gently closed the door behind him, he couldn't believe he had this instant attraction to a total stranger at first sight. Greg dated a few guys in the past and had been sexually attracted to them, but the powerful attraction he felt towards Devon ran much deeper. Greg felt something inside spark by the mere thought of him.

Greg walked over to the reception area and saw Jordan eyeing him suspiciously. Greg could feel the heat radiating from his cheeks. Pulling himself together, he rushed out of the clinic and drove back to the ranch.

CHAPTER 5

Devon sat behind his desk staring at the closed door. His heart was beating like a jackhammer against his chest. Earlier, he hadn't noticed Greg standing by the reception area when he exited his office. The moment their eyes met, Devon's breath caught in his throat. He had to stop himself from groaning aloud.

Then, sitting across from Greg had his cock hard in seconds, straining against his pant's zipper. Devon had to shift in his seat a couple of times just to get comfortable. He was thankful he had the desk to cover his lower body. He hoped Greg didn't notice his squirming too much, but he was sure he gave himself away. *Damn!* He couldn't even control his blushes. That was the most embarrassing part of the meeting.

The man was gorgeous with those breathtaking green eyes, broad shoulders, and hard muscles evident under his tight shirt. He remembered noticing the man's sexy work roughened hands. The thought of those hands touching him almost had him spill in his pants. Although Greg's appearance was intimidating, Devon sensed he was a very gentle man. Devon felt an immediate sexual attraction towards him unlike anything he had ever felt for anyone. It was foreign to him. With his heart racing and

his breath catching just at the mere thought of Greg, he wondered why he never felt this way for his ex, Kevin.

Devon shook his head dispelling the crazy erotic thoughts he was having about the cowboy. *Calling it an early day might be a good idea.*

Devon got up from his chair and walked out of his office to the reception desk. He noticed Jordan smiling at him.

"Seeing that we don't have any more appointments for the rest of the day I think we can go home early. Can you lock up on your way out?" Devon, feeling the color rising in his cheeks, turned away from the desk ready to walk out of the clinic.

"Yeah. No problem, Devon." Jordan said softly, which made Devon turn back around to look at him. Jordan winked at him. *Was Jordan flirting with him?*

"Oh and before I forget, make sure you set monthly appointments for me to go out to The Mountain Hart Ranch. They need a vet to check up on their horses once a month." Feeling decidedly uncomfortable, Devon turned around and walked out of the clinic. Not feeling ready to head back home, he walked towards the diner.

As he walked down the sidewalk, Devon thought of Jordan. Although Jordan was definitely a gorgeous guy, he just wasn't his type. Now *Greg* was a completely different story. He was all man, masculine, wide shoulders, strong arms, gorgeous eyes and extremely kissable lips. Devon's stomach fluttered just thinking about him again.

The bell jingled above the door as he entered the diner and walked up to the counter. It was a small but very homey restaurant. There were booths lining the front

windows and others scattered throughout. The diner was reasonably empty and Devon only recognized a few of the patrons. It must be too early for the familiar dinnertime regular customers.

Devon sat in one of the counter seats and waited for Wesley Carter to finish serving another customer. Wesley, the diner owner, approached him with a notepad in his hand and a pencil behind his ear. Over the past two weeks, Devon came to the diner often after work instead of cooking at home. He didn't see the point in cooking for one person, besides, going home to an empty house made Devon feel lonelier.

On his first visit to the diner, Wesley came over to his table and introduced himself. Sometimes, when Devon came around after work, Wesley would join him at his table and chat about the daily goings on in town while he ate. During their chats, Devon became familiar with the town and got to know Wesley. Although Devon usually enjoyed their chats, he wasn't in a very talkative mood today. Still feeling the after effects of the attraction he felt when meeting Greg, he just wanted to feel the quiet comfort of his home.

"Hi doc. What can I get you today?" Wesley leaned against the counter and looked down at his wristwatch. "It's kind of early for you today, isn't it?"

"It's been a slow day so I'm going home early to relax," Devon said absentmindedly as his thoughts returned to his meeting with Greg. He definitely wasn't in the mood for conversation. "Can I get the Day's Special to go?"

“Sure. One special coming right up.” Wesley turned and shouted his order through the gap in the wall to the kitchen.

Devon didn’t have to wait long until his order was ready and thankfully, Wesley was too busy helping other customers to stay and chat with him. Taking the container with his food, he got up from his seat, walked to his truck, and headed home.

* * * *

Devon sat in his backyard, thinking about the past two weeks in Bridger. He loved the quiet of the town and its beauty. The town people were truly sincere. He was so lost in thought while he ate, he hadn’t realized he had been sitting outside for hours. The sun started to set and the coolness of the breeze drew him out of his daze. Devon got up from the patio table, opened the sliding door and went back inside.

He walked past the kitchen and threw the empty container in the trash on his way to the bedroom. Grabbing his clothes from the edge of the bed, Devon walked into the bathroom in need of a nice hot shower. He pushed the shower curtain aside and turned the shower on, holding his hand under the water, and adjusted the knob until he felt it was the right temperature. He quickly stripped out of his clothes and got into the shower, shutting the curtain behind him.

The water flowed over his body, easing the tension from his shoulders. Taking the soap from its holder, he lathered up his hands and rubbed the soapy suds all over his body. Devon let his head hang back and closed his eyes. His hands grazed his

sensitive nipples making them instantly hard as erotic images of Greg flooded his mind. Devon imagined Greg in the shower with him, touching him, lathering him up.

His cock instantly took notice and hardened when the erotic fantasy took hold of his mind. Devon played with his nipples with his one hand, sliding his other hand down his stomach, grazing his pubic hair. His cock stood out rigid from the body of curls. Just the thought of Greg touching him made pre-cum ooze out from the slit of his cock.

Devon leaned back against the tiled wall and let the fantasy take over. He wrapped his fingers around his hard shaft with one hand and tweaked his nipple with the other. His mouth fell open as a groan escaped him. Behind his closed eyelids, he could imagine Greg playing with his balls while fingers slipped between his butt cheeks, touching Devon's sensitive hole.

His hole clenched tightly and more liquid oozed out of his slit, slicking up his hand. Devon moved his hand faster on his hard shaft. The vivid erotic images Devon created in his mind had his balls drawing up close to his body. His groans echoed in the shower as streams of hot liquid shot out from his cock painting lines all over the shower floor.

Breathing hard, Devon sagged back against the cold tiles. He watched as the water slowly washed his release away from the shower floor. He couldn't believe he had just done that. He just met the man and here he was standing in the shower thinking of Greg doing erotic things to him. Devon smiled at himself. *Maybe he could*

have the real thing sometime in the future. He reached for the soap again, and cleaned himself up. After rinsing himself off, he shut off the water and reached for the fluffy light blue towel hanging on the rail against the opposite side of the wall. He smiled as he imagined Greg was there to dry him. He shook the thought away and quickly dried off and got dressed. Walking back to his bedroom he got into bed under the covers.

Devon fell asleep with thoughts of Greg, wishing he were next to him in bed, holding him tight. Devon wondered what he would do the next he saw the hunky cowboy.

CHAPTER 6

Three nights later, the ringing phone awakened Devon from a deep sleep. He looked over at the clock on the nightstand. Realizing there must be something urgent with a call in the middle of the night, he hurriedly reached for the phone. In a gruff voice he answered, "Hello?"

"Hi. This is Greg from The Mountain Hart Ranch." Devon straightened in his bed when he heard Greg's deep voice. "Lady Luck started foaling not too long ago and it doesn't look good. Would you be available to come out here now?" Devon could hear the concern in Greg's voice.

"Umm...yeah. No problem. I'll be there as soon as I can." Jumping out of bed, holding the phone against his ear with his shoulder, Devon quickly slipped into his jeans and grabbed a shirt from the closet.

"Do you know where the ranch is? Here, let me give you the directions. We're at..."

Before Greg could continue, Devon interrupted him, while he was buttoning his shirt. "It's okay. I know where it is. I drove past it when I first arrived."

"We'll be waiting for you in the stables." Greg replied then hung up the phone.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Devon bent and quickly tied his shoelaces. Once Devon was dressed, he returned the phone back to the charger. He grabbed his cell phone, rushed out of the bedroom and got his jacket out of the closet at the front door.

Devon was anxious to reach Lady Luck, hoping he would get there in time. He also felt very nervous about seeing Greg again and hoped he would be able to keep his mind on the mare and foal.

He left the house with his truck tires leaving behind dust clouds in its wake.

* * * *

After leaving the vet clinic a few days ago, Greg found his thoughts kept returning to his meeting with Devon. The erotic fantasies that constantly crept up made him feel like a stallion in heat, and usually, at the worst possible time.

Greg stood outside the stables and looked down at his phone. Greg's heart started to beat in double time inside his chest. Devon's sleep roughened voice had his cock hard in seconds and his palms sweating. *This isn't the time for sexual thoughts!* He reminded himself.

Greg stuffed the phone into his back pocket and returned to the stables. He saw Jeremy was standing just outside one of the stalls. He walked over and saw Seth on his knees talking softly to Lady Luck. Greg was certain Seth was trying to calm himself just as much as the mare.

In preparation for the foaling, they had cleaned and put dry fresh straw in Lady Luck's stall. The mare held a special place in Greg's heart and seeing her suffer during the contractions was very difficult for him.

