

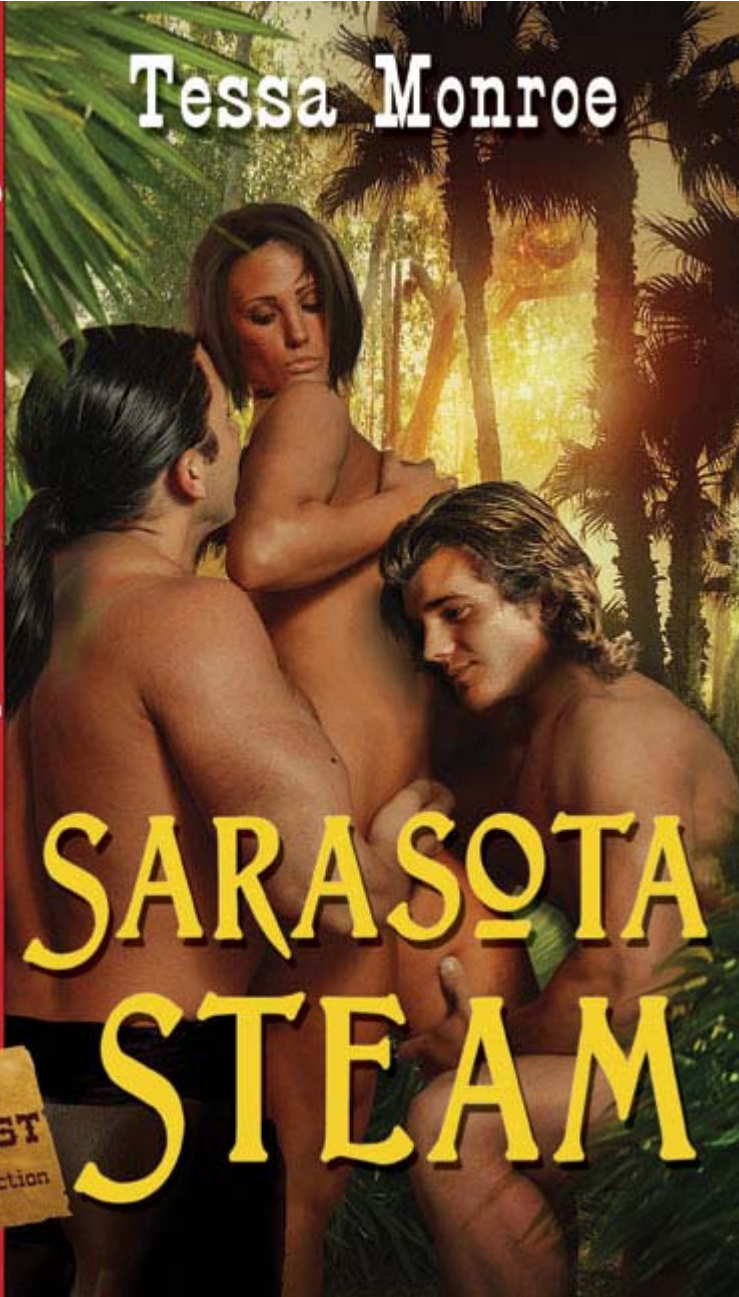
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Tessa Monroe

SARASOTA STEAM

The
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SARASOTA STEAM

The Lost Collection

Tessa Monroe

MENAGE EVERLASTING



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

IMPRINT: Ménage Everlasting

SARASOTA STEAM

Copyright © 2010 by Tessa Monroe

E-book ISBN: 1-60601-866-3

First E-book Publication: May 2010

Cover design by *Les Byerley*

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PUBLISHER

Siren Publishing, Inc.

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SARASOTA STEAM

TESSA MONROE

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Chapter One

White limestone dust rolled from behind the stagecoach as it trundled down the rutted road. According to the passenger manifest, it left Tampa for Sarasota on August 7th, 1889, and listed three women and three men as paying passengers, in addition to the driver and conductor.

The manifest was wrong, although the driver, conductor, and five of the passengers didn't know it.

One of the men, young and fair, very quiet, kept to himself and stared out the window as Florida prairie and piney scrub woods rolled by outside. The journey south from Tampa had been rough but worth it if it meant an end to the running.

There wasn't much further south to run, maybe Miami or even the islands of the Keys, but after that meant Cuba.

Or beyond.

When will he give up?

"Are you all right, child?" the older woman sitting across from "Charles Jones" asked.

"I'm fine, ma'am. Thank you." To preserve the illusion, Jones spoke quietly and lowered his tone.

One of the men looked at him funny, the husband of one of the other women. "First coach ride?"

Pulling his cloth cap down lower over his head, he shook his head.

“No. Not my first.”

He closed his eyes and prayed for sleep. Prayed they didn’t guess his secret.

* * * *

In Sarasota, he quickly parted ways from the other passengers after collecting his two carpetbags and found a room for the night in what he hoped was a quiet boarding house. Once alone in a room, with the door securely bolted behind him, he pulled off his cloth cap and shook out his recently cropped black hair.

Pretending to be a man proved harder than she thought it’d be.

Callista Johnson, also known as Callie, couldn’t afford for her secret to be discovered. There’d been a close call in Atlanta, when she’d spotted him coming out of the boarding house she’d vacated not two hours before, and again in Tallahassee, where she’d spotted his friend at the train depot. Fortunately, he didn’t recognize her. She’d already changed her appearance by then, purchasing men’s clothes and cutting her long hair short. To throw them off the trail, she took a risk and purchased a train ticket west in her own name, destination Kansas City, in hopes of losing her pursuers. Despite the waste of money, she felt she couldn’t afford not to do it. She then quietly headed south instead via stagecoach. She grew up on a farm, could do farm work, had a slim enough body it would be difficult for people to guess through her baggy shirt, overcoat, trousers and boots that she wasn’t a man.

She poured a little water in the washbasin, performed her ablution, and lay down to sleep for the first time in three days.

* * * *

When she awoke the next morning, she noticed immediately how breezy it was despite the sunny day. Gusts rattled the open window in

her room. She stood in front of the small mirror and looked at her reflection. There had been a time she cursed her less than ample frame when every other woman in her family had been born with a large bosom and wide hips. Now, she felt grateful she had inherited her father's slim, graceful stature. She felt even more grateful for all the time her father had spent teaching her basics like riding, hunting, and farming, things no "genteel lady" normally needed to know.

Skills that would likely keep her alive now.

If it'd been up to her lazy, good for nothing step-father, Bart Packer, she'd be married off to his best friend's son. No thank you. She'd rather marry a mangy dog than that worthless piece of trash. Then again, if he'd had his way with her as he'd intended, she'd have been raped by him two weeks earlier when he stumbled into her bedroom drunk on whiskey the night after her momma's funeral.

Despite the humid heat, she shivered at the memory. For the past five years, since her father died when she was fifteen, she'd successfully run their small farm while most girls her age were trying to land a husband. Then a year ago that louse of a step-father had swept her poor, sickly momma off her feet with promises to take care of everything so Callie wouldn't have to work the farm any more.

All lies, of course.

Callie hated him on sight. Not because he wasn't anything like her sweet and gentle father, but because he was a drunk and a liar and Callie hated the way he licked his lips when he looked at her.

With her cousin's help, she'd kept their farm going, too busy to do what other young ladies her age did, things like quilting and church socials and meeting a nice young man to marry.

She'd promised her daddy she'd take care of her momma, who'd suffered from a delicate and sickly constitution all her life.

Well, now Momma was dead of yellow fever.

She touched her waist, the cloth belt hidden under her clothes. It held her mother and grandmother's jewelry, her father's wedding ring and watch, and money she took from her step-father's hiding place

after she knocked him out. She wasn't stupid. He'd taken great pleasure in announcing to her that he was selling the farm, and there wasn't a blessed thing she could do about it, either. As the husband, he had the right to it. That's when he tried to take liberties with her and told her he'd made a deal with his friend to marry her off.

After she hit him with her water pitcher and he fell unconscious on the floor, she rolled his sorry hide down the stairs and left him lying at the bottom with a spilled whiskey bottle next to him, after pouring some on his clothes. Not the most ladylike thing, but then again, she'd never been accused of being ladylike.

He hopefully wouldn't remember what she did, but she wouldn't give him another chance at her, either. She immediately packed and left, taking what she could with her and leaving a note that she was running off to get married.

Hopefully the good Lord would forgive her that lie. Maybe one day she would get married, but first she needed to save up more money and build a new life for herself.

After a quick breakfast downstairs, she got directions and headed for the feed store. If anyone needed an extra ranch hand, they would know. She needed to avoid larger towns for a while, disappear. She couldn't believe he'd tracked her as far as he had and prayed he'd decided to follow her out west on the train.

Well, actually, she could believe he hadn't given up. One thing she had learned about Bart Packer was he possessed a stubborn, vengeful nature. When she'd left their farm outside of Nashville, she'd hoped to never see him again. She should have known he'd hunt her down, wanting back what she'd taken, as well as wanting to take a strip out of her hide for besting him.

* * * *

Jasper Collins snapped the reins, pointing his team toward Sarasota. The day had started out breezy but sunny, even though high

clouds scudded across a blue sky. Yet the barometer in the feed store had been steadily dropping since late yesterday, according to Mike Thomas, the proprietor. That worried both of them. It was August, a prime time for hurricanes.

“Lawrence Palmer came in here the other day,” Mike said with a smirk after they finished discussing the weather.

Jasper tensed. “Yeah? So?”

“His sister Leda’s sweet on you.” He winked. “I bet you could have her if you wanted her. And Lawrence likes you, too. So does their father.”

He should have known. “I’m not sweet on her or any other gal right now, Mike.”

Mike leaned back against the counter and started digging under his filthy fingernails with an old pocket knife. “You and that Cuban out there on your farm, you better be careful. People start to talk about you the wrong way, that ain’t good.”

Jasper glared at Mike. His voice dropped to a low growl. “You married?”

“Yeah, why?”

“Kids?”

Mike stared at him, his gaze narrowing. “Three. Why?”

“You ever watch a woman die, Mike? Your wife? Kids? It’s not something I want to think about. Maybe others can just get over it, but it’s five years later and I still hear their screams after that bastard set fire to my place. I couldn’t rescue them. So don’t be lecturing me about what should be right and proper in my life. I’ll live it however I damn well please.”

Mike’s jaw dropped open. “Jesus, I’m sorry. I didn’t know!”

Jasper slammed his fist against the counter. “Add a spool of barbed wire to my account.”

“S-sure.”

Jasper waited while Mike finished tallying his purchases. They’d lived outside of Sarasota for a year now after moving there from St.

Augustine, where he'd moved from Virginia before that.

He didn't like to talk about Virginia. It hurt too much.

Mike tried again for an apology. "Listen, I didn't mean nothing by it. I didn't know you was widowed."

"Yeah? Well, before you start casting shadows on men's reputations, take a moment to think about what you're saying. Gregorio saved my life. He's like an adopted brother to me. Now we're partners in our ranch. If your mind makes more over it than it is, that says something right peculiar and unnatural about you and your thoughts, don't it?"

Mike's face reddened. "I'm sorry. I didn't know!"

"And don't be spreading stories about my wife and kids dying. Last thing I need is every single woman feeling sorry for me and come chasing after me to make me their husband. I just want to be left alone and work my ranch. That's all. If I ever feel like taking a wife again, I will. Right now, I don't."

"Yeah, sure. I understand."

"If you want to spread any news, gossip that we're looking for another hand. Caleb Hill's father broke his leg last week, and he doesn't have time to help us out anymore. They can even bunk in a room in our barn if they don't have a place to stay. They gotta be able to ride and work cattle and mend fences. We're buying Jack Porter's hundred acres on the other side of us, and we'll need someone full-time." Jasper grabbed a spool of barbed wire from the stack on his way out the door and headed for his wagon. He angrily slung it in the back before climbing up onto the seat.

He knew damn well Mike wouldn't keep his mouth shut. It would mean a renewed influx of women bringing him and Goyo baked goods and invitations to dinners and church socials.

All they wanted was to be left alone.

* * * *

Jasper returned home in a foul mood. He knew it'd only be a matter of time before he had to face down someone and their innuendoes, but he'd hoped it wouldn't be this soon.

When it didn't hurt so much to talk or think about his lost family.

He found Gregorio Valdes in the barn, mucking out stalls. Jasper stared at him for a long moment. Shirtless, Goyo forked soiled straw into a barrow. Naturally tanned skin, a smooth, mostly hairless chest of lean muscles, he'd pulled his long, glossy black hair back with a strip of latigo leather.

"You gonna stand there and gawk, or you gonna help me?" He looked over at Jasper, his full lips quirked in a smile, his blue eyes shining.

"I was enjoying the view, Goyo. Besides, I've got a wagon to unload." Jasper walked over to him and felt his cock harden in his pants. "But don't stop on my account."

He grabbed Jasper's shirt and pulled him close, landing a deep kiss on his lips. "I wish we didn't need an extra hand. I'm enjoying not having to watch my back when I want to kiss you."

"You're gonna like it a lot less when Mike Thomas runs his blasted mouth about me being a widower and we get swarmed with spinsters looking for husbands."

He rolled his eyes. "*Coño!* How in blazes did *that* come up?"

"He made a remark about me and you and hinted something not proper."

"Since when are *we* proper?" he teased.

"You know what I mean. We can't afford for him to decide not to do business with us. It's an extra two hours to the next nearest feed store up in Bradenton."

He leaned against a beam. "So what did you tell him?"

Jasper followed him and kissed him again. "The truth. Sort of. After I mentioned my past, I told him you saved my life. Just not how or why. And that we're partners in the ranch. It's not my fault if he doesn't make the leap in logic. I prefer he doesn't."

Gregorio's arms snaked around his waist. Jasper felt his lover's hard cock pressing into his hip through his trousers. "Not exactly the kind of truth Father Marquez would have approved."

"Since when do you let your Catholic upbringing stop you from doing anything?"

He grinned, exposing straight, white teeth. "Never. You know me better than that, Jaz. But sometime's, a man's gotta pretend to try."

* * * *

The men had unloaded the wagon's contents into the feed room and house, unhitched the team, and had turned them out into the corral when an afternoon thunderstorm dumped on them. They ran to the house where they stood on the wraparound porch and watched water sluice off the barn roof and into the smaller cistern there.

Gregorio stepped behind Jasper and wrapped his arms around his waist again. "It'll rain for at least an hour at this rate."

Jasper leaned back against his lover. "You hope."

Gregorio just hoped the storm wasn't a pre-cursor of something more. He'd felt unsettled all day. Not to mention their two cattle dogs refused to leave the porch. Their horses acted restless, and he'd noticed that morning their beef cattle had all settled in the higher pasture, laying close together as if hunkering down for a storm. Even the pigs and chickens acted odd.

Jasper turned in his arms and kissed him, hard, lips crushing together as their hard cocks rubbed through the fabric of their trousers. "Let's go inside."

The second bedroom was only for show, for the few and far between times people stopped by to visit. Pulling at each other's clothes, they stumbled into their bedroom and fell naked onto the bed, Jasper held down by the taller man's frame. He loved Jasper's curly, sandy brown hair and big brown eyes. He pinned his lover's wrists over his head as he bent down and nibbled on his lower lip. Beneath

him, he felt Jasper's cock twitch. Even though Jaz was four years older than him, he usually let Gregorio take the lead behind closed doors.

"You teased me this morning, Jaz," Goyo chided as he shifted his hips against him, the delicious friction of their cocks rubbing together making Goyo grit his teeth to maintain control. "You got me all worked up and then left for town."

Beneath him, Jasper's eyelids had lowered, his eyes already glazed with passion. "I wanted you to look forward to me coming home."

"When have I ever not?" He slanted his mouth over Jasper's, his tongue demanding and receiving entry, ravishing his mouth until his lips were swollen from his kisses. Jasper lived in fear. Gregorio knew the feeling well, although for different reasons. He spent his own life living a double lie, never able to confess his secrets to anyone until he met Jasper.

Jasper was haunted by screams in the night only he could hear, dreams that woke him bathed in sweat even on the coolest nights, his face wet with tears as Gregorio held him and soothed him back to sleep.

Gregorio worked his way down his lover's body, biting at pink nipples contrasted against pale skin, following the light trail of hair that led from his navel to the now-stiff cock proudly standing away from his body. When he freed Jasper's wrists, Jasper immediately reached down to hold on to his shoulders, his hair, any part of him he could, needing the contact.

He palmed Jasper's sac, the soft, warm weight comfortable in his hand, crinkled hair soft against his palm. "Tell me what you want," he said, teasing him.

Jasper threw his head back and moaned. "I want you."

Gregorio wrapped his fingers around Jasper's cock and teased him, slowly stroking, before finally lowering his mouth to it and licking at his slit.

Jasper's hands fisted in the sheets. "Yes! More, please!"

He couldn't help but smile. "Ai, *papi*, I could do this all night to you. I love making you moan." He engulfed Jasper's cock again, slowly sucking and licking, taking his time exploring the ridge with his tongue and teasing him into a frenzy. He used one hand on the base of Jasper's shaft and the other on his sac. He felt the other man's release build, his balls drawing up tight and hot in his hand, his body growing rigid until he finally let go with a cry.

Ropes of tangy seed exploded from Jasper's cock. He eagerly swallowed him, licking and sucking until Jasper lay limp and whimpering in their bed.

He crawled up their bed to lie next to him, cradling him in his arms. Jasper slung one arm over his waist, clinging to him, their skin damp with sweat.

Finally, after a few minutes, Gregorio ran his fingers through Jasper's curls. "Good?"

"Yeah. Always."

His own cock twitched as he stared at Jasper's sweet lips. "When you're recovered, I have something for you, too."

Jasper rolled on top of him and kissed him before working his way down his body. As the storm intensified outside, rain loudly pelting against the tin roof like buckshot, he spread his legs and drew his knees up a little. He wanted Jasper's hot mouth on him, there, now.

He took the hint and licked his sac, engulfing his balls with his sweet lips as his fingers stroked Goyo's shaft.

Thrusting his hips, Goyo reached down and found Jasper's head. His fingers twined in his curls. "Still a tease? Don't torment me, *papi*. I need you."

Then Jasper sucked his shaft down his throat, deep-throating him and drawing a soft cry from Gregorio. He grabbed Jasper's head with both hands and thrust his hips as Jasper kept up with him. His balls tightened, his climax rolling down his body and out his prick as he

exploded with a cry.

Only when the last wave of his orgasm eased did he relax his grip, finally coaxing Jasper up the bed and back into his arms. Gregorio kissed him and stroked his cheek. He lifted his head to look down into Jasper's brown eyes. "I love you."

Jasper smiled. "I love you, too." His smile faltered. "I don't ever want to lose you."

He held him tighter. "You're not losing me. Never. Someone has to keep an eye out for you, keep you from doing something stupid like wanting to kill yourself again. Besides, who else would keep me out of trouble if I didn't have you? No, *papi*, you're stuck with me for as long as you'll keep my half-breed self around."

They snuggled together like that for a while longer as the storm wound down outside. Gregorio felt the tension in the air, the barometer dropping without a doubt. After the rain faded to nothing more than drips on the roof from overhanging oak trees, he gently nudged Jasper. "I think we have a problem."

Jasper didn't open his eyes. "I'll take care of the shutters on the house," he muttered, "if you want to start securing the barn."

"How do you always know what I'm thinking?"

Jasper opened his eyes then and sadly smiled. "You didn't know my wife." With that cryptic comment he sat up, swung out of bed, and started pulling on his clothes.

Chapter Two

Callie swore a less than ladylike oath as she took shelter from the rain under a thick stand of oak trees. The long duster coat she wore wasn't much shelter from the rain, but she toughed it out. By her best guess, she still had two miles to slog down the now muddy road until she reached the turnoff to the Coval Ranch. The man at the feed store said Jasper Collins had been in just that morning looking for another ranch hand. Florida was a fair sight hotter and more humid than Tennessee, but how different could working cattle in palmetto prairie and pine woods be than taking care of a hilly farm?

Her palms ached and chafed from the carpetbag handles. She had a pair of leather work gloves, but those had grown hot as she walked, making her palms slick with sweat. It was almost better to not wear them.

She should have purchased a horse in town and now cursed herself for not doing it. But she was low on money and didn't want to resort to selling any of the jewelry yet. Not to mention she didn't want to leave a trail her step-father could easily follow in this small town.

When the rain let up, Callie emerged from the woods and returned to the road, thankful at least for her well-fitting boots, one of the things she'd brought with her from home. She didn't have to add wet feet to her growing list of complaints. As the sun came out, turning a hot day steamingly muggy despite the increasing breeze, she had to stop and remove the duster and tuck it into one of the bags. She'd sold all but one of her dresses that she'd taken from home with her, which weren't worth much anyway, to help pay for the men's clothes. She'd taken precautions to sell her other dresses at a different store than

where she bought the men's clothes. She told the store owner the clothes were for her twin brother, hence the size. When she'd left home, she'd also taken two pairs of her father's trousers, which she'd been using as work pants after hemming them and taking in the waist.

Now it didn't matter if she had dresses. She needed to work, and she wouldn't be able to get a decent job if people knew she was a woman. She already discovered lying about her age, saying she was only sixteen instead of twenty, easily fooled people into believing she was a boy. It explained her voice and the lack of stubble on her face.

Another rainstorm blew through. She managed to put on the duster before her clothes got soaked again. This time when the rain ended the sky stayed dark, overcast, still threatening more rain.

Unease settled over her. While she wouldn't say she was familiar with Florida weather patterns, the air didn't even feel right. It reminded her of a bad summer storm two years earlier where tornadoes swept through the next town over. Spared her farm, but the nasty feel in the air stayed with her for days.

Despite her aching palms she slogged on. Hopefully, even if Collins didn't hire her, maybe he'd at least let her sit in his front parlor and wait out the rain. At this rate she'd be happy for a straw bed in a dry barn. Thunder boomed overhead, making her jump. The land had opened up a little, thinner pine woods eking out the denser stands of live oak. Up ahead in the distance, she saw what appeared to be the start of a fence line. The feed store clerk had told her once she reached that she had another two miles or so until the turn-off to the Coval Ranch.

At least it was progress.

She'd exchanged her cloth cap for a battered brimmed hat during the first deluge. It kept the rain off her face, at least, but it didn't stop the water rolling down the back of her coat.

Sodden, miserable, and now hungry as well, she soldiered on.

* * * *

The men stood on the porch and watched as the wind picked up. They'd run the horses out of the barn and into the smaller pasture with their two milk cows. There were several thick stands of oaks the livestock could seek shelter under, but the worst place for them if this was a hurricane would be the barn. At least out there they could fend for themselves. The pigs and chickens would take shelter under the house. They allowed the two dogs inside the house, where they curled up on an old burlap sack in the corner of the front room. The fact that the dogs wanted to be inside at all made the men nervous.

"Well?" Jasper asked.

Gregorio grimly nodded. "Yep. I think we're in for a blow."

Jasper pulled out his watch and looked at it before winding it. A little after three in the afternoon, and already the skies had darkened almost to dusk. "It'll get dark early tonight. I hope the worst blows through before then."

"That makes two of us."

They walked inside. Wind blew through the passageway connecting the newer kitchen addition to the rest of the house, carrying wet mist into the dining room. Jasper closed and bolted the door to the hallway. "Maybe we'd better eat supper sooner than later."

"I'll get it." Gregorio unbolted the door but closed it behind him. A few minutes later he returned with a loaf of bread and what was left of the stew from the night before from their icebox. They'd enjoyed the luxury since they purchased it and the stove four months earlier when they built the kitchen. "I have a feeling they won't be getting many ice shipments from Tampa over the next few weeks if this storm is bad. Good thing you brought more home. We'll be able to eat up what's still in there before it spoils."

Jasper laughed. "You're spoiled."

"Damn right I am." He ladled out a bowl of cold stew and ripped into it.

He loved to watch Goyo eat, how he hunched over his food as if

he'd rip your arm off if you tried to take it from him.

He swiveled his blue eyes. "You gonna stare or eat?"

"I'm going to eat. Then I'm going to eat you."

Goyo smiled. "That's my kind of dessert, *papi*."

* * * *

With the wind now howling outside the closed shutters, there wasn't much they could do except wait and pray. The men had seen worse. Since the wind didn't appear to be growing much in strength, and if no tornadoes spun out of the storm, maybe they'd escape with little damage or loss to the herd. After they finished eating they let the dogs have the scraps before they returned to their bedroom.

Jasper sat on the edge of their bed and pulled Goyo to him, so he stood between his legs. "As good excuse as any to get you back into bed," Jasper teased.

"Since when do you need an excuse?"

Jasper's fingers nimbly unfastened Goyo's trousers, the task made more difficult as the man's cock hardened and fought for escape. "For you, I never need an excuse."

Goyo shrugged off his suspenders and kicked off his boots. "You're gonna wear me out, *papi*."

"You complaining?"

"Never." He ran his hands through Jasper's curly hair and held him close.

Jasper kissed his smooth, firm stomach, dipping his head and following the slim trail of dark hair from his navel to between his legs. He tasted salty, warm, sweet. His hands grabbed Goyo's cheeks, his palms smoothing over the firm globes of his ass. He teased him, blowing soft breaths over Goyo's cock without taking him into his mouth. "I want you inside me," he murmured against Goyo's skin. "Please."

Goyo unbuttoned his shirt. "Then we'd better get you out of those

clothes.” He dropped his shirt to the floor and reached over to unbutton Jasper’s.

Jasper closed his eyes and enjoyed letting go under Goyo’s firm hands. He sat there as Goyo pushed his shirt and suspenders down his shoulders and leaned in, nipping at his bared shoulders. The shiver he felt wasn’t due to the warm air. He tipped his head to the side as Goyo worked his way up Jasper’s neck. Jasper’s lips parted, his breath quickening as Goyo’s teeth scraped along his flesh.

“I love you, *papi*,” Goyo rumbled against his throat. “I’m gonna fuck you real good and show you how much.”

Jasper’s cock throbbed, restrained by his trousers. His hand found Goyo’s cock and he stroked it, slicking the drops of pre-come already weeping from the end over the head.

“You do that, you’re gonna get fucked real hard,” Goyo warned.

“I hope so.”

Goyo’s rumbling chuckle vibrated through Jasper. Goyo pushed him back onto the bed and reached for his trousers. “Can’t do nothing until we get you naked.”

Jasper closed his eyes and lifted his hips so Goyo could strip him. When he lay naked on top of the sheets, Goyo’s hands sensuously stroked his chest, his arms, his abdomen, down to his stiff cock, which he squeezed. Goyo reached for the jar of lotion on the table. “Lift your legs. I want you like this.”

He pulled his legs up to his chest, leaving his ass wide open and vulnerable.

Goyo grunted appreciatively. “That’s just what I wanted.” He stroked Jasper’s cock and sac for a moment before scooping out some of the lotion and rubbing it on his cock, slicking his member before rubbing some along Jasper’s puckered rim.

Jasper didn’t bother holding back his moan as he felt Goyo’s finger probe his ass.

“You like that, don’t you? I know you do. I’ve got something for you even better.” He withdrew his fingers and replaced them with the

head of his cock. "Open your eyes, baby. Look at me."

Jasper forced his eyes open. Goyo's blue gaze ensnared him. He tipped his hips up to give Goyo better access. Feeling that, Goyo pressed forward slowly, sliding his cock deep inside Jasper until buried up to the hilt inside him.

Goyo closed his eyes as he tried to maintain control. "I wish I could stay right here all the time. Dammit, you feel so good!"

Jasper wrapped his legs around Goyo's waist. "Don't leave me like this, please! Fuck me!"

Goyo smiled. "I'm gonna fuck you real good, *papi*. Real good." He slowly withdrew until just the head of his cock remained inside Jasper before plunging hard and deep inside him again, making Jasper moan. He repeated the motion, long, slow withdrawal followed by a hard, quick thrust, until Jasper squirmed on the bed beneath him. Every inward thrust hit that sweet spot within him, driving him closer to the edge.

Goyo opened his eyes and reached between Jasper's legs. He wrapped his fingers around his cock. "Come for me, Jaz." He stroked him. "Come hard for me." He timed his thrusts with every stroke of his hand until Jasper finally threw back his head and cried out as his orgasm hit him, spilling his hot seed all over his lover's hand.

"That's it," Goyo said. He grabbed Jasper's hips and started thrusting, hard and fast, the entire bed shaking with the force until he felt his own release rolling through him. With one final, hard stroke he climaxed, trembling from the force of it as he leaned on Jasper for support until he could catch his breath. He carefully withdrew and rolled over onto the bed next to Jasper.

He kissed him. "That was damn good," Jasper said with a smile. Thunder crashed outside, making them both look at the ceiling and bringing them back to the present, to the fact that a storm raged outside.

"I think I'm ready for a nap," Goyo said, his eyes already drifting closed.

He felt Jasper get out of bed and heard him walk out of the bedroom, then the squeak of the hand pump in the wash room. He returned a moment later with a wet cloth and cleaned them both up. Then they curled up together in bed.

“A nap sounds real good,” Jasper agreed, already drifting to sleep in Goyo’s arms.

Chapter Three

This isn't a normal storm.

Callie thought that while she slogged through the deluge as horizontal rain pelted her face, stinging as it hit her cheeks. She had no idea how long she walked, her head bowed against the storm, thankful for the tie on her hat holding it to her head. The light darkened to a greenish-grey she didn't like at all, but she struggled on against the wind. There was no shelter to be had.

Finally, in the dim light, as the wind picked up and howled around her, she found a break in the fence line. One of three small, neatly-lettered signs nailed to a pine tree read "Coval Ranch" with an arrow pointing down the track.