"The doc is on his way." Greg leaned forward and softly ran his hand over the mare's stomach, stroking her the way she loved to be touched. Greg whispered softly in her ear hoping to soothe her.

The mare's whinny sounds of distress echoed throughout the barn.

"I hope he gets here fast. She's really not doing too well." Seth looked up at him with a worried expression on his face.

"He'll be here soon. Just before I hung up the phone, it sounded like he was getting dressed." Greg replied softly while putting his hand on Seth's shoulder.

A few moments later, the sound of a pickup truck pulling up to the stables alerted them of Devon's arrival. Greg looked up just as Devon entered the stall in a rush with a black medical bag in his hand. Devon put his bag to the side and knelt next to Lady Luck. He watched as Devon carefully ran his hands over the mare's protruding stomach, examining her. Perspiration covered Lady Luck's entire body making her coat slick and shiny.

"How long has she been like this?" Devon looked at him with a worried expression on his face.

"About two hours now." He felt a bit guilty for waiting so long before calling Devon. He was too nervous and being this close to Devon had him in knots. He

pointed to Seth and said, "that's Seth, the owner," then pointed over his shoulder, "and that's Jeremy."

Turning his head Devon looked up at Jeremy. "Get me a couple of towels and some hot water and soap." Jeremy sprinted off to get the necessary things, while Devon was checking over Lady Luck again.

"What do you need me to do?" Greg asked as he watched Devon grab his bag and move behind Lady Luck's hind legs. Greg recognized the container Devon extracted from his bag as the same one Doc Robinson used during foalings.

"Just sit by her head and try to keep her calm. This is going to be very uncomfortable for her." Greg watched as Devon put on long latex gloves, poured the slick liquid, and spread it over his right hand and arm. "The foal is in the wrong position. I'll have to reach inside the birth canal to turn it, so I can reach its front legs. Is this Lady Luck's first foal?" Devon asked.

"No, but she's getting a little old now and we've had some concerns about her having another foal," Seth answered softly.

* * * *

"This is going to be rather painful, since I have to turn the foal while Lady Luck is having contractions," Devon said.

Seth got up and moved out of the way while Greg moved into place at Lady Luck's head. Greg crooned and stroked her as he tried to comfort her with whispers that everything would be fine.

Devon watched Greg from under his eyelashes, listening to the way he tenderly soothed the mare. The man was gorgeous even when his clothes were rumpled and his hair disheveled.

Jeremy walked into the stall carrying the towels over his shoulder and a bowl of hot water in a metal basin.

"Just put it to the side there Jeremy...thanks." Leaning forward, Devon slowly slid his hand into the mare's vulva and up the birth canal feeling for the foal's chest. Finding it, he quickly felt around for the foals' legs. A contraction hit at the exact moment, constricting the blood flow to his arm. The pressure on his arm paralyzed him. He knew he couldn't move until the contraction passed. Finally able to move his arm again, Greg and Seth kept the mare calm while Devon quickly repositioned the foal, guiding the front legs out of the birth canal. "I've got it!" Devon called out.

Devon slowly removed his hand from the birth canal and the mare's vulva as he pulled the foal's front legs. Devon grabbed a towel to wrap about the foal's front legs since they were slick and slippery, and then continued to gently pull. Devon sighed as the foal's tiny head slowly emerged.

The four men watched, within minutes the foal was completely free.

Devon carefully pulled out the umbilical cord and the placenta. He then smiled at the men around him. "Lady Luck and her new foal are going to be just fine. Now who's going to do the honors of cutting the cord?"

Seth stepped forward almost shyly and did as Devon instructed him. They all stood back and observed the mare and the foal in silence, a pure sense of awe surrounded them.

Devon got up, and walked over to the bucket and used the soap to wash his arms. He then took a fresh towel from Jeremy and dried himself off.

They all stood there and watched as Lady Luck started using her tongue to clean her new foal.

Devon turned to Seth, "Have you thought what you want to name your new stallion?"

Seth started talking about the different male names. Greg approached and stood next to him. Devon could feel the heat radiating off Greg. Suddenly, he was distracted by the scent Greg emitted as he tried to focus on the names Seth rattled off.

They all walked out of the stall and stables.

"Thanks for coming so quickly. I really appreciate it." Devon took Seth's outstretched hand and shook it.

"It's not a problem really. It's part of my job and I love it." Devon felt proud of himself tonight, but it also took quite a bit out of him. He felt exhausted and he was sure it showed on his face.

"Well, thanks anyway. I'm going to head off to bed. Early morning and all, you know," Seth said as he smiled at him before he headed in the direction of the main house.

"Good night guys. Thanks." Jeremy shook his hand and walked towards the bunkhouse.

"You look a bit tired. Do you want to come over to my place for some coffee before you go home?" Greg asked. Devon could tell he was nervous and seemed unsure of himself for some reason.

"Yeah, that would be nice. Thanks." Devon looked over at Greg and smiled.

CHAPTER 7

Devon sat with Greg in his living room in the comfortable double couch. Greg's cottage was located on a small piece of land not far from the main house on The Mountain Hart Ranch. The cottage wasn't big, but it was extremely comfortable. When Devon first arrived at the cottage, he saw a fire burning in the fireplace. There were thick brown rugs lying all over the living room and a plushy dark brown furniture set. A beautiful handmade wooden dining room set stood on the other side of the living room in front of two windows. Devon noticed the kitchen done in an open plan style just off to the right of the living room. He could see a short hallway leading to what must be the bedroom and bathroom.

"Would you like something to drink?" Greg asked as he got up from the couch.

"I'd love some coffee, thanks." Turning his head, Devon looked up and caught Greg staring at him and breathing hard. *Looked like he wasn't the only one affected.*

"Make yourself comfortable. I'll be right back." Greg turned away and headed to the kitchen.

Devon pulled off his sneakers and curled up on the couch. The heat coming from the fireplace made the living room nice and warm.

* * * *

Greg stood in the kitchen trying to catch his breath. He couldn't believe Devon was in his house, *sitting in his living room*.

His palms were sweating and his heart was beating like a drum in his chest. Devon was the most beautiful man he had ever seen. When Greg crouched next to him in the stall earlier and watched him help Lady Luck, the sexy man's sweet scent had Greg's cock hard and straining against his zipper.

Just knowing Devon was in his living room had his cock leaking in his jeans. Quickly Greg made the coffee and walked back into the living room carrying the two hot mugs.

"Here's your..." Greg's words trailed off as he saw Devon had curled up on the couch ...in a deep sleep. He bent down to put the mugs on the table quietly.

Greg sat down on the edge of the couch and ran his eyes over the beautiful sleeping angel. Bending over he placed a soft kiss on Devon's cheek, took the throw from the back of the couch, and covered him with it.

As he was sitting on the couch watching the flames and drinking his coffee, he was so lost in thought that he jerked when he felt Devon's head suddenly rest on his lap. Greg sat still in surprise, and watched as Devon started to move his head. His cock immediately went hard again with Devon rubbing against his thigh. Greg laid his hand on Devon's hip and leaned forward to shake him lightly.

“Devon,” Greg said. Then he watched in shock as Devon rubbed his nose against his crotch, instead of waking up.

“Devon!” He said a bit louder.

Devon opened his eyes and looked right at him. Their faces were mere inches apart. He watched as the tip of Devon’s tongue came out and wet his parted lips.

Greg groaned. “Devon...” He couldn’t stop himself anymore. He leaned forward and latched onto Devon’s mouth, running his tongue over Devon’s lips, tasting him. He slipped his tongue inside Devon’s mouth the moment he opened up. Devon responded by sucking on his tongue and wrapping his arms around Greg’s neck, pulling him even closer.

Greg wrapped his arms around Devon’s hips and lifted him, so Devon was sitting on his lap.

Greg’s hard cock strained against the zipper of his jeans, and pressed against Devon’s butt cheeks. He moved one of his hands from Devon’s hip and to the front of his jeans. He felt Devon’s rigid length under his hand and groaned. Pulling away, he looked down at Devon breathing hard.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have...I just....” Greg stammered. “You’re so beautiful. I couldn’t help myself.” They were both breathing hard, Devon’s arms still around his neck.

Devon moved and straddled his lap, latching onto his lips again.

* * * *

Devon couldn't believe his luck that he fell asleep, woke up looking straight into Greg's striking green eyes, and was now kissing him. Groaning, he pressed closer to Greg, feeling his hard shaft rubbing against his.

Greg was an amazing kisser. Their tongues dueled and tasted each other. He tasted like coffee and mint with just a hint of something else that was entirely Greg. Devon slipped his hands down Greg's neck and shoulders and started unbuttoning his shirt, feeling the muscles contracting under his hands. He felt a shiver racking Greg's body when his fingers grazed his nipples.

Devon pulled away just as Greg hauled them both up from the couch and carried him to the bedroom, and gently set him down on to his feet. Devon wanted to protest, but it all felt just too good and it had been a long time since he had been with someone.

Looking up at him, Devon saw desire burning hot in Greg's eyes, making his knees weak. He could hear his heart thumping in his ears, his cock straining against his zipper with anticipation of what was to come.

"I want you," Greg said, his voice deep and gravely.