Oh, thank goodness!

She warily eyed the tall slash pines lining the rough track curving out of sight into the dim light. It wasn't so much lightning she feared now as the wildly thrashing trees themselves, bending and swaying in the wind with dangerous-sounding cracks and groans, as if the very Earth were being tugged at and in misery.

From across the road, she heard a loud crack, followed by a long groan and a crash of the wind snapping a tree and sending it to the ground.

The sound spurred her courage, and she set off down the road. The clerk told her it was another mile or so down this trail until she reached the Coval place.

Her hands slowly went numb as she shivered. Now thoroughly soaked through to her skin, she felt utterly miserable. She wished she'd spent another night at the boarding house in town, in a bed.

In the woods around her she heard more trees loudly crack and give way every few minutes. The wind howled around her, billowing her coat behind her and forcing her to bend into the gale. She'd finally shoved her hat into one of her bags, afraid to lose it and doing her no good anyway.

As she struggled, she cursed her step-father under her breath with every step she won against the storm.

* * * *

Jasper lay awake, one arm curled under his head, his other holding Goyo as he lay snuggled against him. He stared at the ceiling and let the drone of the rain lull him back into memories. Times like this, he struggled not to think about his family. They were dead and gone and never coming back.

At least he'd had the satisfaction of shooting the man responsible for murdering them.

He preferred to pretend his life started four years ago, in St. Augustine, when he awoke from a drunken stupor and with the worst hangover of his life to find that not only had he not managed to shoot himself in the head, but that the black-haired man now lying beside him had carried him up to his room to keep him from getting arrested and thrown in jail for public drunkenness.

Goyo. What an apt name. Short for Gregorio. Watcher. He'd opened his eyes that day to find Goyo's blue eyes staring at him from where he sat in a chair in the corner.

Then he'd laid his head back and cried. He didn't turn his head and look when he felt the mattress sink as the then-stranger sat beside him.

"What's so bad you feel you have to get drunk and kill yourself?" he'd quietly asked.

"Why do you care?"

"I watched you at the saloon. You aren't a man prone to drink,

under normal circumstances. Not from the way you were acting. What drove you to it?"

And he found himself spilling his guts to this then nameless man, those blue eyes watching him, never interrupting as he told the story of murder and loss and revenge. No price on his head, the man he'd killed had been wanted with a large bounty. He'd collected it, but there'd been no satisfaction and it wouldn't make up for what he'd lost to earn it.

It wouldn't take away the sounds of their screams in the night and the memory of the blisters on his hands as he tried to open the door to get to them.

"Why'd you save me?" he hoarsely croaked when he finished his story.

The man he now knew as Goyo shrugged. "My *abuela* beat the Catholic faith into me. It's a sin to commit suicide." He playfully smiled. "There are a few of the rules I still play by." His face clouded. "That's one of them."

Jasper liked his smile. He had a strange urge to take the frown from his face, wanted to make him smile again. "What are some of the ones you ignore?"

He shrugged. "Maybe you get to know me better and I'll tell you about them."

A month later, the men weren't just sharing a room—they shared a bed. And Jasper had discovered one of Goyo's secrets. The other, that he wasn't half-Cuban, as he told everyone, but half-Seminole Indian. His widowed German mother had died during childbirth, leaving Goyo to be raised by his adopted *abuela*, an elderly Cuban Negress who worked for the local priest and who'd been friends with his mother. *Abuela* died when he was ten, and he spent the next few years in the orphanage until old enough to leave on his own.

The local priest had given Goyo the family name Valdes when he baptized him, which was what they named boys in an orphanage back in his native Cuba. Before she died, his *abuela* had told him the secret

of his true parentage so he would know. Considering emotions still ran high in the wake of the long-settled Seminole Indian Wars, it was easier for him to pass himself as half-Cuban.

Many nights Jasper had awoken to find Goyo watching him in the dark.

“Why do you watch me?” he’d asked one night.

“Because I can’t believe you’re still here and haven’t left me yet,” he quietly replied.

Jasper sighed, closed his eyes, and tried to rest even as the wind howled outside. He’d never leave Goyo. Not as long as the man still wanted him.

* * * *

Callie fought back her tears and her fear. This had to be one of those hurricanes she’d heard about. She’d never seen a storm so fierce that lasted so long. A few times the wind knocked her off her feet, and she struggled to hold on to her bags. The tall slash pines dangerously swayed in the breeze around her. One fell behind her not too long after she’d passed it. She prayed she’d make it to the Coval ranch at this rate.

A near-hysterical burp of laughter escaped her. How ironic that would be to escape her damned step-father just to meet her end like this.

Then the sound of the wind roared around her, even louder than before, spinning through the rain and the woods sounding like it came from every direction, like a locomotive bearing down upon her. She tried to run forward. One of the pine trees by the track fell, the upper branches bearing down upon her before she could get out of the way.

She screamed.

* * * *

Gregorio's eyes snapped open as he listened while Jasper dozed beside him. Beyond the wind, above the howl, he could have sworn he heard something else.

Someone.

The wind picked up with the sound of a tornado nearby. He prayed it didn't hit them as he lay there and listened to pine trees crack with explosions of tortured wood as they fell. After what felt like forever, it roared off into the distance, the wail of the wind finally settling back to its previous eerie fury.

He wondered how many trees they'd have to saw through to clear their fences and road.

He was about to doze off when he thought he heard the noise again. This time he sat up, drawing a sleepy, "What?" from Jaz.

"Shh. Listen."

Jasper sat up, his head cocked. After a minute, Gregorio was about to admit he must have imagined it when they both heard it. Faint, barely audible except for a brief lull in the wind.

"Help!"

One of their cow dogs barked out in the front room. The men looked at each other and bolted out of bed, racing to pull on clothes and boots. They grabbed their oilskin jackets and rushed out into the melee bare-headed, their hats useless against the wind.

Jasper put his hands to his mouth and called out. "Hello!"

They listened. Then, faintly, they heard a weak cry. "Help!"

Gregorio tapped Jasper's shoulder and pointed down their road. The men broke into a run, finally noticing the wind had started to die down even though the light still looked far too dark and green.

"Must be the eye," Jasper said. "That means we'll still have a couple of hours of wind."

"Dammit, I wanted to check the barn."

As the wind eased, the men raced down their road, rounding the corner to find a man trapped under a downed pine tree. It looked like he wasn't seriously injured from the way he thrashed, just unable to

free himself. Jasper and Goyo started working their way through the branches and toward the man, who was pinned face-down in the mud.

“Are you all right?” Gregorio called.

“Please, help me!”

He would have sworn it was a woman’s voice, but what he could see of the short hair and clothes indicated a young man. With Jasper’s help, they managed to get him pulled out.

The stranger was so exhausted he couldn’t even walk. Gregorio picked him up and carried him while Jasper grabbed the two bags he’d had with him.

He sobbed against Goyo’s shoulder. “Oh, thank you so much! I thought I was dead!”

Definitely a woman’s voice, but he couldn’t get a look at the guy’s face.

Already the wind had started up again as the eye passed and the other side of the storm overtook them. They hurried back to the house to beat the worst of the storm before the eye completely passed them by.

The stranger was soaked through, shivering in his wet clothes. No doubt the clothes in his carpet bags were soaked, too. Goyo carried him into the spare bedroom while Jasper ran for towels and blankets. When Gregorio tried to set the man on his feet, he was so exhausted his knees gave out and he seemed to actually faint. Goyo opted to lay the stranger on the bed and started peeling the layers from him, starting with the soaked long coat and jacket.

Jasper returned with the towels and blankets. When Gregorio started to unbutton the man’s shirt, he revived and pushed his hands away.

“No!”

“You’re soaked. You’ll catch a chill.” He studied the young man’s face. Very young, almost feminine-looking. Not a hint of stubble shadowing his cheeks.

“I-I can do it. Thank you.”

Jasper left and returned a moment later with a clean nightshirt. "Here, you can wear this until we get the rest of your stuff dried out. What in blazes were you doing out there in that storm?"

"Are you Jasper Collins?"

Gregorio watched Jasper's expression harden. "Yeah, why?"

"My name's Charles...Johnson. The man at the feed store in town said you're looking for a ranch hand. I was coming out to talk to you about the job when I got caught in the storm."

Jasper visibly relaxed. "Oh, sure. That was fast. Listen, get dried off and changed, and we'll talk."

The two men walked out, Jasper shutting the door behind them.

Gregorio pulled him into their bedroom and shut the door. "There's something wrong here," he whispered.

"Don't I know it."

He relaxed knowing they were on the same page. "Why would a boy that young be looking for a job way out here in the middle of a storm?"

The corners of Jasper's eyes crinkled with amusement as he shook his head, then leaned in and kissed him. "You're so cute when you're clueless. The person in that room is no more a man than either of those two cow dogs out in our front room."

Chapter Four

Exhausted and shaking but grateful to be alive, Callie changed clothes. The only thing still relatively dry was the cloth belt around her waist holding the jewelry and money. She kept that on and it didn't show. The nightshirt dwarfed her, hung down to her ankles. Everything in her bags was soaked. She laid as much out as she could over the end of the bed and on the chair. When she started to pull out her only dress she realized that wouldn't work and shoved it back into the bag. She couldn't let the men see that. She shoved the carpet bags under the bed and decided to wait to figure that problem out.

She hadn't got a good look at the house on the way in. One of the men had lit an oil lamp on the dresser. The room was neat, if sparse, with bare cypress walls, a wrought iron bed, and a plain pine wardrobe in the corner. On the wall next to the door, a small dresser with a washbasin and pitcher and small mirror. On the freshly-swept wood floor lay a braided rag rug. The ceilings looked taller than she was used to, probably to help cool the room. She noticed a gap between the walls and ceiling of about a foot or so, meaning she'd have to be careful what kind of noise she made.

When she emerged, a blanket wrapped around her, she found the men sitting at the dining table in the front room. If it wasn't for the fact she was trying to pretend to be a man, she would have broken down and cried with gratitude for their rescue.

Collins studied her and pointed to another chair pulled up to the table. "We'd offer you a hot meal or coffee, but with this storm, we can't risk lighting the stove until the wind dies down."

She glanced around. "I don't see a kitchen, Mr. Collins."

He hooked his thumb down the hallway she'd just come from. "Jasper. And it's outside, in back. Added it on." He clasped his hands in front of him on the table. "This is my business partner, Gregorio Valdes," he said, indicating the other man.

Callie nodded to him. "Pleased to meet you."

He nodded. "Call me Goyo."

"Is that why it's called the Coval Ranch? For Collins and Valdes?" she asked.

"Yep. Can you ride?" Jasper asked.

She nodded. This was her first job interview. She hoped the less she said, the faster it would go.

"You have experience working a ranch or with cattle?"

"I ran my parents' farm for the past five years. We had ten head of dairy cows, twenty of beef, pigs, chickens, and one hundred acres of crops."

"Why aren't you there now?"

She didn't have to lie. "My mother died two weeks ago, and my step-father and I got into a fight. He got drunk, attacked me, so I took some of my momma's jewelry and left."

She noticed Goyo's expression softened. "Where are you from?" he asked.

Okay, now she'd lie. "Savannah."

"You born there?"

She nodded.

She didn't miss how the men exchanged a look. Jasper leaned in. "You don't start off trying to get a new job by lying to your employer."

She blanched. How could they have known? "Okay, I'm not from Savannah. How'd you know?"

Goyo laughed. "You're too twangy. I'd bet you're from Kentucky or Tennessee."

She looked down at her hands. "Outside of Nashville."

"And you ended up in the middle of nowhere, Florida, in a

hurricane, because he's chasing you down," Jasper surmised.

She nodded.

He leaned back. "Well, now we have the truth. Most of it. Leastways, enough of it for now. You can start right away."

She finally looked at the men, surprised by their ready acceptance. "Thank you."

"Is your real name Charles Johnson?"

"My last name really is Johnson."

Jasper held up a hand. "Okay. That's fine. You're not wanted by the law?" She shook her head. He extended the upheld hand to her to shake. She did, hoping her grip felt strong enough. "Welcome to the Coval Ranch, Charles."

* * * *

Jasper studied her while they talked. Very cute, even with her black hair cut short like a boy's, and round hazel eyes that didn't painfully remind him of anyone else. If she wanted to pretend she was a man, he'd let her. For now, at least. He suspected there was a lot more to her story than she told them, but to tell them more would give away her biggest secret.

Well, keeping secrets was something he understood. Lord knew he and Goyo had a whopper of their own. Maybe this would work out well for all three of them.

"Let me make one thing perfectly clear to you, Charles," he told her. "Goyo and I are private. We don't want people poking into our business or spreading rumors about us. We don't gossip about others, and don't want them gossiping about us. If I hear one word you've been talking about us to anyone in town, you'll be down that road before you can spit. Do I make myself clear?"

The girl nodded. Not girl, that wasn't right. He guessed at least eighteen, maybe nineteen, from the lines around her eyes. One thing for certain, he did believe that she told the truth about working a farm.

Her hand, while not hard like a man's, was strong with some calluses. She didn't strike him as a woman who'd be weak and wobbly under normal circumstances, but she was flat done-in by the storm.

"We'll afford you the same privacy," he assured her. "How old are you? Sixteen?"

She nodded.

He fought the urge to smile. She was a terrible liar and probably not used to doing it. She'd just told them she'd run a farm for five years, meaning she'd started when she was eleven.

He pointed to a sideboard. "There should be a length of clothesline and a bag of pegs in there, if you want to hang up your clothes in your room to dry. It'll be well past dark by the time this storm dies down. We'll be up before dawn in the morning to ride out and check the livestock. There's a privy outside, near the back door, but it might not even be standing right now. There should be a pot under the bed if you need to use it."

"Thank you." He didn't miss how exhausted she looked.

Goyo went and fetched the water pitcher from her room and filled it for her. He pointed down the hall toward the back room. "Used to be the kitchen," he said. "We use it as a wash room now, kept a pump and sink there. Makes baths easier when it's chilly."

She bid them goodnight after finding the clothesline and pegs. Then she walked down the hall and closed the bedroom door behind her.

Goyo sat at the table and leaned back in his chair, stretching his long torso. "Well," he softly said, "I'm convinced. You're right. She's definitely not a man."

"What made up your mind?"

He smiled. "No man in his right mind would accept a job without negotiating the wage first."

Jasper laughed, remembering to keep his voice low. "That's what convinced you?"

He nodded. "Yeah. What convinced you?"

He smiled and leaned in closer, making sure to keep his voice quiet. "When you tried to take her shirt off, the rain had plastered it to her body. You could see right through it. I don't know about you, and you're the only man I've been up close and personal with, but I've never seen a man with breasts and nipples that look like that."

Goyo slapped a hand over his mouth to stifle his howls of laughter.

* * * *

Callie had already arisen, dressed, and gotten ready the next morning when she heard the men moving around. Her trousers still felt a little damp in the seams, but she guessed as the day heated up that wouldn't be a problem. Her shirt and undershirt had dried nicely, as had her socks.

Her stomach rumbled when she smelled coffee and bacon. She followed the scent to the kitchen where Goyo cooked by the light of an oil lamp.

"You hungry?"

She nodded. "Can I help?"

"Naw, it'll be ready in a minute."

It finally hit her she must have upended one of them the night before from their bed. "Oh, where will I normally sleep?"

He turned and arched an eyebrow at her, his expression guarded. "Excuse me?" She loved his blue eyes. It was only through sheer strength of will she pulled her gaze from his.

"I don't mind sleeping in the barn. I'm sorry I took someone's bed last night. I wasn't even thinking. I felt exhausted."

The back screen door slammed shut, and she turned to look at Jasper. Both men were handsome in different ways. She suspected Goyo might be a Spaniard or Cuban, with his swarthy looks, but Jasper's slim, shorter frame still looked strong, well-muscled arms she imagined could...

Hoping she hadn't blushed, she swallowed and tried to focus on the smell of food.

"Privy's upright again. Luckily all it did was blow over, not away." He pumped water and washed his hands. "Sleep okay, Charles? Or do you prefer Charlie?"

"Charlie's fine," she said.

He nodded. "Once we find out what's what with the herd, and we get you settled in, you'll take turns with us cooking. You can cook, right?"

She nodded.

"Good."

The barest hint of grey light shadowed the yard after they'd finished eating, cleaned up the dishes, and walked to the barn. The cow dogs followed them and sat, waiting.

Jasper and Goyo walked around the outside of the barn first, then inside.

"We got lucky," Goyo said as he shoved his hat back on his head. "Real lucky. Looks like the roof's okay."

"Must have been a small storm," Jasper agreed. "I wonder how much fence is down." He turned to her. "You know how to mend a fence?"

She nodded.

Jasper led her to the feed room. "There's chicken feed in there. If you go scatter it outside, it should bring them back. We'll worry about the pigs later. I want to get the horses rounded up." He scooped horse feed into a bucket. Then he went outside and walked across the yard to a wooden corral fence. He started shaking the bucket and whistling.

As she scattered feed for the chickens, she heard hoof beats approach. A moment later, as Goyo joined Jasper at the fence, eight horses galloped into the corral through the open pasture gate.

"That's a relief," Goyo said as he walked around and shut the gate.

"They don't look bad," Jasper said as he ran his hand over the

neck of one.

Goyo walked around them. "Couple of minor scratches. That's real good. The herd should be okay too, if these guys are in good shape."

Jasper disappeared into the barn and returned with three bridles. "You ever work with cow dogs before?" he asked her. She shook her head. He handed one of the bridles to her and indicated the smallest horse, a sorrel gelding. "You can ride him. He works well with the dogs. Just point him and hang on."

She climbed through the fence and approached the gelding, which blew out a few wide-nosed breaths at her before sniffing her outstretched palm. She slipped the reins around his neck to hold him while she bridled him.

She realized the men were watching her. "What?"

Jasper's smile seemed to hold more behind it than he let on. "Nothing. Just wanted to see if you were telling the truth about your horse sense."

She led the horse out of the corral and over to a hitching rail in front of the barn. "Where's the saddle?" she said in reply, trying to rein in her irritation. Why would they doubt her word if they thought she was a man?

I'll show them.

The tough, compact pony stood still while she quickly brushed and saddled him. Not a beautiful beast, and not very big, but he looked tough and strong in the hind quarters despite his short back.

Goyo led a slightly taller bay over to the hitching rail. "Cow ponies in Florida tend to run smaller to what you're used to seeing, I'm sure," he said as he patted her horse's neck. "Can't run no big ole saddle horse through the scrub. These ponies are as tough as us Crackers."

"Crackers?"

She jumped, startled when a whip cracked far too near for her liking. The two ponies and Goyo never flinched. Jasper, a teasing grin

on his face, stood in the barn doorway and coiled the whip. “Crackers. That’s how we drive them.”

A few minutes later they all mounted, and she followed the men through the woods as the sun slowly climbed and filled the pines and palmettos with a crystal clear, golden-tinged hue. Sunlight sparkled off rain drops still clinging to the vegetation before the heat of the day evaporated it and turned the air into a steamy soup.

“How many head you got?” she asked.

“A hundred,” Goyo called over his shoulder, “but we’re getting ready to expand. Buying the property next door, and his herd. Another hundred.”

The land opened up into scrubby palmetto prairie and pasture land. In the distance, she spotted the herd they sought.

With Jasper in the lead, he picked up the pace, and she followed the men until they reached the herd. They all dismounted. The men handed her the reins for their horses before they walked into the herd, examining them.

After a few minutes, Jasper shook his head. “I don’t believe it, but I’m glad of it.”

“You and me both, Jaz,” Goyo echoed. “That’s one worry down. Now we need to check the fence, and then we get to clear the road.”

Jasper groaned. “Thank goodness we picked up that new double-ended saw last month.”

She remounted, and that’s when Callie realized she had a problem. The men stood on the other side of their horses, their backs to her for a moment before mounting, and she knew they’d relieved themselves.

She glanced around. It’d be hard to explain having to find a tree for modesty’s sake, and even more embarrassing to piddle all over herself. She couldn’t very well squat in front of them, or they’d know the truth about her.

The men took swigs of water from a canteen before Goyo handed it back to her. Thirsty, she also took a drink even though she knew

that would only add to her discomfort.

They reached the fence line a few minutes later. She felt more than happy when Goyo sent her riding down one direction while the men went the other. As soon as the men were out of sight, she hurriedly dismounted and relieved herself.

I should have thought this plan out a little better.

That taken care of, she quickly remounted and continued on her way.

By the time she hit the turn in the fence they'd told her about, she hadn't found any breaks. She turned her horse and headed back to their meeting point, but Goyo intercepted her before she reached it. "Big tree down that way. We need the saw. Come with me back to the house to get the stuff we'll need."

"Where's Jasper?"

"He's gonna ride the rest of the fence on this side to see if there's any more."

She followed him back to the house and helped him gather what they needed. Their wagon couldn't make it through the thick brush, and with the road blocked, they had to load the supplies on the two larger team horses. She snuck a trip to the privy while using the excuse that she'd refill their canteens and get them some food.

"These aren't cow ponies," she observed when she returned.

"No, we don't use them to work the herd, they're too big. We use them for the wagon, for pulling, and for pack work when we need them." When she mounted, he handed her the lead for one. "You can lead a horse, right?"

She furrowed her brow in irritation. As handsome as he was, she'd begun to think he had an ego to match his good looks. "Yes, I can lead a horse." She headed off down the trail, trying to ignore his amused snickering behind her as he mounted his horse and followed.

Jasper had discovered two more fence breaks, neither as serious as the first one. By mid-afternoon, they'd repaired them and headed for the road to take care of the downed trees. The two men stared at the

first tree, the one that had nearly killed her.

“We’re going to need the team hitched to pull this out of the way.” Jasper looked at her. “You know how to hook up a team for pulling?”

She’d had just about enough of this. “You got collars for them?”

Goyo laughed. “I think you riled his feathers, Jaz.”

“Just get the stuff you need from them unloaded,” she sniped. “Where’s their harness?”

“Everything’s hanging in the tack room in the barn.”

Stewing, she mounted her pony and took the team’s leads when the men handed them to her before leading them back to the house. After another quick trip to the privy, she investigated the tack room and found everything she needed except the whippetree and a stout chain or even a log hook. Finally, she found it all hanging in the back of the barn near a small plow.

She wouldn’t need her pony, so she turned him loose in the corral with the others. Then she swung up on the back of one of the team and rode down to the men.

Jasper looked up from where they’d nearly sawed through the tree. “Don’t suppose you found the—”

She shot him a smug grin as she jumped down from the horse she’d rode and pointed. “Yes, I found it. Thanks for remembering to tell me it was in the back of the barn.”

Goyo leaned against another tree, slapping his thigh as he laughed at Jasper. “I think—”

Jasper cut him off with a dark look. “That you’d better shut your mouth.”

Goyo snickered but nodded. “Sure.”

* * * *

Jasper stewed, not sure how to call her bluff. He’d been sure Charlie, whatever her real name was, would have revealed herself

before now. She'd certainly surprised him. He had to admit with more than a little respect that she hadn't lied about her skills. A hard worker, harder than some men they'd hired in the past. He had no doubts about that part of her history being the truth, even if she lied about who she was.

As she bent over to hook the traces to the log, he would also admit to admiring her curvy backside. Goyo caught sight of him staring and shot him a wink and a grin. No doubt he'd noticed her backside, too.

Two more trees had fallen across the road, both smaller than the first. Late in the afternoon they finished clearing them and returned to the house.

She jumped down off the horse and led the team to the hitching rail. "What now?"

"You take care of the horses, we'll get the milking done. Then I need a swim." He suppressed his laugh. That would work. No way she could hide who she was in the spring. "In fact, as hot as it is, I think we all need one."

She didn't say anything. He'd toss her into the spring if he had to, but one way or another, before she went to bed that night, he would get her to admit her secret.

Then it hopefully wouldn't matter if she discovered theirs.

She made excuses and hemmed and hawed about not being able to swim, but between Jasper and Goyo, they finally coaxed her behind the house and down the short path to the small, clear spring.

He started stripping his clothes, his eyes on her face. "Hey, makes bathing easy." He tossed a bar of soap and wash rag he'd brought from the house onto a rock near the edge. "Saves us the trouble of running a tub full of water."

He couldn't help but notice that when he and Goyo pulled their trousers off, she closed her eyes and swallowed hard. "Come on in, Charlie. Nothing like a cool swim after a long, hard day of honest work." He waded into the spring.

* * * *

Callie stood there, mortified. Well, not just mortified, curious, too, because she'd never been with a man before. Theoretically, she knew what they must look like based on animals, but...

Holy heavens!

Their thick members hung over heavy sacs. When they turned to wade into the water, she was treated to an unobstructed view of their firm backsides.

"Come on in," Jasper repeated, his eyes twinkling.

She shook her head. "I told you, I can't swim." Okay, another lie, but it was either lie or go in with her clothes on and try to explain *that* to the men.

"We'll teach you," Goyo said. "Come on, Charlie. Live dangerously."

She kicked off her boots and carefully laid her socks in them so they wouldn't get wet. "I'll just dip my feet in." She rolled her pants up to her knees and carefully walked to another rock near the edge, but hopefully far enough away from the men that they wouldn't be tempted to try anything funny.

* * * *

The men swam to the far side of the spring. Goyo chuckled under his breath. "She's really doing anything she can to stay away from the water, isn't she?"

"Wouldn't you?" Jasper said.

"She is cute."

Jasper studied him, an eyebrow arching in surprise. "You think so?"

"Don't you?"

"Well, yeah."

He shrugged. "Just because I'm with you doesn't mean I don't

like women. I'd been with women before I decided I liked men, too."

Jasper laughed. "I guess I'd forgotten that."

"You're not really going to make her sleep in the barn tonight are you?" He glanced at her. "I'd feel really guilty if we did that. Even if she is willing, it wouldn't be right to make her do it."

"Not if I can get her to fess up before bedtime." He looked at Goyo. "It means we wouldn't have to explain you and me sharing a bed when she's not in the house."

"Always so logical."

"I want to bend you over and stick my cock in you right now."

"And so horny, too," Goyo teased, then he sighed. "If she stays long enough, maybe you can use her as a way to avoid Sarasota's eligible ladies."

"You mean we."

His blue eyes darkened as he crouched in the water. "No, *papi*, I mean you. No white woman's going to want to settle for a *Cubano* half-breed, even if they don't know I'm part Seminole. Besides, I don't want anyone but you. No one will question me being single." He grinned. "I can always tell them I flunked out of the seminary but still hold my vows." He backstroked away to Jasper's roaring laughter.

* * * *

Callie looked up at the sound of Jasper's laugh. The easy sound rolled out of him and across the small spring. She watched the way Goyo looked at him, and Jasper's return glances. At the very least they seemed good friends, as close as brothers from the way they worked together. Many times silently, as if knowing the other's thoughts.

She wondered why they were single, then decided it didn't matter. She'd hate giving up a nice bed for a pile of hay, but if it meant staying safe, she'd do it.

The dogs had followed them to the spring and plunged in with the men, paddling around for a few minutes before climbing out and shaking water all over. She watched them, not paying attention to the men until she heard a splash of water and realized Jasper swam over to her. Even through the rippled water she could see his thick member, seemingly waving at her as the clear spring created the illusion.

She swallowed hard.

"It's a hot day, Charlie. You should come on in. I'm sure you'd like to cool off."

She didn't dare draw her feet in, reading something in his eyes telling her that'd be the wrong thing to do. "I'm all right. Just wettin' my toes."

He stood, the water just below his hips. Water clung to the dark, curly nest of hair just barely exposed by the water. She struggled to keep her eyes off the trickles of water running down the dark hair on his chest and dripping from his...

Oh, my!

He put his hands on his hips. "I think you'd enjoy a chance to scrub the dirt and sweat off after a day like today. You smell like a horse."

"Well, you smell like a wet dog, Jasper."

He grinned. "Do I?"

Goyo chimed in from nearby, where he sudsed up with the soap. "Yeah, now that I think of it, Jaz, you sort of do."

Jasper's smile didn't put her at ease, but before she could scramble backward off the rock and out of his reach, he'd grabbed her, hoisted her off the rock, and slung her out into the middle of the spring where she nearly landed on Goyo.

She came up screaming her outrage as she tried to swim to shore, but Jasper blocked her progress.

"No, Charlie, I told you we'd teach you to swim," he said as he grabbed her and tossed her into the middle of the spring again, "and

that's what we're going to do!"

She finally had to swim across the spring to get away from him. Goyo stood near the opposite shore, laughing. "Look at that, Jaz. You're a good teacher. One swimming lesson and she's swimming like a gator."

Her eyes widened, horrified. "There's gators in here?" She frantically looked around, terrified.

"Not in this one, it's way too small." He crossed his arms and stared at her. "Now tell us your *real* name, *Charlie*. Or is it maybe Charlene? Or Carla?"

She stared at the men as she realized they knew her secret, then she broke down crying. She'd tried so hard to pretend. How was she supposed to escape and hide from Bart if she couldn't even fool these two guys?

The men swam over to her. She felt too upset to even remember they were naked as they surrounded her in the water.

"Hey," Jasper said, his voice gentled, "it's all right, honey. We knew last night when we got you back to the house. It's okay. We were just waiting for you to admit the truth. We didn't want to make you sleep in the barn tonight."

"Yeah," Goyo agreed. "We'll keep you hid, but you need to tell us the truth."

Standing there in the spring, in sopping wet clothes with two handsome, naked Crackers flanking her, she cried out the story.

The men appeared angry, she realized, when she finally opened her eyes and looked into their faces. Jasper reached out and touched her chin. "How old are you, really?"

"How old are you?" she shot back.

He smiled. "I'm thirty. Goyo is twenty-six. Now answer my question."