A breathless, "yes," escaped Devon's mouth.

The next moment Devon was pulled into Greg's arms again. They kissed and nibbled at each other while they discarded their clothes. When all article of clothing were removed, Devon pulled away and stepped back, not taking his eyes off Greg. Looking at him from head to toe, Devon caught his breath. He was enthralled by the beautiful physique of the man standing before him. His strength was overpowering, but

the way Greg held him was so tender, it had Devon feeling extremely safe. A drop of liquid was glistening at the tip of Greg's hard shaft.

He stepped forward and took Greg's hard shaft in his hand in a vice like grip, and slowly started stroking him, using Greg's pre-cum to help glide his hand. Taking Greg's balls in his other hand Devon leaned forward and ran the top of his tongue around his left nipple. A groan escaped from Greg's lips as he took it into his mouth and bit down hard enough to cause a sting.

Devon slowly went down on his knees while kissing and licking all the way down Greg's ripped chest and stomach. He pressed his nose into Greg's pubic hairs, smelling the masculine scent that drove him crazy with lust. Devon licked all the way up the hard shaft right to the tip, capturing the drop of liquid on his tongue. The taste exploded on Devon's tongue. It wasn't sweet, nor was it sour, it was just perfect.

Taking the head of Greg's cock into his mouth, Devon teased the sensitive spot just below. He felt Greg threading his fingers into his hair, guiding him to take more of the hard shaft into his mouth. The satin softness against his tongue was a total contrast to the hardness of Greg. Taking more of the shaft in his mouth, he felt it hit the back of his throat, which almost made him gag, but more liquid oozed out dripping onto his tongue, making the discomfort all worthwhile.

Devon looked up at Greg and saw pure bliss reflected on his face. The moans and groans coming from him spurred Devon on. He sucked harder, playing with Greg's balls in his left hand. Greg thrust deep into his mouth moving in a steady rhythm.

Pulling off from his shaft, Devon bent down and took his nut into his mouth, sucking and twirling his tongue around it. When he finished with the second one, he took Greg's cock in his mouth again and began twirling his tongue around the mushroom head in a teasingly slow way. Greg's hands tightened in his hair.

* * * *

"Damn, baby. That feels fantastic." Greg looked down at Devon where his cock was disappearing into Devon's mouth. "Just watching you..."

Pulling Devon to his feet, Greg guided them to his bed and gently laid him down on it.

"I need to be inside you." Bending forward he ravaged Devon's mouth and took his hard shaft into his hand and slowly started stroking him.

Greg pulled away and kissed behind Devon's ear and down his neck making Devon groan and move around restlessly. Taking his right nipple into his mouth, Greg teased it with the top of his tongue, sucking harder and biting down softly.

"Now, Greg, please!" Devon begged.

Sitting back on his knees, Greg leaned over to the bedside table, opened the drawer, removed the lube and condoms, and laid them on the bed. Without having to ask, Devon spread his legs wide and wrapped his arms around them, and lifted his legs to his body. He caught his breath at the sight of Devon's rose puckered hole winking at him.

Greg grabbed the lube and squeezed some out onto his fingers. Twirling his finger around the tight hole, slicking it up, he slipped a finger inside watching Devon's face the entire time. The pure need and desire in Devon's eyes made him groan.

"More!" Devon pleaded with him.

He slipped another finger inside Devon, loosening him up.

Greg grabbed a condom and tore the packet open with his teeth. Withdrawing his fingers from Devon's tight hole, he slipped the condom on and squeezed some lube over his hard shaft, slicking himself up.

Moving between his legs, he positioned the head of his cock at Devon's entrance. Greg bent forward and plummeted Devon's mouth with his tongue and slowly entered him at the same time. They stopped kissing and looked at each other the moment his hard shaft was completely sheathed inside Devon's tight passage. Their mouths hung open and they were both breathing hard.

Greg could spend endless minutes staring into Devon's beautiful face. Looking into those eyes, he saw warmth and openness unlike anything he'd ever seen. He felt something deep within him awaken. Suddenly, a rush of emotions began to consume him.

Struggling not to move until Devon became accustomed to him, Greg leaned down on his right elbow and touched Devon's face with his other hand. He wanted this man, more than anything else in the world.

"Please. I need to feel you moving inside me." Devon started squirming under him.

"Oh baby..." Greg slowly pulled almost all the way out and pushed all the way back inside. Devon's legs tightened around his hips as he starting moving.

"I'm not going to last long," Devon said breathlessly.

"Me either." Greg took hold of Devon's shaft and started stroking him with the same rhythm as he moved inside him. Greg grunted as the muscles around his shaft started contracting.

Leaning down, Greg captured Devon's mouth with his own. A moment later, Devon gasped in his mouth just as Greg felt Devon's passage tightening around his cock in a vice like grip. Feeling Devon's seed painting both their chest, Greg lost it, and threw his head back and shouted Devon's name, filling the condom with his release.

Greg felt so weak he almost collapsed on top of Devon, but moved to the side just in time. He noticed Devon had immediately fallen asleep. Greg kissed him softly on the cheek and slowly slipped out of him. He got up, walked into the bathroom to discard the condom, and grabbed a wet washcloth. He came back out and gently cleaned Devon the best he could before slipping back in bed. He switched off the light and pulled Devon close to him, covering them with a blanket.

"Good night," he whispered in Devon's ear.

"Good night," Devon said softly in a dreamy voice as he nestled closer to Greg.

CHAPTER 8

Devon woke up the next morning with arms holding him tight around his waist. He felt a bit disorientated, not recognizing the bedroom. Looking towards the window, the sun was just starting to come up, and a beautiful bluebird sat on the windowsill chirping away.

Slowly turning around in the bed, Devon looked at the warm body next to him and remembered everything that happened the night before. He could still feel the effects of their lovemaking as his body ached in all the right places. Smiling, he looked over at the alarm clock on the bedside table. He was ready to jump out of bed when he noticed it was after 7am, but then realized it was Saturday.

Next to him, Greg started moving and slowly opened his eyes and stared at him. A slow smile appeared on his face.

“Good morning, beautiful,” Greg said, his voice rough from sleep.

“Morning.” He could feel his cheeks heating up and turned his face away. Greg took hold of his chin and turned him back to face him, his head slowly coming towards him and placing a soft kiss on his lips.

“Did you sleep well?” Greg asked.

"Yeah. Like a baby." Devon couldn't remember the last time he had slept so well.

Inside, Devon was jumping for joy. Ever since he met Greg, he sensed there could be something more between them. He never thought there was a chance the erotic fantasy he had in the shower at home would ever become reality especially since he wasn't sure he was ready for another relationship. But spending the night with Greg and waking next to him, felt fantastic.

"I've got to get dressed. Do you have a spare tooth brush?"

"Yeah, it's in the second drawer on the left in the bathroom. If you want to shower, there are clean towels inside the bathroom cabinet."

"Thanks." Devon got out of bed, grabbed his clothes and walked into the bathroom.

When Devon finally left the bathroom, he found Greg already dressed with his hair wet, making coffee in the kitchen. It looked like Greg had showered in the main house.

"It's Saturday, you don't need to go into the clinic do you? Do you have anything planned for today?" Greg asked over his shoulder.

"No. I don't need to go in, but I'm on call though, in case anything happens." Turning around, Devon walked into the living room and sat on the couch. Footsteps followed behind him.

"Here you go. I hope you like it. I just took a guess that you'd liked a bit of milk and sugar in your coffee," Greg said as he handed him the hot liquid before he sat on the couch. Taking the mug, Devon inhaled the rich aroma.

"Thanks, it's perfect." Devon smiled over at Greg before taking a sip of the steaming coffee.

* * * *

Sitting next to Devon, Greg tried to work up the courage to ask Devon out on a date. He watched Devon drink his coffee and hoped the right words would come to him. In a small town like Bridger, there weren't many opportunities. He felt so out of his depth because he had not asked anyone out on a date in a very long time. After what they shared last night, it should have been easier, not more difficult.

"Um...would you like to go out and check up on some of the animals out in the field?" He stammered and squirmed uncomfortably. He could feel his cheeks heating up. "Maybe we could have a picnic out by the lake?"

Devon looked over at him, a smile curving on his lips. "Are you asking me out on a date?"

Greg felt so uncomfortable he got up from the couch, wiping away the sweat trickling down his neck. "Uh...yeah."

He felt Devon's hand on his arm. "That would be really nice. Thanks."

"Let's go. The day is young." Greg smirked down at Devon as he walked into the kitchen and got the picnic basket he packed earlier hoping Devon would agree to the date. "I hope you can ride," he said, returning to the living room.

He couldn't help but smile at the shocked look on Devon's face.

* * * *

After much convincing and tons of reassurances, they set off to see the pastures. Greg was impressed at how well Devon was doing for a first time rider. He smiled as he remembered Devon's nervousness about riding. He wanted his first ride to be pleasant so he carefully chose a steady and calm horse for him.

They rode for a while and checked up on some of the bulls before they headed out to the lake. Greg dismounted his horse and loosely tied her to a tree before he helped Devon. Holding him by the hips, he lifted Devon off the horse, setting him gently on his feet. Standing so close to him, Greg smelled Devon's sweet scent. He leaned forward and nuzzled his neck, kissing him softly.