"Twenty."

"Is that the truth?"

"Yes." Why bother lying anymore? It didn't matter.

He nodded. "We will keep you safe. But you can't sleep in the barn. You can keep the room you're in. We'll share."

She felt horrible about that. "That's not right, though. It's y'all's house. I don't mind the barn."

The men exchanged a glance. "We don't mind sharing a bed. And we'll help you keep your secret if you'll promise to help us keep ours."

She sniffled. "Yours?"

The men exchanged another glance. Goyo nodded.

"Are you a religious girl?" Jasper asked.

She shrugged. "Will it shock you if I tell you no?"

Goyo grinned. "I like this girl."

"Will you promise?" Jasper repeated.

"Okay, sure."

He let go of her. "I'm a widower. I don't feel like telling the story right now. Goyo saved my life when I tried to kill myself. And let's just say that we're a lot closer than any brothers. Sharing a bed isn't any great sacrifice, because normally we sleep together anyway. That's a secret we don't want getting out to anyone."

She stared at him as comprehension dawned. "Oh."

Jasper's face took on a hard edge. "Will this be a problem? Because if it is, I'll wait for you to change your clothes, and I'll hitch the team and take you back to Sarasota right now so you can catch the next stage out."

She shook her head, still a little shocked. "No, it's not a problem." In fact, it explained the way they'd acted while working together.

Both men seemed to relax. Jasper nodded. "Good. We'll keep you safe, and you keep your mouth shut, and we'll all get along just fine."

She blushed as her eyes darted down and saw their cocks again. Such a waste. Two beautiful men and neither wanted her. "It's a deal," she softly said.

* * * *

After dinner they sat on the front porch and talked. With their secrets out on the table, Goyo sensed her relax around them, no longer afraid to laugh for fear of exposing her true identity. Callie. It fit her better than Charlie, that's for sure.

She retired to bed before them. Once they heard her bedroom door shut, Goyo looked at Jasper and tipped his head toward the barn before he stood and walked down the steps and across the yard. Inside the barn he grabbed Jasper and pulled him close for a long, hard kiss neither wanted to break.

"You brought me out here to kiss me? We could have done that in bed," Jasper gasped.

Goyo pushed him down onto a clean pile of hay in an empty stall. "I couldn't do this, though," he said as he unfastened his trousers and withdrew his cock. He knelt over Jasper, who greedily sucked it down. He stroked Goyo's sac with one hand, his shaft with the other.

Goyo braced himself with his arms as he fucked his cock into Jasper's willing and eager mouth. "Ai, I wanted to feel my cock in your ass this afternoon at the spring, and I couldn't with her there. Maybe we can get her to let us bathe alone from now on. Then I can fuck you whenever I want."

Jasper grunted his assent but couldn't reply with Goyo's cock filling his mouth.

"Suck me good, *papi*, and I'll repay the favor."

When Jasper's finger pressed against Goyo's rim, it triggered his climax. His balls drew up against his body, tightening as his eruption squeezed out of him. He didn't bother suppressing his happy cry as Jasper continued sucking him dry until he finally had to roll off him and collapse onto the hay next to him.

Jasper sat up. "You had to bring me out here for this?" he teased.

Goyo laughed. "I didn't want to scare her off. You know I can't keep quiet when you do such good things to me."

* * * *

Callie stared at the ceiling as a breeze blew in over her through the screened window. She thought she heard something, then realized the men hadn't come in yet.

She threw the sheet off and padded into the front room. No men.

She thought she heard muffled voices coming from the barn. She grabbed her boots and yanked them on without socks, then quietly let herself out the front door and walked across the yard.

Definitely the men. But it wasn't a conversation she heard. In the light of the waning moon, she saw their shadows cast out of one of the stalls and went to investigate. Carefully peering over the edge, she slapped her hand over her mouth to stifle her gasp at the sight.

Jasper lay back in the pile of hay, his hands tucked behind his head. Between his legs knelt Goyo, and she could only imagine what he was doing there as his head bobbed up and down.

Frozen in stunned disbelief, she watched the men together.

"That's it," Jasper grunted. "Take me deep."

A sudden flurry of heat pooled inside her, settling between her legs. She knew she should be shocked or horrified, but as she stood there, her fingers tightly curled around the top of the stall, she wished she was down there in the hay with them.

She closed her eyes and sucked in a deep breath at the wicked thought. Before her Momma died, she'd talked to her about husbands and wives.

"Marry for love, like I did with your father," she'd said. "Don't marry to settle or because you think it's safe, like I did with Bart. Don't marry because you think you have to, or because people say it's right and proper. Find someone who will love you just as good in bed as out of it. Live your life the way you want to be happy, not settling for whatever comes along because you think you can't do better."

It finally struck her as she heard Jasper let out a long, loud moan that she'd better get herself back into the house so they didn't know

she'd spied on them. She turned to leave, but one of her boots caught on the hem of the oversized nightshirt and down she went in a tangle with a pained grunt.

"What was that?" Jasper said.

Before she could scramble to her feet she heard the two men tumble out of the stall. As she rolled over to face them, ready to stammer apologies, she didn't miss the fact that Jasper was tucking his member back into his trousers and buttoning the fly.

Goyo stood behind him, his playful smile unmistakable even in the dim light.

"What are you doing out here?" Jasper demanded.

"I'm sorry," she said even as he grabbed her arm and hauled her to her feet. "I heard a noise. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to intrude."

She noticed Jasper didn't let go of her wrist. "So much for not scaring her off," Jasper said to Goyo before turning back to her. His voice and expression gentled. "If you want to leave, we'll understand."

She shook her head. "I don't want to leave."

Both men looked puzzled. Jasper found his voice first. "Really? We don't...disgust you?"

She snorted in irritation and finally pulled her wrist free. "No, what disgusted me was my step-father getting drunk and trying to rape me before my mother's body was even cold in her grave." She tried to straighten her nightshirt and realized it was a futile job. "I'm not some innocent little thing, you know. I had to grow up quick to keep our farm going. Now that son of a gun has it, and I can't do a blasted thing about it."

Now she did cry. "I worked so hard. I worked as hard as any man did after Daddy died. Momma was always sickly, and then when she married that worthless, no-good coward, he took everything away. It should've been mine!"

She turned from them, wishing she could have held it back, but she couldn't. She sobbed, angry, and punched at a post, which only

made her hand hurt. "I worked blasted hard. And it's all gone!" She sucked at her sore knuckle and tried to choke back her sobs. She hated feeling weak and helpless, hated that everything her daddy and she had worked for was now gone.

Callie flinched when she felt a gentle hand on her back. She looked up into Goyo's blue eyes. "I can't tell you it'll be okay because that's a lie," he softly said. "But you can start over with us." He glanced at Jasper, who nodded. "We'd be honored to have you here as long as you want." He brushed a piece of straw off her shoulder as a sad smile curled his lips. "Until some lucky guy steals you away from us."

She vigorously shook her head. "Oh, no. I don't want no man in my life if they're gonna be like Bart Packer. I'd rather spend my life alone than end up with some worthless skunk like that. That'd be like hell on earth."

Jasper stepped forward. "Then spend it here with us," he quietly said. "Maybe the three of us can scratch out a little corner of Heaven for ourselves, instead of ending up in Hell."

She laughed. "Heaven in this hot, mosquito-infested place?"

He smiled. "It's not so bad." He looked at Goyo. "Right?"

Goyo smiled and slipped his arm around Jasper's waist. "Right." He looked at her and extended his other arm to her for a hug. "Someone offering you a better option? Better than two guys who will keep you safe and treat you fairly?"

She had to admit, it was a better than fair offer. She stepped into their hug and rested her forehead against Jasper's firm chest. "I feel like I've been through Hell. This is starting to feel a lot like Heaven already."

Chapter Five

Hell truly arrived two weeks later in the guise of Leda Palmer and her friend, Bessie Wyatt. The girls stopped by unexpectedly, bearing a fruit cake and cookies respectively. Bessie's younger brother, Tommy, drove the carriage they arrived in.

Callie looked up from where she sat on the front porch while mending the team's harness. The women walked over to her.

The girls had apparently put on their best dresses and rouge. "Hello there," one of them said. "Are Jasper and Gregorio home?"

Callie frowned at them and remembered to tone down her twangy drawl. "No. They're out with the herd."

When Callie didn't say anything else, the girl forged ahead. "I'm Leda Palmer, and this is my friend, Bessie Wyatt, and her brother, Tommy. And you are?"

"Busy."

Leda forced a smile. "We wanted to drop by and make sure they made it through the storm all right."

Callie gritted her teeth and kept her voice low and deep. "That was two weeks ago. We made it through just fine."

"You know, I don't remember seeing you around Sarasota before."

"I got into town the day of the storm. Jasper hired me on as a hand."

"Oh." Callie saw the girls exchange a curious glance. "Well, would you mind if we waited for them?"

"Yes." She finished pounding in the last rivet and tested the mend. "I've got to hook the team up and get them out to the back pasture."

We had another deadfall from the storm break through the fence. We won't be done with repairs until close to dark. I'll tell them you dropped by." She remembered to tip her hat to the two girls, who couldn't be more than sixteen or seventeen.

"But what do we do with what we brought?" Bessie asked with more than a note of dashed hopes.

Callie tried to contain her irritation. "I'll take them inside." She laid the harness over the porch rail and grabbed the plates from the girls. She made sure to stomp loudly to show her displeasure at the interruption as she walked through the house to the kitchen in back, then outside again.

The girls apparently didn't know what to do after having been so rudely dismissed. They stared at each other, then back at Callie.

"I'm, sorry, what was your name again?" Bessie asked.

"Charles," she growled, hopefully sounding as snarly as she felt. The thought of either of these girls wanting Jasper and Goyo irked her to no end. Not that they were her men, or that they would even want these girls, but it was the principle of the matter. She'd felt more at home in her short time with the men than she had since her daddy died. As far as she was concerned, they *were* her men, and she'd be damned if she'd stand by and let some kids try to seduce them.

"I need to get back to work or I'll get my hide chewed. Jasper told me he wanted me back with the team pronto. Thank you for the grub. Good day, ladies." She said the last word through clenched teeth and remembered to grab the harness on her way past.

Callie thought the girls would get back in their carriage and leave, but they didn't. Instead, they trailed behind her across the yard to the hitching rail where the team patiently waited.

"We wouldn't mind following you out to them, so we could say hello ourselves," Leda suggested.

Callie rolled her eyes without turning to face Leda. "Ma'am," she said, "that carriage of yours wouldn't make it through the woods. I'll be sure to pass your message on to Jasper and Goyo."

Realizing they'd truly been dismissed, the girls turned and walked away. Leda made no attempt to lower her voice. "Well! I'll make sure next time I see Jasper to tell him how rude his new ranch hand is!"

Bessie wholeheartedly agreed. "I'd be willing to bet Gregorio and Jasper send him on his way when they hear!"

Callie fought the urge to snicker. If that was an attempt on their part to scare her into ingratiating them to the men, they were sadly mistaken. By the time Callie had the repaired harness hooked up, the girls and Tommy had left.

Callie finally laughed, the sound rolling out of her. She shook her head and made a quick trip to the privy before mounting one of the team and riding back to where the men worked on the fence. She'd never admit it, but she hoped the men wouldn't make her leave one day. She didn't want to be anywhere but there with them. Sweet men, handsome men, both haunted in their own way, Jasper more so than Goyo. She liked how Jasper seemed to laugh more now over the past few days, more than when she first arrived. She enjoyed Goyo's teasing, playful familiarity, bordering on overly forward, but she didn't mind.

Considering all the Bart Packers in the world, she was more than happy to stay with Jasper and Goyo. It was plain to see how much the men loved each other, too. Reminded her of Momma and Daddy in happier times, before he died. They couldn't be open in front of anyone but her, of course, and that saddened her. She'd never thought about it too much one way or the other before, but why shouldn't they have a right to be happy together?

When she told the story about their visitors to the men, Goyo laughed, but Jasper's face darkened. "Blasted girls. I should've counted on Mike Thomas running his mouth."

* * * *

Three days later, on Friday, Callie rode in the wagon to Sarasota

with Goyo for supplies. Jasper had to meet with their neighbor and the banker at the neighbor's ranch to finalize the paperwork for the sale. The men no longer bothered keeping up pretenses in front of her, and at night she smiled as she listened to their passionate noises drifting over the top of the wall.

She wouldn't have told them about that even if they asked if she could hear. She enjoyed closing her eyes and wishing she lay in bed with them. After having seen them naked, she could easily fantasize about the actions generating such sweet sounds in their bed.

The men didn't treat her with kid gloves, but with her secret out, they happily let her take over the cooking while they relieved her of the most strenuous chores. She still rode with them and pulled her weight. It was a relief to relax, even while working side-by-side with them, having them appreciate and thank her for her efforts.

Jasper paid out her first wages even though she tried to refuse them. "No," he said, "I insist. You work as hard as any man, harder than a lot of them. You've earned it." He grinned. "Buy yourself something pretty." Then he delivered a playful wink.

She'd laughed, but at the same time she thought about it. She could buy fabric and make herself a house dress to wear in the evenings, something basic and comfortable. Although "Charles" would have to explain the purchase was for his sister.

They had several stops to make. In the dry goods store, a display of sunbonnets caught her eye. Not fancy but pretty nonetheless.

Goyo, ever watchful, walked up behind her. "You know," he said loud enough so Mrs. Collings, the elderly sales clerk, could hear, "your sister would like that." He winked at her.

The clerk, the wife of the store owner, trundled up. "Oh, yes, we've sold lots of those." She picked one up. "How old is your sister?"

Callie glared at Goyo, whose eyes twinkled with merry mischief. "Oh, they're twins," Goyo said. "She wasn't feeling up to a trip to town today. Would that size fit her, do you think, Charlie?"

Callie nodded and remembered to lower her voice. "Prob'ly."

"Then why don't you buy it for her?"

She stepped on his foot. "Mebbe she doesn't want me buying a bonnet for her."

"Oh, every girl loves a bonnet," Mrs. Collings insisted even as she carried it over to the counter to wrap it.

Goyo grinned, wide and playful. "I'm sure she'll love it, Mrs. Collings."

Callie stuck her tongue out at him.

They were outside loading their supplies in the wagon when they heard a girl calling.

"Yoo hoo! Greg-ooooorio!"

Callie noticed Goyo's body tensed almost as much as her own. They both slowly turned to see Bessie Wyatt scurrying across the street toward them. They had already left the empty plates with the pastor on their way into town, and he'd assured Goyo he'd return them when he saw the girls on Sunday.

Bessie hustled up, the color high in her cheeks. Callie knew it wasn't from the hot Florida sun, either. Bessie glared at Callie before putting on a syrupy smile for Goyo. When Goyo tipped his hat to her, Callie remembered to do the same.

"Did you enjoy the sweets?" Bessie asked, trying to step between them and take Goyo's arm.

Goyo resisted by leaning back against the wagon. "We did, thank you. And please thank Leda for us. It was very generous."

She cast a glance at Callie. "You know, Jasper really should give Charles here a talking to. He was very rude to us the other day. We even offered to wait or follow him so we could say hi to y'all personally."

Callie could tell Goyo barely kept his laughter in check. "We only care if a ranch hand can do his job, Bessie. I'm sorry, but ever since the storm we've been pretty busy. No time for socializing. Jasper would have tanned Charlie's hide if he hadn't got the team back to us

right quick. And I reckon Charlie would rather deal with an upset girl than an upset boss.” Callie didn’t miss his particular use of the word “girl” in lieu of “woman.”

Bessie huffed. “Well, that may very well be true, but it’s still no reason to be rude.” She turned her back on Callie and stepped in front of Goyo. “There’s a social Sunday night at the church, you know. Leda and I wouldn’t mind it if you and Jasper wanted to take us. Leda’s daddy said he’s looking forward to talking to Jasper again.”

Callie didn’t miss how the color rose in Goyo’s face. “I doubt I’ll go, but I know Jasper was planning on taking Callie.”

Both women responded in shock. “What?”

Callie crossed her arms over her chest and looked down to avoid Bessie’s gaze before the girl turned back to Goyo. “Who?” Bessie asked.

“Callie. Charlie’s twin sister. Oh, didn’t you know? She rode the train from Jacksonville into Arcadia and came over the day after the storm. “

“No, I didn’t know Charlie had a sister. I’m sure Leda and I would love to meet her. I hope Callie’s not as rude as Charlie here.”

“Ruder,” Callie growled without looking up. She suspected Leda would be getting an earful about this as soon as Bessie could track her down to tell her. She knew from what Jasper told her that Leda was sweet on him, had set her sights on him.

That could cause trouble for all of them.

“Charlie, you settle down,” Goyo warned, but Callie didn’t miss the playful tone in his voice. “I’m sorry to break it to you, Bessie, but Jasper’s really sweet on Callie. Oh, he doesn’t admit it in so many words, but a man can tell when his best friend pines for a woman.”

As Callie listened she wished it were true. Then again, that would mean choosing between the men, something she didn’t want to do. They were both handsome, and she’d love to have either in her bed, not that it would ever happen anywhere but in her dreams.

They finally got away from Bessie and returned to the wagon.

Callie remained silent as she climbed aboard before Goyo snapped the reins and the team moved on. They headed for the feed store. Callie felt conflicting emotions swirling in her.

“Nice lie you told about ‘Callie’ and Jasper. Now we’ll have to go to the blasted social. How am I supposed to go to that?”

“That dress you have will look right nice with your new bonnet.”

She stewed. At least she still had shoes, too, the one pair beside her work boots.

As they approached the feed store she asked, “Why’d you have to tell her that lie? Couldn’t you have said we just weren’t going? Now Jasper’s going to have to pretend he’s courting me.”

Goyo didn’t look at her. The brim of his hat shaded his eyes, casting his face into shadow. “No lie. It’s the truth.”

“What is?”

“That he’s sweet on you.” He finally turned to look at her. She couldn’t read his normally open expression.

“What?”

He nodded. “He is.”

“But...” She licked her lips to wet them. “What about you?”

That’s when he smiled and pushed his hat back on his head. He leaned in. “Truth is,” he softly said, “I’m sweet on you, too.”

That’s not what she’d meant, but she sat there, stunned, as he pulled the wagon up in front of the feed store, secured the reins, and walked inside.

By the time he’d returned and she climbed down to help him load, she had a million questions she wanted to ask and knew she couldn’t until they were safely out of Sarasota and on the road back to the ranch.

He knew it, too. His playful smirk betrayed his amusement. Once they were safely out of town, she confronted him. “What did you mean back there?”

He feigned wide-eyed innocence. “What?”

“When you said what you said.”

“What did I say?”

He would make her say it. She gritted her teeth. “About Jasper and you. I thought you...how can you...I don’t understand.”

He laughed long and hard. “Never had the talk about men and women with your momma? Where would you like me to start, sweetheart?”

“No! I mean, yes, I did, but I thought that—” She took a deep breath and resisted the urge to shove him off the wagon. “You and Jasper.”

He pushed his hat back. “Yes?”

“I mean, you. And. Jasper.”

“And?”

She let out a frustrated scream. “How can you both be sweet on me?”

“Why? Don’t you want us to be sweet on you?”

“Yes! I mean, no. I mean—” She let out another scream and turned away from him.

His laughter rolled over her. “Your face turns all red when you get upset. It’s very cute, sweetheart.”

“You are an insufferable man!”

“Yes, I am. Jasper tells me that at least once a week.”

When she refused to speak again, he hooked an arm around her waist and dragged her across the seat to him. After glancing around to make sure no one was on the road behind them, he leaned in and kissed her.

At first she froze, surprised by it. But then as his lips insisted on her giving over to him, her arms wrapped around his neck and she melted against his side as the horses continued their steady pace, ignoring their silly human drivers.

When he finally lifted his lips from hers, his blue eyes scorched her soul. “That,” he hoarsely said, “is how I can be sweet on you. I can love him and still want you, too. So does he. We have absolutely no interest in those two girls when we’ve got a beautiful woman

already living with us.”

She spent the rest of the ride staring at him, her jaw gaped, while he focused on the road ahead of them and sang songs in both Spanish and English.

* * * *

Callie had thought to spend the trip asking Goyo more about his and Jasper’s pasts, but his revelation had shocked her into silence. When they returned to the house, they found Jasper hadn’t yet returned.

When she tried to help unload the wagon, Goyo gently refused her assistance. “You go ahead and start dinner.” He handed her the package with the bonnet. “And put your new pretty away.”

She smacked his shoulder as he laughed at her indignation. When she stormed across the yard she made sure to slam the front screen door hard behind her.

Insufferable man!

But a handsome one. Both of them.

She left the bonnet on her bed and headed for the kitchen to check on the soup she’d left on the stove. After stirring up the fire, she prepared a batch of biscuits and had them in the oven when she heard Jasper return.

She was tidying up the kitchen when she heard the front door open and close a few minutes later. Booted footsteps walked down the hallway and out the back door to stand in the kitchen doorway.

She pretended not to hear.

When Jasper cleared his throat a moment later, she almost jumped out of her skin before she turned. “Hi,” she said. “Did it go well?”

He held his hat in his hands and looked...well, bashful, truth be told. “It’s all finalized. We’ll take it over at the first of the month.”

“Oh, good.” She continued with her cleaning.

He laid his hat on the small table they ate breakfast at and walked

over to her. She had to stop moving when he caught her wrists and gently turned her to face him. When she wouldn't look up, he tipped her chin so she stared into his brown eyes.

"He told me," he softly said.

She swallowed hard.

"The question is," he continued, "are you sweet on us?"

Her heart raced as sweat trickled down her back. She couldn't find her voice, so she nodded. Why deny it? If they could be honest, so could she.

A slow smile spread over his face. He leaned in and kissed her, different than Goyo's hot and heavy embrace. Despite the scratchy stubble on his cheeks, this kiss felt tender and gentle, a request instead of a demand. A different kind of heat coiled inside her, spreading through her insides and sending fiery sparks of heat lightning through her soul. With a mind of their own, her hands clutched at his shirt, pulling him closer, holding him there. When she felt a hard bulge grow against her, she realized the effect she had on him was as powerful as the effect they had on her.

Then he stepped back, leaving her swaying on her feet. "I promise I'll take a bath and shave before the social," he said with a teasing smile before he left the kitchen.

She had to grab hold of the table because her knees had suddenly gone weak and wobbly. Once she could walk, she followed him out of the house and to the barn, where he stood talking with Goyo. The men turned to her expectantly, awaiting whatever she had to say.

Her mouth flapped open and shut a few times, no sounds coming out.

Both men smiled as they surrounded her. Goyo stroked her cheek. "You're not a kid like those other two," he teased. "You know what we're talking about when we say we're sweet on you, don't you?"

She nodded. She'd die of shame rather than admit it, but there were a few times she'd pleased herself in bed at night, especially when she heard the men making love across the hall.

She felt a dangerous, sensual heat radiating from the men, more sultry than any Sarasota summer day. Jasper stood behind her as his arm encircled her waist. "You ever been with a man before?"

She shook her head as she felt her face grow red.

When his lips brushed the back of her neck, she closed her eyes and moaned as her knees went weak again.

"Do you like that?" Goyo asked. Gone was his playful, teasing tone. His voice sounded full of unrestrained emotion, low and hoarse.

She licked her lips and nodded even while more heat flared inside her.

"Do you want him to stop?"

She shook her head.

Goyo stepped closer and she felt the heat from his breath against her lips. "Jasper and I've been talking. We need a woman around here full time to take care of us. You need two strong men to keep you safe. I think it's time Jasper gets remarried."

Her eyes flew open. "What?"

His blue eyes burned with the intensity of a flame. "No one will spread stories about you, shame your reputation if you're married to Jaz."

She harshly laughed. "Living with two men won't shame my reputation?"

He gently held her chin. "We continue like we are. Me and Jaz are best friends. Charlie moved on, and Callie stayed behind. You'd be Jasper's wife. No one's gonna talk. They'll talk less that way than they might now."

"But..." She looked back at Jasper. His brown eyes looked darker. "That's not fair to Goyo."

Goyo caught her chin again and made her look at him. "Baby, if people knew the truth about me, they wouldn't want me around them. A Seminole half-breed? They tolerate me because they think I'm half-Cuban. If I married you, they'd look down on you and me both. Even more if they ever found out the truth about me. I'm not stupid. I'm not

an outcast right now, at least.” He smiled. “What’s more important, what we feel and know is true, or what everyone else thinks?”

Somehow, this wasn’t sinking into her brain. She wasn’t sure she understood them. “I can’t choose between you. I...I love you both.”

“We’re not asking you to choose,” Jasper rumbled against the back of her neck. Goodness, she couldn’t think with the delicious feel of his lips there! “We’re asking you to share our lives and our bed. Getting married to me will make sure we’re all left alone.”

“On one condition.” She turned and put her arms around his neck.

“What?”

“I want you both to tell me everything about your pasts. How you met. About your family.”

His face darkened. “I can’t talk about them,” he softly said.

“You’re asking me to share your bed. I need to know I really have your hearts, so I know I’m not little more than some cheap whore and a convenient excuse.”

Goyo grabbed her from behind and turned her to look at him. “You’re not a whore or an excuse. That’s not what this is about. We love you.” He almost looked shocked that the words had flown from his mouth.

She turned back to Jasper. “Is that true?” she asked.

He nodded. “We do.”

“Then if you love me,” she carefully said, “you need to be able to trust me the way I trust you two. I need to hear it from you to know you mean what you say.”

He pulled her into his arms again and kissed her. She could almost taste his pain, his guilt, his heartbreak lurking just beyond his passion. “Okay,” he hoarsely said when he broke their embrace. “But not today, please.”

“Not today,” she agreed. “Soon.”

He nodded. “Soon.” He kissed her again. “Will you marry me, Callie Johnson?”

“Yes I will, Jasper Collins.”

Goyo stepped behind her and turned her. “Will you still want me, too?”

She kissed him. “Gregorio Valdes, I’ll always want you, too.”

Chapter Six

“I still don’t understand why we have to go to the social,” Callie groused at dinner.

Goyo laughed. “Leda’s father is a powerful man. It pays to keep on his good side.”

“She’ll be madder than a wet hen when she finds out about our impending nuptials,” Callie said. “Why throw it in her face and make her madder?”

Jasper laughed. “No, William Palmer is a reasonable man. He knows his daughter is a spoiled brat, believe me. Besides,” he said as his face darkened, “I’m a widower. I can’t imagine any father wanting their young daughter to marry a widower almost twice her age.”

She turned her attention to Goyo. “What about you? Bessie seemed pretty hot to go after you.”

He shrugged. “Her daddy’s a deep-water Baptist. I’ll genuflect in front of him. No way he’ll let his daughter anywhere near a papist.” He laughed. “I can’t believe he’s letting her go to the church social with Leda. It’s an Episcopal church.”

“The Methodist circuit rider’s in town this weekend,” Jasper said. “Everyone wants to hear him preach when he comes to town, even Reverend Avery. And Bessie’s father wants her married off as soon as possible. He lost a lot of money when his sawmill burned down last year. He’s got three other daughters younger than her to feed, and not a son among them. He’s willing to look the other way on a few issues if it means easing his burden a little—”

“We have drifted off-topic,” Callie interrupted, glaring at the two men. “Why do we need to go to the social?”

Jasper sat back in his chair and wiped his chin with his napkin. "We need to introduce Callie around anyway." He grinned. "Charlie's already got a bad reputation with the girls, apparently."

Callie's face reddened. "You should have seen Bessie throwing herself at Goyo! It was disgraceful! That girl's nothing but a shameless hussy!"

The men laughed. Goyo reached over and caught her hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. "I knew from your reaction you had feelings for us. No way you would be jealous like that if you didn't."

Her face reddened even more. "Was it that obvious?"

"To me, yes. Bessie was clueless, I'm sure. She's a ninny anyway."

"Another reason we need to go," Jasper continued, "is we need to talk to the pastor. I know the circuit rider will marry us without any questions. Reverend Avery can be a little too nosey sometimes."

"Won't it hurt his feelings you didn't ask him to do it?"

"Nope. When we first moved to town and he paid us a visit, I told him I was Methodist. He's an Episcopalian. He'll understand. It'll also explain why we want it done so quickly rather than waiting until the next time the circuit rider's in town." He looked at Goyo. "You really should go, too."

He turned to him, startled. "Why?"

"Ha!" Callie crowed triumphantly.

"Because you can dance with some of the girls, be polite, and it'll help keep up appearances."

Callie looked at Jasper. "Wait, what? Him dance with other girls?"

Goyo grinned. "Might be worth it just to see her get jealous. Her face looks so cute when it's all red like that."

She threw her napkin at him. "No! I don't want you dancing with any other girls but me!"

"Well I don't want to dance with any other girls but you, so we're even."

In a huff she stood to clear the table. "I'm not happy about this. I don't see why we have to go to the social just to talk to the preacher about getting married."

"Because the justice of the peace should be there, too. He can issue a marriage license right there. We can come home husband and wife. The circuit rider marries people all the time when he's in town."

She froze, her hands trembling. "Really? You're serious about this? You mean it?"

"Really." He stood and rounded the table. "And that's about all the time Goyo and I will be able to stand looking at you without ripping your clothes off and taking you to bed. You make us wait any longer, we won't be able to stay honorable."

She laughed. "I don't think what we'll have is exactly considered honorable by most."

"It don't matter what they think. It only matters what we think. In both our minds, you'll be our wife, not just mine, even if that's all we can say to others." He looked at Goyo. "You agree?"

He nodded, his face solemn. "I agree, *papi*." He pushed his chair back and patted his lap. "Come here."