Pulling away, Greg cleared his throat and tied Devon's horse next to his. Greg untied the picnic basket he attached to his saddle and removed a blanket from one of the saddlebags. He then laid the blanket open on the soft grass.

"This view is beautiful, so quiet and peaceful." Devon's voice carried over the slight breeze.

"Yes it is," Greg responded. Walking up behind Devon, he wrapped his arms around him, pulling him close to his body. Greg slipped his hand inside Devon's shirt and started playing with his nipples, tweaking and softly pinching them.

"Hmm...that feels good," Devon groaned.

"You're so beautiful. You take my breath away." Greg guided his other hand down and started undoing Devon's pants, letting it fall to his knees. Slipping his hand inside Devon's underwear, Greg exposed and took hold of his already hard shaft and started stroking him.

The whimpering noises Devon made spurred him on. He felt him go rigid in his arms. Devon's head fell back onto his shoulder and with a loud cry, white pearly liquid spewed from him, landing on the soft green grass and colorful wild flowers. Greg leaned down and kissed Devon passionately, while birds chirped in the background.

Greg pulled away and used his handkerchief to clean Devon up. Helping Devon right his pants, he took Devon's hand and led him to the blanket.

"What...what about you?" Devon stammered with a dazed expression on his face.

"I already have all I need right here," Greg said, pulling Devon to lie down on the blanket, as he wrapped his arms around him. He didn't want Devon to know he had already lost it in his jeans like a teenager the moment he saw him coming all over the grass.

They laid there next to each other talking for hours about their childhoods and their jobs as they enjoyed the food, the heat of the sun and each other's company.

A few hours later, they rode back to the ranch and checked on Lady Luck and her foal.

Greg followed Devon out to his truck and felt decidedly nervous. "Can I see you again sometime?" His cheeks heated up as he shyly looked over at Devon.

"Sure. Call me." Devon gave him a heart-stopping smile before he got into his truck and drove off.

* * * *

Later that night, Devon lay in bed lost in thought going over everything that happened between them. The way Greg touched him was so gentle and loving it made Devon's heart ache and brought a lump to his throat. Devon remembered the moment Greg's hard shaft slid into him and their eyes met. At that moment, there was something more than just sexual attraction and the morning when he woke next to Greg holding him, was pure bliss. It felt as if he belonged there.

Instant recognition had him bolting straight up in bed. The chirping of the bird perched on the window in the morning...he recognized it. *It can't be!*

Devon recalled the picnic at the lake and the way Greg's arms looked when he held him from behind. They were the same arms from his dream. *This was impossible!*

Devon remembered how safe he felt in the stranger's embrace. The feeling of rightness and safety in Greg's arms matched that of his dream. Even when riding for the first time, he felt secure under Greg's protectiveness.

He wasn't sure what it all meant, but the feeling of hope and contentment that Greg was in his future, brought a smile to Devon's lips as he drifted off to sleep.

CHAPTER 9

Over the next week and a half, Devon walked around in a haze of happiness and bliss. He couldn't stop thinking about his night with Greg. Since then, they had met for lunch and dinner several times and spoke on the phone almost every day. He smiled as he recalled the other night when he fell asleep with the phone still clutched to his ear. Devon was quickly falling in love with the rugged cowboy.

He stood by the reception desk as his mind wandered to thoughts of Greg. He was enjoying a moment of peace and quiet in the late afternoon after seeing his last patient whose dog was suffering from dehydration.

When the bell above the door sounded, Devon looked up. His body went rigid when he saw Kevin standing there in his clinic. *What the hell?*

"Hello, Devon." An attempt of a smile appeared on Kevin's lips.

"What are you doing here?" Devon couldn't keep the shock and contempt from his voice.

"I came to see you, of course. What else?" Kevin gave him a look like the answer should have been obvious.

"Well, we don't actually have anything to say to each other. So you've wasted your time coming here." Devon turned and started walking toward his office.

"Please. Can't we just talk?" Kevin pleaded.

Devon looked over his shoulder at Kevin and saw the questioning look in Jordan's eyes.

"Come into my office." Devon walked into his office with Kevin following close behind. Leaving the door ajar, he walked over to his desk and sat in his chair.

Kevin entered and closed the door behind him. He stood in front of Devon's desk and looked around the office. "I like your office. It looks nice."

"Kevin..." Devon said exasperatedly. "You didn't come all this way just to admire my office. What do you want?" Devon's temper was quickly getting the better of him.

"Well, I thought we could talk and maybe..." Kevin gave him a hopeful look as he sat in the chair opposite Devon. "You know, we could get back together again, like..."

"You thought wrong." Devon cut Kevin off before he could continue. "When my mother was dying I needed someone to stand by me and you weren't there. You left." Devon took a deep breath before he continued. "I needed your support. I needed you to be there for me, and you weren't."

"You have my support now, and I will be there for you whenever you need me. I was just scared and felt left out," Kevin replied in a pleading voice.

Devon almost started to laugh aloud. "It's a bit too late for that, isn't it?"

Just then, the office door opened and in walked Greg with a cheerful smile on his face.

"Oh...I'm sorry. I didn't know you had someone in here." The smile on Greg's face instantly disappeared.

"No, no. It's okay. We're finished." Devon got up from his chair and walked over to Greg. "Hello baby. Did you have a good day?" Devon leaned forward and gave Greg a scorching kiss on the lips.

"My day just got better," Greg said a little out of breath with a heart-stopping smile on his face.

"Looks like it didn't take you long to find someone else!" The chair scraped on the floor as Kevin got up, stormed out of his office and slammed the door shut.

A concerned look crossed Greg's face. "Who was that?"

"That was my ex-boyfriend, Kevin." Devon wasn't in the mood to rehash his past. That's exactly what it was...his past.

The concerned look didn't completely disappear from Greg's face.

"He's history," he said as he raised his hands and held Greg's face in hopes of reassuring him.

Greg gave him a little smile and Devon dropped his hands. "Well, I actually came to ask you something." Greg looked so adorable when he was fidgety.

Devon couldn't help but smile when the big rugged cowboy was as nervous as a school kid.

"Do you want to go to the carnival with me tonight?"

"Yeah. I was hoping you'd ask me," he said, smiling up at Greg.

"Do you want me to pick you up at home?" Devon liked that Greg was so protective of him. It made him feel extremely safe and most of all, it made him feel wanted.

"No. I never know when I'll be called to an emergency. It's best that I meet you there," Devon replied. With the tender look Greg had in his eyes, he was convinced Greg was falling in love with him, although neither of them had said the words.

"Then I'll meet you there." Greg gave him a quick kiss and turned to leave. "I still have some things to do before then. See you later?"

"Definitely." Devon watched as Greg strolled out of the clinic. Turning around he walked back to his desk to finish up for the day.

Devon couldn't believe how lucky he was. For the first time in his life, he felt like he finally found his home. Being part of the small town of Bridger was a part of that, but Greg was the main reason. During the past week while they were talking on the phone, they shared a lot of their past with each other. Devon was still a bit shocked of the way Greg's dad chased him off his childhood home not even giving Greg the opportunity to say goodbye to his brother. He was falling in love, hard and fast. Who could resist Greg with his big muscles and even bigger heart? Devon certainly couldn't!

Just the thought of him brought a smile to Devon's lips. He could not recall ever being this happy, with Kevin or anyone.

Devon shook off those maudlin thoughts, and quickly tried to finish his work so he could leave the clinic.

* * * *

Greg walked out of the clinic concerned about Kevin's presence. He felt he would be intruding if he asked Devon the reason for his visit, so he resisted. He was not entirely convinced everything was fine with Devon's ex. What bothered Greg the most was the look Kevin gave him when Devon walked up to him and kissed him. It was driving him mad not knowing what Kevin wanted or why he was in town.

"At least *I* get to see him tonight," he grumbled as a twinge of jealousy began to threaten his mood. Turning the key in the ignition, Greg headed back to the ranch.

Greg was sitting at his desk, so lost in thoughts of Devon he didn't notice when Seth walked into his office.

"Daydreaming, are you?" Seth smirked. "Does it perhaps have something to do with our gorgeous new vet?"

Greg jumped in his chair. His face and neck heated with embarrassment at being caught daydreaming, especially since Seth's guess was spot on.

"Yeah." There was no reason for him to hide what he was feeling for Devon. "There's just something about him," Greg said as he smiled. "Yes, I know I wasn't in

favor of a new vet in town, but when I first met him, I just wanted to take him into my arms and protect him from the world, you know?"

Looking over at Seth, he saw a lost look on his boss' face. He'd seen that look many times and always wondered what hidden heartbreak brought it on.

"Yeah, I know. I'm happy you found someone." Seth slapped him on the shoulder and grinned. "Are you going to carnival?"

"Yeah, I just need to finish up some paperwork before I can head out there. Are you going?"

"Umm...not this year. I have some things to take care of. Enjoy yourself!" He watched as his boss walked out of his office.

Greg wished Seth had someone special in his life. He was such a good friend with a great spirit and a big heart. He just couldn't understand why Seth was alone.

Greg turned his attention back to the paperwork on his desk. He quickly finished entering the data into his computer. After shutting everything off, he walked out to his truck, got in and left for the carnival.

He was glad most of the ranch hands would also be attending. They deserved to have a little bit of fun and time away from the ranch to relax.

* * * *

For the past thirty minutes, Devon sat in one of the chairs smiling, and watched as Greg greeted everyone and said a few words here and there. Looking around, there were tons of food kiosks and rides with funny names he knew he wouldn't remember.

It seemed most of the town attended the carnival and all were enjoying themselves. Devon saw many of the familiar faces from the clinic as they passed by and greeted him. It felt good to be part of a small town like this. He felt welcomed, at home. He looked over at Greg and smiled as the older women shamelessly flirted with him.

"You really have it bad don't you?" Devon startled and looked up, just as Jordan took a seat next to him. Devon looked out over the crowd and watched Greg again.

"Yeah I do." He couldn't stop looking at Greg. The man was a walking dream with wide shoulders and green eyes that seemed to look straight into Devon's soul.

"What is it about him?" Jordan asked.

Devon thought he detected a note of jealousy in Jordan's voice and looked over at him. "What do you mean?"

"What is it about Greg that makes you want him more than someone like me?" Devon reared back in surprise.

Devon wouldn't have guessed Jordan was attracted to him. Thinking back since his first day at the clinic, he could now see the tell-tell signs of Jordan's crush. On numerous occasions, whenever he caught Jordan starring at him, a blush would always appear on Jordan's cheeks. He didn't want to hurt his feelings.

"Umm...well..." Devon stuttered and looked away. "He makes me feel safe without even trying. I know how he feels without telling me." Devon didn't know what else to say.

Before either of them could say anything more, Greg yanked Devon by his right hand and pulled him into his arms.

"Hey baby. I'm glad you had some company," Greg said as he smiled down at him. Devon always went weak at the knees when Greg smiled. "Do you want to go get something to eat? Or maybe go on some of the rides?"

"Yeah, I'm starved. I didn't have much to eat at lunch today and I didn't eat dinner." Devon was relieved to get away from Jordan. He looked over his shoulder and at a blushing Jordan. "I'll see you on Monday. Enjoy the carnival," Devon said as he walked off with Greg.

"What was that all about?" Greg gave him a quizzical look, still holding his right hand as they strolled around.

"Umm..." Devon gave a quick glance over his shoulder. "I think Jordan might have a crush on me. He asked me what I saw in you."

"And...what did you say?" Greg smirked at him.

"Well...I told him..." Devon began but stopped when he felt his cheeks flaming with embarrassment.

"Aww, come on! You're not going to tell me?" Greg asked teasingly as he poked him in the side.

"No!" Stop that!" Laughing, he pulled away from Greg's teasing fingers.

Greg grabbed his right hand again and pulled him into a dark corner, drawing him right into his arms.

"What are you doing?" Devon asked in a hushed voice.

"I've been dying to kiss you all night. I can't wait anymore." Greg pushed him up against a tree and held his face between his hands. When their lips touched, all thoughts left Devon's mind. Everything and everyone around them faded into nothingness.

Greg's groan echoed in his mouth as their tongues teased each other. Devon's hands roamed all over Greg's body, feeling the hard muscles beneath his hands. He could feel Greg's nipples perking up as his fingers grazed them and his cock responded, getting harder by the minute.

Devon whimpered as Greg's hand covered his hard shaft through his pants. Pulling away, Devon let his head hang to the side against the tree and closed his eyes. The need inside him was overwhelming.

"I want to taste you so bad right now," Greg whispered in his ear and kissed down his neck while undoing his pants. A groan escaped from between Devon's lips.

"Oh, Greg..." Devon breathed rapidly. He could feel a wet spot starting to form in his underwear. He inhaled deeply as Greg's fingers took his exposed shaft into his hand and started stroking him. "I'm not going to last long if you keep that up," Devon said between breaths.

Devon opened his eyes and watched as Greg went onto his knees in front of him. Seeing Greg like that almost had him spilling his load at that exact moment. Greg drove him crazy with his tongue, tasting him and licking up and down his hard shaft. Devon

held onto Greg's head with both hands just as Greg took his balls into his mouth and started sucking and tonguing them.

"Baby! Please, I can't hold back for much longer." Devon could barely catch his breath, he was so aroused and ready to come.

"Hmm...hmm...nice" Greg pulled off from his balls. Before he could respond, Greg took Devon's hard cock into his mouth right down to the root, deep throating him. Devon felt his orgasm approaching. His balls pulled up tight to his body as Greg played with them. Greg's tongue teased his sensitive spot just below the mushroom head of his cock.

Devon clamped his mouth shut from calling out Greg's name as he came and shot stream after stream down Greg's throat. Never had he come so much. It was the best orgasm he ever had. While Devon was still recovering, Greg pulled up Devon's pants before he stood back up. When their lips met, Devon could taste himself on Greg's tongue.

The ringing of Devon's phone interrupted them. He quickly zipped up his pants, pulled his phone out of his pocket, and looked at the caller ID.

"It's okay, babe. Answer it. It may be an emergency." Greg said, panting for breath.

Devon flipped his phone open and answered. "Hello, Devon Reid."

"Hi, Dr. Reid? This is Deputy Stevenson from the Bridger Police Department."

Devon instantly went onto alert and wondered what the emergency could be.

"Yes, deputy, how can I help you?" Devon asked, as he headed towards his car with Greg walking right beside him.

"I'm sorry to tell you this, but umm..." The deputy stammered and then continued. "There's been a fire at your house. The fire department is still on the scene trying to keep it under control."

Devon stopped in his tracks. "A fire? How did it happen!?! I'm sure I didn't leave anything on." Devon hoped the damage was minimal, but the tone of the deputy's voice indicated he should prepare for the worst.

"The fire marshal will be able to determine the cause of the fire once it's been contained."

"I'll be right there," Devon responded and shut the phone. Turning to face Greg, his legs suddenly gave out from under him. Luckily, Greg was there to catch him.

"What is it?" Greg asked with concern in his voice and he held him.

"My house," Devon said feeling dazed. "There's been a fire. The fire department is still trying to put it out."

"Shit! Come on, baby. Let's go." Greg guided him to his truck. "I'll follow you. Are you okay to drive?"

"Yeah, I'm okay. I'll see you at my place." Devon opened the door to his pickup and got in as Greg headed off to his truck. Looking over his shoulder to make sure the road was clear, Devon pulled out of the lot and headed home.

CHAPTER 10

Devon pulled up to the cabin, and watched as flames licked up into the sky. Flames engulfed his entire house as firefighters were struggling to get it under control. Devon got out and stood next to his truck, watching as Greg stopped his vehicle next to his.

“My God! Have you been able to find out what the cause of this was?” Greg looked at him with worry etched on his face.

“No. Do you know...” Devon’s voice died off as a man in a fire fighter uniform and a hand held radio approached him. He couldn’t believe this was happening to him. Devon had been so preoccupied getting the clinic in order, he hadn’t had the chance to finalize the insurance papers for the cabin. That was another worry he had to deal with besides having to find another place to stay.

“Dr. Reid?” The man looked to be in his late 30’s or early 40’s. Devon couldn’t be too sure.

“Yes, that’s me.” Devon took Greg’s hand and pulled him closer needing the physical and emotional support.

"I'm Derrick White, the fire marshal." Derrick fidgeted as he saw Devon and Greg holding hands. He turned to face the burning house. "I won't be able to tell what the cause of the fire is until it's died out completely. From the looks of it now, it might be some time before we get this under control. Do you have a place to stay tonight?"

He looked over at the burning cabin he had grown to love so much. Devon felt his bottom lip start to quiver as his eyes began to well up with tears. "Umm...I can probably stay at the town lodge but..."

Greg interrupted before Devon could say anything else. "There's no need for you to stay at the lodge. You know you're always welcome to stay at my place."

"Are...Are you sure? I don't want to inconvenience you." Devon looked up at Greg through hazy eyes and willingly went into his arms when Greg pulled him close.

"Yes, I'm sure. Don't worry it won't be a problem with Seth either. So don't even ask." Greg's arms wrapped around him bringing a measure of comfort he needed so much at this moment. He knew he could count on Greg, but didn't want to take anything for granted.

He looked over Greg's shoulder at what was left of the burning cabin. All his personal belongings now destroyed. The only mementos he had left of his mother were inside the cabin. And now, he was left with nothing but memories. He had wonderful memories of his mother from both childhood and the later years, tiny details most people would forget. She loved to sing when she was happy. He would smile when he'd come home from school and hear her singing or humming because she made him

feel as if everything was going to be wonderful. Little things like that he remembered. There were so many memories. But he enjoyed seeing her photos as well. He woke every morning and greeted her picture as if she were there with him. He knew it was silly, but it gave him comfort and made him feel as if everything would be fine. Now, all the pictures in the cabin were gone. He fought the tears building in his eyes. "Does it look like anything is salvageable?"

"Well, I'm sorry but I don't think there's anything left. Or at least there won't be by the time the fire is under control," Derrick interjected. "I'll keep you up to date with the investigation so that you can file the necessary paperwork with your insurance company." Derrick turned around and walked off, shouting at the firefighters around them.

* * * *

Greg felt Devon start to shake in his arms so he held him closer to his body.

"Everything will be okay, baby. We'll work something out." As he tightly held Devon, he couldn't stop thinking about the possible cause of the fire. He knew Devon was too meticulous and would not have left anything on that could have caused this.