She let him pull her down onto his lap, her arms slipping around his neck. He nuzzled her throat with his lips before speaking soft and low. "I promise to love you, honor you, protect you, cherish you. For better and for worse, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

She felt the prickle of tears in her eyes. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. You say your vows now."

"I promise to love, honor, and obey you, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

He kissed her, sweetly and tenderly. "Now when you say it to Jaz in front of the preacher, you'll remember saying it to me first. And you'll know you mean it for both of us just like we mean it for you." His hand rested on her thigh, slowly stroking it. "Maybe Sunday night we can finally get a sweet taste of what you hide from us under those clothes."

* * * *

If it'd been up to Callie, she would have skipped the wedding and gone right to their wedding night. With their emotions out in the open, the men took great pains to tease her. It wasn't uncommon for the men to grab her and kiss her during the course of the day, leaving her panting for breath and decidedly slick between her legs. No matter what, they wouldn't let her coax them into doing more than that. She suspected she could have teased Goyo beyond the point of control and into bedding her sooner, but Jasper's honor wouldn't let them do that. He insisted they had to be rightfully married first.

It didn't stop the men from bedding each other, however. Saturday night she laid awake in her bed and listened as the men pleased each other long into the night on the other side of the hall.

She woke up Sunday morning to the sound of the men already in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Wedding or not, they still had chores to do and animals to tend. On her way back from the privy, Goyo caught her and kissed her good morning, starting deep fires inside her that were only further stoked when Jasper caught her by the waist and laid another on her.

"I wish I had a ring for you," he said. "I didn't have time to go buy one."

She started to tell him that was okay when she remembered something. "Wait!" She rushed off to her bedroom and returned a moment later with the belt. She kept it hidden in a drawer, rolled up in the one chemise she still owned.

The men crowded around her as she opened the belt and rummaged through the contents.

"Good Lord, Callie," Goyo said. "What is this?"

"The reason my step-father is after me. It's what Momma had, Daddy's rings, and some of my grandparents' things. Some of these were handed down three generations. Aha!" She held out her palm to

Jasper. "This was Momma's wedding ring that Daddy gave her. It fits me."

He smiled and took it, held it up to the light. "I'm sorry I don't have one of my own to give you, but if you're okay with it, I am, too."

She nodded. "Momma and Daddy were happy together. He loved her something fierce, and she loved him back, even as sick as she felt all the time. He'd do anything for her, anytime. They were still in love when he died. I think that's part of why she did so poorly at the end, even before she got yellow fever. She just missed him so much."

Searching through the belt again, she came up with two more rings. She grabbed Goyo's hand and tried one on him, which proved too small, then another, which fit his finger perfectly. "There," she softly said and looked up at him. "That's my Daddy's wedding band."

His hand gently closed around hers. "I do love you, Callie."

She smiled. "I know. I love you, too." She turned to Jasper. The other ring fit perfectly on his hand. "That was my grandpa's ring." Their eyes met as she looked up. "Like it was meant to be."

He kissed her. "Exactly like it was meant to be."

* * * *

They finished their chores late that afternoon before returning to the house. The men took their shaving kits and soap and headed out back to the spring to clean up. Callie couldn't stand it. She grabbed another towel and followed them. If they would most likely be married in a few hours anyway, barring any unforeseen circumstances, what difference did it make if they saw her naked or not? And she'd already sworn her vows to Goyo. Technically that made her a married woman. Besides, she'd already seen them naked.

Her face, as well as her intimate places, grew hot at that memory.

She heard them talking as she walked down the path to the spring. When she stepped out of the woods, they had their backs to her, both

of them standing in waist-deep water. Goyo was helping Jasper shave.

The sight made her pause and smile as she listened to their banter.

“Don’t go cuttin’ my throat now,” Jasper warned, his face covered with shaving soap.

Goyo laughed. “Why would I do that to you, *papi*?” he asked, his voice tender. “I love you.”

Her heart fluttered. She’d caught them saying it to each other before, but to hear him say it like that, it took her breath away.

“She’s special, isn’t she?” Jasper asked.

“She certainly is. We’re lucky men.” The sunlight glinted off the wedding band on Goyo’s hand.

When she walked over, they finally looked up. Before she could lose her nerve she kicked off her boots and started unbuttoning her shirt. “I’ll do that for you. For both of you,” she softly said. “I want to shave you.”

The men’s jaws gaped as she slipped her shirt off her shoulders.

* * * *

Jasper stared, breathless at the sight of her bare body slipping into the spring. Creamy and pale where her clothes hid her flesh from the harsh Florida sun, a light sprinkle of freckles over her nose and cheeks, the dark nest of curls at the juncture of her firm thighs disappeared into the water as she stepped in and walked over. The cool water made her pink nipples tighten to hard peaks, as if begging for them to cup her firm breasts and play with them.

“*Joder!*” Goyo softly swore. Jasper wasn’t sure what that epithet meant, but he could easily guess.

Her eyes never left them even though the color rose in her cheeks as she stood beside them. She held out her hand to Goyo for the razor. “Let me do it. Then I’ll shave you.”

Shaving was the last thing on Jasper’s mind, and even in the cool water his cock stiffened as he stared at Callie’s beautiful body. He

knew Goyo's reaction had to match his.

Callie used one hand to tip his head up and back while the other carefully worked the straight razor over his flesh. His eyes never left her as she worked, until she gently ran her hand over his flesh. "There," she said with a smile. She turned to Goyo. "Now you."

"At least I'm easy," he teased. Jasper wasn't exceedingly hairy, but Goyo had much less. Shaving him was a much faster job. She kissed Goyo, then Jasper, before returning the razor to Goyo.

"There. You both look very handsome."

She started to swim past Jasper, but he snagged her and pulled her to him as he leaned back in the water with her cradled against his chest. "Where do you think you're going?"

* * * *

She felt his stiff member rubbing against her. "Just going for a swim. Then I'm going to wash up. It's my wedding day, you know."

Goyo swam up behind them. She enjoyed the feel of his body pressed against her back. "Does your fiancé know you're swimming with two naked men?" he joked.

She wiggled her backside against him. "Why, I believe he does," she said, giggling.

Fires raged within her. She knew what passion and pleasure could feel like without them and wondered how much better it would be with one of their hands or better yet, their cocks, between her legs instead of her own fingers.

"I'd better get back to shore," Jasper hoarsely said.

She clamped her legs around him. "No you don't," she warned. "You're not leaving me out here feelin' like this." She wiggled again and felt his cock now rubbing against that sweet spot between her legs.

Jasper moaned. "Baby, don't do that. I can't control myself if you do that!"

Goyo's arms wrapped around her, his hands cupping her breasts. "I think that's her intent."

"Dang right it is." She held on to Jasper's shoulders and rocked her hips against him. "It feels better than my hand, that's for sure." She leaned in and kissed him and felt his flesh pulsate against hers.

"Your first time shouldn't be in the middle of a spring," he tried to protest.

"Why not?" Goyo chimed in. "Ours was at a beach in St. Augustine."

"See?" she insisted, nuzzling at his neck. "He agrees with me."

"I think I still have sand in places no man should have sand," Goyo grumbled.

"Not helping," she quipped. "Please?" she whispered against Jasper's neck. "Make me yours now. I don't want to wait."

* * * *

Jasper let out a low moan as he held her tightly with one arm. He couldn't resist her plaintive request. With the other hand, he reached between her legs and found her throbbing nub of flesh. She moaned as he stroked it.

Goyo kissed his way across her shoulder. "Lean back against me, baby. Let him show you how good it feels."

Jasper relinquished her to Goyo even as she kept her legs wrapped around his waist. Supporting her ass with one hand while she floated in the water, he used his other to stroke her clit, rubbing it, making her writhe between them as Goyo kissed her and swallowed every sweet cry she made. Jasper's greatest fear proved unfounded—that it would remind him too much of painful days, of sweet and long-gone times he could never reclaim. He'd worried he might not be able to give her all of him the way he could Goyo. But his heart decided otherwise. Callie proved so different in mind, body, and soul than his sweet Mary had been, that there were no comparisons to distract him from

making love to her with all his heart.

He gently parted her folds with his finger, pressing for entrance. Even in the cool water the lips of her sex felt hot, promising a wild ride once he had his cock planted firmly inside her.

She arched her back as he gently probed her. Then he added a second finger and she moaned again as she rocked her hips against him. "You're so tight, baby," he softly said.

Her eyes fluttered open. "Please, take me!"

He couldn't hold back. No matter what he'd sworn, how much of a gentleman he'd be, he was only human. He lined up the head of his cock with her sex and gently pressed forward into her silken, hot pussy.

* * * *

She looked into Jasper's eyes as she felt the hot, hard, smooth head of his member paused between her legs. "This might hurt, sweetheart," he said. "At first. Then it'll feel good, I promise."

She nodded. "I know."

He slowly pressed forward then drew back a little, pulling almost all the way out. With one hand still supporting her backside, he began stroking her clit again. She closed her eyes, her head lolling against Goyo's shoulder as she rocked her hips, wanting Jasper's cock deeper inside her.

The familiar sensation started, a deep boiling of her nerves until it formed a red-hot ball of pleasure under the pad of his finger stroking her clit.

"That's it, sugar," Jasper urged. "You want to give it to me, don't you?"

She rocked harder in the water against the men, needing the release, her body under their command and not her own as Goyo nibbled on her neck and played with her nipples. She whined with need, wanting more, wanting everything. Goyo's hands felt hot

against her breasts as every stroke of Jasper's fingers pulled liquid fire from the center of her being and sent it straight between her legs.

Then her body unhinged as her climax exploded, more powerful than any other she'd ever experienced before. That's when Jasper pistoned his hips forward, driving his cock deep inside her, stretching and filling her and demanding her body give way. The pain of the thrust mingled with the pleasure still assaulting her, until finally every deep, hard stroke he took brought nothing but sheer bliss.

His hands moved to her hips and tightly gripped her, holding her firmly in place while he fucked her hard and fast until he let out one last cry. She felt his hot seed pumping inside her, his cock throbbing his release.

Goyo gently shifted her up until they had her firmly sandwiched between them, his chest pressing against her back while her nipples deliciously rubbed against Jasper's chest. Goyo wrapped his arms around both of them as Jasper rested his head against her shoulder.

"*Ai, papi,*" Goyo murmured, stroking Jasper's arm. "How did that feel?"

He nodded, still trying to catch his breath.

Goyo kissed the side of her neck. "You sounded beautiful, baby. I can't wait to take you next."

Jasper lifted his head and kissed her, one hand tangling in her hair, holding her to him, refusing to let go at first. She tasted his desperation, his desire, his love, all from his lips devouring hers. He closed his eyes and rested his forehead against hers. "I love you, Callie. And I don't love easy."

"I love you, too," she assured him. She had a feeling some of his thoughts had strayed to the past, to his lost wife. That didn't bother her, but she hoped he could tell her the story sooner than later. She wanted to love all the hurt out of both men's souls.

After a few minutes he untangled from her and turned her to face Goyo. His blue eyes looked as dark as evening skies from his desire for her. He stepped between her thighs, his hands slowly sliding down

her legs to lift them around his waist. He reached between her legs and gently stroked her swollen nub. "How do you feel, baby?" he softly asked.

"Good. I want you."

He teased her, rolling her clit between his fingers and driving her mad until she begged for him to give her release. "I thought you'd never ask," he said with a smile. His cock felt a little larger, thicker than Jasper's, and he slowly pushed into her until seated all the way to the root. "I'm going to make you come so I feel your sweet, tight pussy squeezing my cock, baby."

Devious fingers stroked and played and teased until she felt her release pour through her veins and replace reason with passion. Jasper securely held her in his arms as her body trembled between them. "That's it," he whispered in her ear. "Come for him like you did for me."

When convinced he'd wrung every last drop of climax from her, Goyo started thrusting again, every sweet stroke stretching her and making her body burn for him almost as badly as if she hadn't just had two beautiful orgasms under their skillful hands. Each hard thrust plumbed her very depths. Her heels dug into his firm backside as he sawed his cock in and out of her willing body. Then his grip grew harder, fingers digging in as he thrust one last time. He orgasmed inside her, crying out as his hot come shot into her body and filled her, just as Jasper's had done.

He let his forehead fall against hers. "Ai, baby, that felt fantastic. I love you so much."

"I love you, too." She knew she did. No matter how short the time together, she knew from the moment she revealed her secret and they admitted theirs, then followed by the night in the barn, that they were special. Loving and strong and decent men. And all hers, they wanted only her and each other.

After a few minutes they untangled themselves and the men took turns carefully lathering her body, making sure every intimate nook

and cranny was well-washed. Only when she shivered and her skin started pruning did they all finally get out.

She didn't bother putting her clothes on, just wrapped her towel around herself and let Goyo carry her back to the house so her feet didn't get dirty. The men only pulled on their trousers and boots. Jasper carried her clothes for her.

Goyo set her on her feet at her bedroom door after giving her one last kiss. "Go get ready, baby," he said. "We'll be waiting."

She moved as if in a dream, enjoying the blissful feel of love. This felt the way that Momma and Daddy had looked at each other before he died, this fluffy summer cloud feeling, like nothing could ever go wrong with the world.

Her men.

When she finished dressing, it surprised her to see them both stand up when she walked into the front room. Her dress wasn't the fanciest in the world, but it wasn't a rag, either. She'd wanted to keep something she could look respectable in and have a chance to use if she needed. The bonnet did match the dress. As an added bonus, it helped conceal how short her hair was.

Jasper and Goyo had both put on their Sunday best, trousers and clean, starched white shirts and jackets.

Her heart fluttered. They both looked so handsome.

She noticed Goyo had put her wedding ring on his pinky finger. "So I don't lose it," he explained when he noticed her look. "I'm his best man. I have to hand it to him."

She smiled and adjusted his collar for him. "You're my best man, too." She slipped Jasper's ring off her thumb, where she'd put it to keep it safe, and it fit on his index finger. "There." She looked into his eyes. "You sure you don't mind me marrying him instead of you?"

He pulled her tight and laid another kiss on her that would have burned her boots right off her had she been wearing boots. "You're already married to me, *mami*," he said. "We said our vows. And now it's the three of us. It'll always be the three of us. Remember? A little

slice of Heaven, together.”

Jasper stepped close and put an arm around each of their shoulders. “Together.”

Chapter Seven

Goyo threw a clean blanket into the back of the wagon for him to sit on so he didn't get his clothes dirty. There wasn't enough room on the seat for all three of them, and he refused to let Callie sit in back even though she'd offered.

"It wouldn't look right," he insisted.

On the way to town she sat snuggled close to Jasper despite the heat. Her heart felt lighter than it had since her momma died. Heavens, it felt lighter than before her daddy died. Life was still full of hard, honest work, but now she had two loving men at her side. She didn't have to live in fear anymore.

"People are gonna ask me about my past, where I came from," she said. "What do we tell them?"

Goyo tapped her shoulder and she turned to look at him. "Keep your voice soft," he said, "and don't twang. Tell them you're from Virginia."

"Powhatan," Jasper softly added.