When Devon's body finally stopped shaking, Greg pulled back and looked at him, brushing away the tears that stained his cheeks. They both stood there for a while looking at the burning cabin when they were once again interrupted by the fire marshal.

"Does this belong to you? We found it lying on the ground close to the house."

Greg watched as Derrick handed Devon something that looked like a piece of jewelry.

Devon gasped, and Greg's head snapped in his direction, looking right at him.

"This...this is something I gave my ex-boyfriend, Kevin Weston, but..." A confused expression crossed Devon's face. "I don't understand. He has never been to my place before. Just today he came to my office..." Devon's voice trailed off.

Greg could see the wheels turning in his head. "What is it, baby?" Greg asked feeling very apprehensive.

"Do you think he could have...?" Devon eyes were going between him and Derrick.

"So he's never been to your home?" Derrick asked.

"No. He just arrived in town today I think. He came by my clinic." Devon answered looking at Derrick.

Greg had a sick feeling Kevin was responsible for the fire. "Derrick, I think you need to get a hold of this guy. Something just didn't feel right when I walked into Devon's office today and saw him sitting there." Greg held on tight to Devon's hand while talking to Derrick. "I just think you should question him. Maybe he came here looking for Devon first, you know?"

"I think that might be a good idea." Derrick gave him a knowing look. Taking the jewelry back from Devon, he walked off leaving them alone again.

"Come on. Let's get out of here. There's nothing we can do now." Greg opened Devon's truck door for him and closed it after Devon got in. "I'll see you at the ranch."

Greg walked over to his truck, turned the ignition and drove off, watching Devon following him in the rearview mirror. *As if the man hadn't been through enough already!*

* * * *

Devon stood in the shower letting the water cascade down his neck and shoulder, working the tension out of his muscles. He couldn't believe this was happening to him. It was a total nightmare.

Getting out of the shower, Devon dried himself off and dressed in the clothes Greg gave him earlier. He didn't even have clothes to wear other than the jean and shirt he wore tonight. Everything went up in flames. Devon shook his head to rid himself of the thoughts going through his mind before tears could build in his eyes. When he walked into the bedroom, Greg was already laying under the covers.

"Come on, baby. Let's get some sleep." Devon went straight into Greg's open arms and crawled in close to him. "We'll sort things out tomorrow morning."

"Okay." With his eyes closed, Devon felt Greg's lips as he kissed his forehead while he held him. Devon tried to put the night's events out of his mind and soon fell asleep encased in Greg's protective arms.

CHAPTER 11

The next morning, they sat at the dining room table having eggs, bacon and toast with coffee for breakfast which they cooked, together.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," Devon said feeling dejected. "I don't have the money to rebuild my cabin." All the events of the previous evening came rushing back.

"Well, you should call the insurance company and see what they have to say." Greg sat at the opposite side of the table looking at him as he continued eating.

"That's the problem. I don't *have* insurance. I've been so busy with the clinic and working late, I didn't have the chance to finalize the paperwork." Tears pooled in his eyes. "And I can't rebuild the cabin right now. I used all the money I had to buy the clinic."

Greg came around the table and held Devon close to his body. "We'll figure it out."

They were interrupted by a knock at the door.

Letting him go, Greg walked over to the door and opened it. Seth stood there on the front porch. He remembered meeting Seth the night the foal was born. His hairs on

the back of his neck rose when he noticed the fire marshal, Derrick, and a police officer standing with Seth.

"These gentlemen were looking for the doc. I brought them right on over. I know you guys have some things to talk about, so I'll make myself scarce." Seth said his goodbyes and left.

* * * *

Greg invited the police officer and the fire marshal into his home. The officer and marshal sat in the living room opposite Devon and him.

"This is Deputy Stevenson. You spoke on the phone last night." Derrick nodded his head towards the deputy sitting next to him. "We have some good news and some bad news." Derrick said as he looked at Devon. "We found your ex, Kevin packing his belongings in quite a hurry to get out of town last night. The officer here took him in for questioning and showed him the piece of jewelry. He eventually confessed to setting your place on fire. They also found the clothes he wore last night which had some fire damage to them."

"But...but...why would he do that?" Devon asked, as Greg pulled Devon close to him. He could see Devon was holding on to his emotions by a mere thread.

"According to Kevin, he came here to talk you into coming back to him and when he saw you with Greg, well, he got into a jealous rage," Stevenson said. "It seems that's not all he did. He also managed to cause some damage at the clinic."

"Oh no!" Devon shouted.

Greg now understood the look he got from Kevin when he stormed out of the office. It was a look of insanity. It seemed Kevin went into a jealous rage, when Devon had found someone else. Greg took Devon into his arms as tears streamed down his cheeks and his body began to shake.

"Thank God I didn't have any animals there. At least I have insurance for that. Was anyone hurt?"

"No, there wasn't anyone nearby. Most of the damage was inside the clinic." The deputy responded as he and the fire marshal got up. "We'll leave you to make your arrangement with the insurance company to get everything sorted out." The deputy and fire marshal shook their hands. The deputy continued to address Devon. "All the best to you and I'm really sorry we had to meet under these circumstances." He handed Devon the police reports and some other paperwork, then left them standing there, closing the front door behind them.

"Everything will work out, baby. We'll take it one step at a time." Greg held onto Devon not wanting to let him go.

"I have a lot to do," Devon said with a faraway look.

"You go ahead and call the insurance company and sort out the stuff with the clinic. I have a couple of things that I need to do on the ranch." Greg pulled away from Devon and looked at him. "I'll be back later. Are you going to be okay?"

"Yeah, I'll be fine," he said as he tried to smile.

Greg leaned forward and gave Devon a quick kiss before turning around and walking out.

Later that evening after having dinner, they sat outside on the porch swing holding hands and looking out at the sunset. Greg was nervous as hell about what he wanted to suggest to Devon. He was growing to love Devon more with each passing minute he spent with him. Even the time he spent talking to him over the phone meant the world to him.

With the lunch and dinner dates, daily phone calls, and endless daydreaming, Greg didn't want to imagine his life without Devon anymore. Devon had managed to become an important part of his daily life in a short period of time. To Greg, it felt natural to suggest Devon stay with him while he got things sorted. That didn't mean he wouldn't try to convince Devon to make it a permanent move at some stage. It felt great having Devon in his home...it felt right.

"Have you been able to work anything out?" Greg asked as he looked at Devon.

"No, but at least I got things sorted out with my insurance company. They'll send someone out to the clinic and assess the damage and then we'll take it from there." Devon had a lost look on his face, which made Greg want to hold him in his arms and protect him from everything and everyone however irrational that may seem. "I'll probably look for a small place to rent until I have enough money to rebuild the cabin."

"Umm...well, I have a suggestion." Greg sat there fidgeting, unsure of what Devon's response to his suggestion would be.

"What is it? You look uncomfortable." Devon looked at him with concern on his face. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. What I was thinking is that..." Greg's voice trailed off. "If you wanted, you can live here with me." Greg's heart hammered in his chest and his hands started sweating profusely. "That's if you want to, of course."

"That's really generous of you, but I don't want to be a burden to you." The worry disappeared from Devon's face and was replaced by a sad look Greg had seen before. Greg pulled him into his arms.

"Hey now, come on. You're not a burden to me." Greg held him close and kissed Devon on his temples. "It would be really nice having you around all the time. It feels right to have you here. I *want* you to stay here with me." Greg pulled away a bit and watched as a faint smile appeared on Devon's lips.

"Really? Are you sure?" The glitter of hope shining in Devon's eyes had Greg pulling him close again with Devon's head resting on his chest.

"Yes, I'm sure. If I didn't want you to stay I wouldn't have asked." Greg felt the excitement rise up inside him.

"Then yes, I'll stay here with you." He could hear the smile in Devon's voice. "Thank you," Devon said as he pulled away to look at him.

“Don’t thank me, baby. Kiss me.” Greg couldn’t help but smile. He felt elated
Devon agreed to stay with him.

Leaning forward Devon met him half way and they devoured each other’s
mouths in a heat-scorching kiss that made both their knees weak.

CHAPTER 12

As Devon drove the long stretch of road, he recalled the events of the last three weeks. He was able to have the insurance company replace everything that was destroyed at the clinic. He was also able to replace his wardrobe and even bought himself a pair of cowboy boots that Greg picked out. He wasn't sure what he was going to do about the cabin. He liked the land, but didn't have the money now to rebuild it. But, in all honesty, he enjoyed staying with Greg and was in no rush to change his living arrangements. He smiled as he thought of all the little things Greg did to make him feel welcomed. But the best part of it all was going to sleep and waking up wrapped in Greg's arms. Greg had given him much more than a place to stay. He had given him the support he needed during a rough time in his life when he had no one else.

Devon wanted to do something for Greg to show his appreciation. He had a big surprise in mind but wasn't sure it would work out. So, he didn't want to tell Greg until he was certain everything would go as planned. He told Greg he had to take a business trip and would be back in about a week. He hated lying to him, but he needed a few days to get everything in order.

After driving for three days, Devon finally arrived at his destination. He turned into a dirt road and stopped in front of the homestead labeled The Lazy EL Ranch. He parked his truck next to the only other truck in front of the house. A young man immediately walked out of the stables and approached him.

"Hi. May I help you?" The young man asked Devon.

Devon was taken aback. The young man was the spitting image of Greg.

"Hi, I'm Devon Reid. Are you Jasper Elliot?" Devon felt extremely nervous when Jasper gave him a funny look.

"Yes, that's me. Do I know you?" Jasper stopped a few feet away from him and stood there with his hands on his hips.

"No you don't know me, but..." Devon looked around nervously, hoping Greg's father wasn't around. "I know your brother, Greg," Devon quickly said under his breath looking up at Jasper.

"That's good for you. I don't know where you came from but I suggest you go back and tell *my brother* to go fuck himself and to stay away from me." Disgust was evident in Jasper's voice. He grabbed Jasper by the arm when he started to walk away.

"Please, just listen to me," Devon pleaded. "I don't know what you've been told but it's not what you think."

"*Not what I think?* How do you know what I'm thinking?" Jasper stood there with his body rigid. Devon could feel the tension radiating from him. "He left us...just like that!" Jasper shouted.

Devon looked around nervously. "Can we just talk, please? Just...not here."

Jasper wondered why Devon kept nervously glancing at the house. Jasper's curiosity got the better of him. He looked right into Devon's eyes and answered, "okay, if that's what it takes to get you to leave."

Devon followed Jasper as they walked in silence until they reached the lake. Devon recognized the lake from the stories Greg told him. Beautiful trees and flowers all around with water so clear you could see straight to the lake bottom. He saw a large tree with a long branch that Greg and Jasper must have jumped from as children.

* * * *

Jasper couldn't believe his brother would send someone to the ranch. *How dare he?! He left them without even saying goodbye. But there was something in Devon's voice that convinced Jasper he needed to listen. A thought occurred to him. How does Devon know his brother?*

"So? You came out here from God knows where to talk to me. Well, I'm listening." Jasper leaned against a tree as he watched Devon look out over the lake.

"This was where you and your brother used to swim when you were kids," Devon said.

"Yes. What's your point? I don't have all day." Jasper was getting tired of the waiting and wasn't in the mood for games. "Just say what it is you came to say and please leave." Jasper could see Devon's chest rise as he took a deep breath.

"Greg didn't just leave. Your father chased him off your ranch," Devon stated flatly.

"*What?* Please don't come here and make accusations like that. My father told me Greg just up and left." Jasper couldn't believe such nonsense. His father would *never* do something like that.

"One of the ranch hands caught your brother in the barn with another ranch hand while they were..." Devon's voice trailed off.

Jasper pushed away from the tree and regarded Devon closely, trying to understand what he was trying to say. "While they were...?"

Devon turned and looked at him. "One of the ranch hands caught them having sex and told you father."

Jasper reared back with shock. He never thought his brother could be gay. It was the last thing he would have ever guessed. "Excuse me? You're telling me that my brother is gay?!?"

"Yes," Devon stated without batting an eyelash.

"How do you know?" Jasper turned and stared out over the lake, not seeing anything. He heard Devon chuckle softly.

"We're dating," Devon replied. Jasper could hear the affection in Devon's voice.

"Go on." Jasper said feeling a dull ache inside him.

"I'll tell you what Greg told me. He said that after he came out of the barn from having sex with one of the ranch hands, he got to the house, your father was already

waiting on the front porch with a hunting rifle in his hand.” Devon’s voice grew so soft Jasper had to listen closely to hear what he was saying. “When your dad saw Greg, he told him to get off the ranch. He didn’t even allow him to take his belongings. The only thing he took was his truck.”

Jasper stood, unable to move. He listened to each word Devon spoke. He listened to every word out of his mouth while analyzing every word his father ever used when mentioning his brother. Conversations he attempted to have with his father, his father’s anger when mentioning Greg’s departure, all the words, the emotions, everything flipped through his mind within seconds. He just couldn’t make sense of everything. He couldn’t understand why this happened. As if it weren’t enough that a stranger was now telling him his brother didn’t leave him and his father had lied to him all these years, now this man was telling him his brother was gay.

“Didn’t you ever wonder why your brother didn’t take any of his things?”

Jasper turned his head and looked at Devon with tears in his eyes. “Yes, I have, but whenever I asked my father, he would say Greg must have wanted a clean break, and didn’t want anything to remind him of home.” Jasper struggled wanting desperately to believe his father couldn’t have made him lose his brother all these years. “Why should I believe you?”

“Because I’m someone who loves your brother greatly, and I know you must love him from the stories he’s told me. He told me a lot about you. When we first met,

you were the one person he spoke of most.” There was a sincere look on Devon’s face that Jasper just couldn’t deny. “He misses you terribly.”

Jasper couldn’t believe his own father had lied to him and that he was the one who chased his own son off the ranch because he was gay. Jasper started to laugh out loud.

The sound echoed over the silence of the lake.

* * * *

“Why are you laughing?” Devon looked at Jasper, concerned that perhaps the shock of hearing the truth after all these years made Jasper hysterical.

“I’m gay!” Jasper said between the laughter pouring out of him. Jasper was laughing so hard tears were streaming down his face.

“Oh my...” Devon could see the funny side to it and started to giggle.

When they got their laughter under control, Jasper turned to him. “Do you think my brother would want to see me?” Jasper had a hopeful look on his face.

“As much as your brother has spoken about you, I would say that he would *love* for you to be part of his life again,” Devon replied.

“That...that means so much to me,” he said in a soft voice as a single tear ran down his cheek.

Jasper straightened and composed himself. “Come on. I have something to take care of.” Devon followed Jasper as he walked back towards the house. “Are you planning on staying in town or...” Jasper’s voice died off as they walked.

"No. I came in last night and I was only planning on talking to you and then going back home." Devon heard the question in Jasper's voice before he even finished asking.

"Do you think there's a place in town there for me?" The hopefulness in Jasper voice had Devon's heart overflowing with joy. Devon wasn't sure if everything would work out but it sure looked promising.

"Yeah, there's a place." Devon smiled over at Jasper. "Bridger is a very gay friendly town, but there will always be a place for you to stay at your brother's home."

As they continued to walk, Devon told Jasper about The Mountain Hart Ranch where Greg worked as a foreman. He also told him about Lady Luck, the one and only female that had stolen Greg's heart.

After a few minutes, they arrived at the house and walked over to Devon's truck. Jasper opened the door for him and waited until he got in before closing it again.

"Wait for me? I'll be out in a little bit." Jasper looked at him pleadingly.

"No problem. I'll be here waiting." Devon reassured Jasper as he took his right hand and squeezed it.

Devon sat there in his truck watching as Jasper walked into the house.

A little while later, he could hear shouting and screaming from inside. Just as he was about to get out of the truck, Jasper came storming out the front door with a suitcase in his hand and an angry older man following right behind him.

“And don’t you dare come back here! You can tell that to your faggot brother too!” The man shouted as Jasper opened the passenger side door and tossed his suitcase in the back seat as he got in.

Devon turned the key in the ignition and drove off.

They drove in silence for a while. Glancing over at Jasper, he asked, “are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay. I just can’t believe it, you know?” Jasper gazed over at him, a look of disbelief crossed his face. “All these years my father led me to believe that my brother left us. That Greg wanted nothing to do with us. Everything was a fucking lie! All these years I thought Greg hated us. That he just upped and walked out for no reason and left me behind. All these years, I just didn’t know why. I thought we were so close and he loved me. I just didn’t understand. I figured if he didn’t care, why should I. He didn’t even try to call or reach me. I even thought he might have figured out I was gay and left because of that. I tried to hate him for leaving but...I just couldn’t.”

“Hey, don’t think like that anymore. Your brother loves you very much and he misses you like crazy. He didn’t reach out to you because he didn’t know what your father would do if he tried.” Devon put a hand on Jasper’s arm to calm him.

“Everything will work out just fine. Trust me.”

* * * *

For the next two days, while Devon and Jasper took turns driving towards Bridger, Montana, they talked and got to know each other. Devon told Jasper everything about Greg, since they met, and about the town of Bridger. They would stay in a motel at night and take turns driving during the day. Eventually they arrived in Bridger on the morning of the third day. Devon was feeling decidedly nervous, because he didn't know how Greg would take this new development.

Devon turned towards Jasper as they neared The Mountain Hart Ranch. "Greg doesn't know I went to see you, so this will be quite a surprise to him." Devon pulled the truck up to the cottage. "He's most likely out working with one of the horses."

"Are you sure he'll want me here?" Jasper asked with a note of worry in his voice.

"Yes, I'm sure." Devon looked over and smiled at Jasper before getting out of the truck. "Leave your bags in the truck. We'll sort out something later."

He walked into the cottage with Jasper following close behind him.

"Have a seat and make yourself comfortable." Devon pointed over to the couch. "I know you're nervous, but really there's no reason to be. Greg is a fantastic man and he loves you." Taking Jasper's hand, Devon gave it a quick squeeze before letting it go and started walking out the door. "I'll be right back."

Devon knew Greg never expected to see his brother again. Even though he knew how much Jasper meant to Greg, Devon was extremely nervous about telling him he

brought his brother to the ranch. He wasn't exactly sure how to tell him and was a bit worried about Greg's reaction once he knew.

He hoped his surprise would be well received.

CHAPTER 13

Greg's heart sped up when he saw Devon's truck parked in the driveway. He drove himself mad this week without Devon and couldn't wait another moment to be with him. Greg climbed over the fence and started walking towards the house when he saw Devon approaching him.

"Hey baby," Greg called out when he got close to Devon. "Did you get to sort everything out on your business trip?"

"Hey. Yeah, everything's sorted out," Devon said as he fidgeted. "I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise, huh?" Greg pulled Devon into his arms and kissed him passionately. His hands cupped Devon's ass and gave it a slight squeeze. "I missed you."

"I missed you too." Devon pulled out of his embrace. "Come on, I have to show you your surprise."

"So what's the surprise?" Something was up with Devon and Greg began to worry.

"Just wait. You'll see," Devon answered and started to fidget as they walked back to the cottage.

He didn't like it when Devon fidgeted. It usually meant he was uncomfortable about something. Devon hadn't been this nervous in weeks and Greg started to panic.

Opening the door, Greg nervously followed Devon inside. "So what's the...." His voice trailed off and a stunned look appeared on his face. Greg froze, as his eyes locked onto the one person he never thought he would ever see again, his brother. The emotions running rampant through him, threatened to overwhelm him.

"Jas...Jasper?" Greg stammered. He could barely speak as tears welled up in his eyes. He watched as Jasper slowly started walking towards him with tears streaming down his face.

Greg grabbed hold of Jasper and pulled him into his arms. Their bodies shook as they held each other and cried. Greg pulled away and smiled while holding Jasper's face between his hands and wiping the tears from his cheeks.

"I never thought I'd see you again." Greg's throat closed up. "I missed you so much."

"I'm missed you too, brother." Jasper gave him a wobbly smile.

Greg turned and looked over at Devon where he was standing in front of the fireplace. The tear stained on his cheeks marred his beautiful face. Greg walked over to him and took Devon in his arms.

"Thank you," Greg whispered as he held onto Devon, giving him a quick squeeze before he kissed him.

"There's no need to thank me. It's the least I could do considering everything you've done for me," Devon said as he pulled away and smiled up at him.

"Oh baby..." Greg leaned forward and kissed him passionately, quickly pulling away as he remembered his brother was standing there. Greg didn't know what Devon had told Jasper, so he wasn't sure if his brother knew he was gay. Greg pulled out of Devon's arms and sat down on the couch.

Greg and Jasper sat there talking for hours and getting to know each other again while Devon went off to take care of some errands.

Greg felt truly blessed to have his brother with him again. They spoke about what happened to him these past seven years and what happened on the day he left. They talked about all the changes since Greg left and Jasper's relationship with their father. Jasper told Greg he was also gay. They actually had a bit of a laugh about that. *How ironic was that?*

"So do you have a place to stay? I only have one bedroom but I'm sure we can work something out."

"Nah, I'll just go and stay at the lodge I saw on our way into town," Jasper answered.

"No you won't. Come on. Let's see what we can do." Greg got up from the couch and pulled Jasper to his feet. "I'm sure Seth wouldn't mind if you bunked with the

ranch hands, maybe he'll even offer you a job," Greg said as he smiled at Jasper over his shoulder as they walked out of the cabin up to the main house.

Greg knocked on the door and heard Seth calling from inside. "Come in. I'm in the office."

He walked into the house to the office with Jasper following right behind him. They entered the office and stood in front of the desk looking down at Seth.

"This is my brother Jasper, he just arrived in town." Greg pointed to his brother.

Greg looked at him curiously as he saw Seth's eyes go huge and back to normal again in a flash when he looked up and saw them standing there. *Hmm. That was interesting.*

"I was hoping you wouldn't mind if he stayed in one of the rooms in the bunkhouse with the ranch hands."

"Umm...no, not at all." He watched as Seth stood up, took Jasper's hand and greeted him. "It's nice to meet you. I'm Seth Hart, as your brother here seems to have forgotten to introduce me."

"It's nice to meet you too." Greg saw a smile appear on his brother's face.

"Oh damn. I forgot my manners there for a minute." Greg laughed when he realized Seth hadn't let go of his brother's hand yet. He cleared his throat loudly and Seth pulled his hand back, a flush appearing on his cheeks. Greg tried to control his smile but couldn't resist letting Seth know he was busted.

"I take it you'll be staying here, then?" Seth asked Jasper as he sat back down trying to ignore Greg.

"Yeah, I'd like to be close to my family," Jasper replied, as he glanced over at him, a knot formed in Greg's throat. It felt good to hear his brother wanted to be part of his life again.

"Do you have a place to work yet? Your brother told me years ago he grew up on a ranch." Greg stood there watching the two of them. There was a strange twinkle in Seth's eyes when he looked at Jasper. Greg smiled. *Something was going on here.*

"No, actually Greg was hoping there'd be some work here for me." Greg heard the uncertainty in Jasper's voice and quickly interrupted and looked at Seth.

"We do need another hand around. Things have been picking up around here." Greg slapped his brother on the back. "There's plenty of work for him here."

"Yeah, that's perfect. Go get settled, we can sort out the rest later," Seth said as he nodded and dismissed them.

They walked out of the office and headed back to his home.

As they approached the cabin, they knew Devon returned from running errands when they spotted his truck parked in the driveway.

"Get your things from Devon's truck and I'll show you around." Greg stood there waiting for his brother while he got his suitcase.

Greg took Jasper to the bunkhouse to introduce him to each of the ranch hands then showed him around the rest of the ranch. Sometime later, he returned Jasper to the bunkhouse for the evening. "Well, I guess I'll see you first thing in the morning?"

"Yeah, you know it." They hugged and held on tight to each other for a while.

"It's really great to have you here. I'm very happy you're back in my life again, Jasper." Greg started to feel emotional again and pulled away, smiling at Jasper.

"It's great to be here," he said before turning around and going into the bunkhouse.

Greg watched his brother walk into the bunkhouse and smiled. He was so happy to have Jasper back and to know things were going to work out. He couldn't wait any longer to have Devon to himself. He turned around and headed to the cabin.

When he walked into his home, he noticed the lights were off, two candles were burning on the dining room table, and a bottle of wine was being chilled. Seems Devon had planned a romantic dinner for the two of them. Greg closed the door behind him and smiled just as Devon came walking out of the kitchen carrying the food to the table.

"What's this all about?" Greg walked over to Devon as he placed the food on the table.

"I wanted to have a romantic evening with you. I've missed you," Devon answered as Greg pulled him against his chest. "Let's eat before it gets cold." Greg let go of Devon and sat down on the chair opposite him.

They sat and ate in silence gazing at each other between bites and sips of wine. Greg was nervous and began to fidget. During the course of the past week when they were apart, Greg decided to ask Devon to stay with him permanently. He hoped Devon would agree because Greg knew, without a doubt, he was head over heels in love with Devon. So, living *without* him wasn't an option. He'd been without Devon this past week, and hated it.

Greg was nervous as hell to take the plunge. When their plates were empty, Greg got up and walked over to Devon, going down on his knees in front of him.

"What are you doing?" A nervous laugh escaped from Devon's lips.

"Since the moment I first met you I wanted to take you into my arms and protect you. I was caught so off guard I was tongue-tied." Greg licked his lips nervously as he gazed up at Devon. "For the first time in my life, I feel truly, really, happy and complete. It's all because of you. I found that I could open myself up to you, and tell you things very few people knew about me without being afraid you'd walk away."

"Greg, I would...." Devon started to say, but Greg interrupted him.

"Please, let me say this." Greg smiled up at Devon nervously. "I never thought that I'd ever meet someone that I would want to spend the rest of my life with, but there you were." He took Devon's hands in his. "You took my breath away, you made me feel wanted. I fell in love with you." Greg cleared his throat. "I love you Dr. Devon Reid. I love you with all my heart. Would do me the honor of sharing my home and the rest of my life with me?"

Greg looked up from their entwined fingers into Devon's eyes and saw the tears running down his cheeks. He stood and lifted his hands to wipe the tears from Devon's face.

"Oh yes! I love you...I love you so much." Greg had to brace himself as Devon launched himself into his arms.

Devon began pecking kisses all over him. Greg started giggling as his heart overflowed with happiness. He had his brother back in his life and a partner he loved with all his heart who loved him back.

* * * *

Devon lay in bed next to a sleeping Greg. Devon would never have believed he could rope in a cowboy to call his own. He just lay there silently, watching him as he slept. They spent the entire night making love. Devon should have been exhausted like his fiancé, but he couldn't fall asleep, he just wasn't tired.

When he left the city, Devon never thought he'd find someone who would love him during the good times and the bad, and would still be there the next morning when he woke. The emotions Greg stirred in him overwhelmed him in such a good way. Here he was, lying next to the man he loved with all his heart. A man, he knew, loved him just as much. Not only did he say the words but Greg looked at him as if he were his world. He was *the one*. He knew his mom would agree.

He turned and faced the window just as the dawning sunlight filtered in. He closed his eyes and smiled as he felt Greg's arm wrap around his waist and pull him close. Devon turned to look at him and saw love filled green eyes staring back.

He leaned in for a kiss just as a bluebird began chirping the morning song in the background. With the sound of its familiar tune, Devon knew everything would be wonderful.