"Why?"

He finally looked at her. "It's near where I came from. Make it easier for people to understand why I decided to marry you so quick."

"But," she reminded him, "'Charlie' showed up looking for a job."

He shrugged. "Coincidence."

A chill blew across her heart. "I hope Bart doesn't head down this way."

"You think he'll still be after you?"

She nodded. "You don't know how vindictive that man is. He's

flat-out mean and vicious.” She shivered despite the heat. “If I hadn’t busted that pitcher across his head, he would’ve...” She didn’t want to finish the sentence and think the thought.

Jasper’s arm tightened around her. He leaned in and kissed her. “That son of a bitch shows up here, darlin’, we’ll take care of him.”

“Yeah,” Goyo joked. “Then maybe you can get your farm back if he hasn’t sold it yet.”

“At this point I don’t want it back. I just want to be here with you two.” After thinking on it for a moment, she added, “I guess in a way he did me a favor. I never would’ve met you two if it hadn’t been for him. I’d have my farm, but I’d be alone and miserable.”

“You’ll never be alone again,” Goyo promised. “Not with the two of us around.”

* * * *

Of course, she quickly discovered she wouldn’t have many friends amongst Leda and Bessie’s clique. When they arrived at the social, the six girls quickly repositioned themselves at the far end of the meeting hall room where the social was being held and shot Callie dirty looks even as others moved in to be introduced to Jasper’s fiancée.

Callie felt bad that she wasn’t able to stand there with Goyo, too, but he took up a lively conversation with a few other men on the far side of the room.

Jasper soon caught the circuit rider’s attention, a short, chubby man with a round face and easy smile. Reverend Dixon was more than happy to perform the quick nuptials, and they found the Justice of the Peace to sign off on the marriage certificate.

With her stomach a flurry of nerves, the small group of them, Goyo in tow, assembled outside in the waning light to have the ceremony. And even as Jasper held her hand and she repeated the vows the preacher recited, she thought about being nestled in Goyo’s

lap and saying them to him first.

When Jasper slipped the ring onto her hand after Goyo handed it to him, she glanced over Jasper's shoulder and didn't miss Goyo's playful wink. Forcing back her giggle, she managed to keep her wits about her even as he handed her the ring to slip on Jasper's finger.

"I now pronounce you man and wife," Reverend Dixon announced. "You may kiss your bride."

Jasper's smile warmed her heart along with deeper, more intimate places. He swept her into his arms and kissed her, long and hard, hinting at the loving she would receive from them both later.

Goyo stepped in to quickly hug him, then give her a longer hug. "Don't forget, sweetheart," he whispered in her ear. "You were mine first."

"Don't worry, I'm sure you'll remind me." He stepped back and she knew his grin matched the one on her face.

And as she heard applause she realized a few dozen of Sarasota's citizens had gathered out front to watch the proceedings. That's when she blushed, embarrassed, as people she didn't know offered her and Jasper their congratulations and once again pushed Goyo to the side.

It didn't feel real in a way, even as she stood dutifully at Jasper's side, her arm hooked through his, and listened to him talk. It wasn't hard to play the shy new bride with all these strangers around. All she wanted to do was leave so she could go home with her men.

At least they weren't the only marriage that night. Two other couples had the circuit rider marry them, too, finally taking the brunt of the attention off of them. The social was in full swing when a tall, severe-looking man walked up. He offered his hand to Jasper and nodded to Callie. He looked a little less stern when he smiled.

"Congratulations, Jasper. I heard you bought Jack Porter's land."

"Thanks, Ron. Callie, this is Ron Palmer."

Ah, *Leda's father*. "Pleased to meet you," she softly said. She'd tried to limit how much she spoke during the social.

The man leaned in closer to Jasper. "I'm glad you didn't bring

Callie's brother tonight. That daughter of mine's been chewing my ear about how rude he acted." He winked. "Between you and me, I can understand why a brother would want to chase off anyone he considered competition for his sister's beau."

Callie blushed and pressed herself tighter against Jasper's side. Jasper's rumbling laugh rolled through her. "Well, I do apologize if your daughter's feelings were hurt, but I have to admit Callie and I had an immediate attraction. Neither of us expected it." He gently squeezed her arm. "After I lost my first wife, I never imagined I could fall in love again, and then all of a sudden there she was. Like a gift from God."

She looked up into his face and read the emotions in his eyes. That wasn't just a line he told for Palmer's benefit, he felt it through his very core. Her heart fluttered again, wishing she could throw her arms around him and kiss him good and hard except she didn't think that would be a proper thing to do at a church social.

The men talked for a few more minutes. Callie looked around and spotted Goyo on the other side of the room, near the refreshment table. Bessie had cornered him.

Callie fought her wave of jealousy. She couldn't do a darn thing about it with all those people around, it would look totally improper.

As she watched, an older man walked over, Bessie's father if she had to guess, and started talking with Goyo. The older man's posture seemed to relax a few moments later when Goyo held up his left hand, as if displaying the ring. Then he looked upward and genuflected before bowing his head, his hand pressed to his heart.

She stifled another giggle. Somehow, from Bessie's sudden, forlorn look, she imagined Goyo had just told a story that would get him off the hook with any of Sarasota's hopeful single women.

After a few more minutes of talking, Goyo bid his leave and made his way over to Jasper and Callie.

Ron Palmer shook hands with him. "You know," he said to Jasper, "you, Gregorio, and I haven't had much chance to socialize

since you two arrived in town. How did you two meet, anyway?"

"Allow me," Goyo immediately chimed in. Callie knew they were in for a whopper from the playful twinkle in Goyo's eyes. "I was living in St. Augustine, where I grew up. One day I was on my way to go eat dinner, I lived in town, and this horse pulling a wagon spooked. I was walking toward Jasper, and he didn't see it running up behind him. I grabbed him and pulled him out of the way. Well, he wanted to buy me dinner to thank me, and we got to talking. I found out he'd just arrived in town, we were both widowers, and he needed a place to stay. We had a lot in common, understood each other's loss." He put his hand over his heart again and looked down briefly. "Pretty soon we decided to pool our money and go partners in a ranch. And here we are. *Compadres*."

Jasper looked like he wanted to burst out laughing almost as much as Callie did. He arched an eyebrow at Goyo. "*Compadres*," he agreed before he looked back to Palmer.

"Ah, that makes sense. I'm sorry about your wife, Gregorio. How did she die?"

Goyo repeated the performance he'd apparently given Bessie's father, genuflecting and then dramatically looking up to Heaven with his hand over his heart. Callie would have believed him if she didn't know it was pure fantasy. "Lost at sea." He bowed his head for a moment before looking at Palmer. "I shall never marry again. It is my vow to God, made before my priest at her funeral."

Callie chewed on the inside of her lip to keep from laughing. She knew darn well the story would be all over Sarasota by the next evening, a ready-made explanation that would discourage all but the most stalwart of female pursuers.

When Palmer started to ask Jasper about his first wife, Callie fanned herself and hoped she looked faint. "Jasper, I'm so sorry," she whispered just loud enough for Palmer to hear and trying to sound weak, "but this heat is making me feel rather poorly."

Both men immediately seized upon the fib. "Jaz, perhaps you

should take her home,” Goyo suggested. “I don’t mind leaving early.” He looked at Palmer. “She’s not used to our weather down here yet. Virginia’s not usually this hot and muggy.”

He nodded. “I totally understand. I hope you feel better soon, Mrs. Collins.”

She nearly did swoon at that, and felt extremely glad when a few minutes later they were back in the wagon and heading for home.

When they were safely down the road, Jasper turned and looked at Goyo with a playful grin. “I’m guessing Bessie won’t be paying us anymore unexpected social calls?”

Goyo laughed and shook his head. “Nope.” He reached over the wagon seat and patted Callie on the thigh. “And I even managed to get out of there without having to dance a single time.” His touch turned more seductive. “With any luck, we won’t have to face any questions in the future, Mrs. Collins.”

She leaned back and kissed him. “I hope not.”

* * * *

When they reached the house Jasper shooed them inside. “I’ll take care of the team,” he offered after giving them both a kiss. “You two go get started with our wedding night.”

Callie squealed as Goyo scooped her into his arms. “Don’t take too long,” he said. “I don’t want you to miss the fun.”

Inside, he dropped her onto their bed before lighting an oil lamp. In the dim, flickering light, his blue eyes looked dark with passion as he removed his jacket and shrugged off his suspenders. He unbuttoned his shirt. “I shall enjoy ravishing you all night long, Mrs. Collins,” he softly teased.

“Don’t call me that,” she said. “Please.”

He frowned before moving to sit next to her on the bed. “Why not?”

She took his left hand in hers and kissed it, then pressed it to her

chest. "I belong to both of you."

He lifted an eyebrow at her. "Well, I can't very damn well go around calling you Mrs. Valdes, can I?"

"Just call me yours."

He leaned in and kissed her. "You are mine. Just like he's mine. We'll love you something fierce. I promise, Callie. Forever."

"I'll hold you to it, Gregorio Valdes." She stroked his cheek, fires lighting inside of her as she recalled their time in the spring. "Now are you going to sit there, or are you going to get out of those clothes and help me out of mine?"

He smiled and sprang to his feet, quickly shedding the rest of his clothes. His cock, already thick and dark and rigid with his desire, immediately drew her eyes. He stood next to the bed, but before he could climb in again she leaned over and stroked him with her hand.

He sucked in a breath. "Ai, baby, you do that, I won't last long."

"I want to taste you." He smelled good, still slightly of soap from their earlier bath and musky desire as she drew close and kissed the end of his cock.

It jerked at her touch. His hands moved to her shoulders. "Don't tease me, Callie. Please, baby, I need you."

Her lips gingerly closed around the large head, her tongue carefully exploring the hot, smooth surface. He sucked in another breath. "That's it, baby. That's perfect." From the way his body trembled, she knew he desperately struggled to hold back.

Braver, she placed her hands on his hips and held on as she took him deeper into her mouth. She tasted him, salty and tangy and spicy on her tongue and wondered if Jasper would taste the same.

He loosened her bonnet and removed it. His hands smoothed through her hair. "I can't wait for you to grow your hair long, baby. I want to wrap it around my fingers while you do this to me. I want to feel it drape over my skin while you do this to me."

Her heart raced at his words, his passionate tone. His voice deepened with his desire. "Just remember, you belong to me as much

as you belong to him. Remember who you said your vows to first.”

She closed her eyes and wanted to melt into him, be a part of him.

His hips started rocking, each thrust pushing him a little deeper into her mouth. “*Ai, mami*, I can’t hold it back.” His large hands gently cradled her head. “I’m gonna come.”

With that warning, she felt his cock harden even more, pulsing between her lips as it erupted. Thick, hot ropes of come splashed across her tongue. He moaned as she licked and swallowed until he finally laughed and withdrew. “All right, you’re gonna kill me, you keep that up.” He crawled into bed with her and pulled her into his arms. “Sweetness, you are so good.”

“I did it right? I’ve never done that before.”

He laughed, loud and long. “Did you do it right?” He laughed even more. “Baby, that was so good, Jaz couldn’t have done it better.”

She felt oddly pleased with herself. “Really?”

He kissed her. “Really. Now let’s get you out of that dress.” It didn’t take but a minute. Then he moved to kneel between her legs. “You’re so beautiful,” he said in an awed tone. “I could spend all night looking at you.”

Her heart raced as he leaned forward and kissed her tummy. “One day you’ll have our child and be even more beautiful, *mami*.” He kissed a slow, hot trail lower, across her belly until his hands pushed her legs further apart. “Open up for me, let me get you nice and hot.”

His hair had come loose and it fell forward, softly brushing against her thighs. When his tongue stroked her clit, she let out a moan. If she’d thought their fingers had felt good earlier, this was beyond comparison. Her hands tightly fisted in the sheets as she writhed beneath him. She lost track of time as his tongue snaked in and out of her pussy, along her slick folds, around her clit, bringing her close to sweet release without letting her over the top. She was about to start begging when she heard the front door open and shut, then the sound of Jasper’s boots walking down the hall.

At the sound of his deep, amused chuckle, she forced her eyes

open. He stood in the doorway, a smile on his face, his arms crossed. "Looks like Goyo's having fun, sweetheart." He quickly stripped and joined them in the bed.

Goyo lifted his head, prompting a disappointed moan from her. "I wanted to wait until you got here, *papi*, so you could hear her scream her head off."

Jasper leaned in and kissed her. "I can't wait to watch you fuck her again."

"You'll have to. She already sucked me dry."

Another long, sweet rumble of laughter. "I can't wait to feel that myself!" He lowered his lips to her right breast and sucked her nipple into his mouth, teasing it with his tongue until she felt every pull of his lips all the way through her body, joining with the feel of Goyo's mouth on her pussy. He used his hand to similarly torment her other nipple until she was helplessly squirming on the bed under their touch.

"Please!" she gasped. "Please do it!"

Goyo lifted his head again. "Do what, *mami*?" he asked. "Tell us what you want."

"Please make me come!"

"That's my girl." This time when he licked her pussy he didn't stop, concentrating on her clit and holding on to her thighs until she screamed from the sweet explosions threatening to rend her very soul. When he finally relented, she lay trembling on the bed.

Goyo sat up, a pleased smile on his face. "Top that, *papi*."

Jasper sat up, laughing, and kissed him. Callie looked on in wonder, feeling stirrings deep within her at the sight of the two men tenderly embracing. Jasper closed his eyes and touched his forehead to Goyo's. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you, too. Time for me to watch you have some fun." He changed positions with Jasper, laying down beside her and cuddling her close. He tucked her head against his shoulder, one arm around her. "Now, baby, I get to watch him make sweet love to you."

She looked up into Goyo's eyes as his other hand tenderly stroked her cheek before it slowly drew a trail down her neck to her left breast. With one finger he circled her nipple, making it peak, begging for his lips to suck on it.

Between her legs, Jasper lowered his head to her sex and flicked his tongue along her clit. She didn't think she'd be able to get over again that soon, but it didn't stop Jasper from trying. He soon had her squirming and whining for him to fuck her.

He sat up and stroked his cock, which already rigidly stood at attention. "You want this, sweetheart? Is that what you're saying?"

Goyo chuckled. "Don't torture her. That's mean."

He covered her body with his and slowly pressed the head of his cock against her drenched opening. "We're going to love you for the rest of our lives, baby," he promised. He kissed her chin, the hollow of her throat, the tip of her nose, before he lowered his lips to hers and gently brushed them across her parted mouth. "We're going to show you how hard two men can love a women, not just in bed, either." He kissed her again as he slowly pressed forward, his cock spreading her tight passage open as he continued until he buried his member all the way to the root.

Jasper adjusted his position, putting his weight on his elbows so he didn't squish her. "You sure you can handle two hot and horny men?"

She draped her arms around his neck. "I can handle you two." She wiggled her hips against him and enjoyed the feeling of his shaft stroking her throbbing clit.

Goyo chuckled. "I know what I'd love to do." He kissed her shoulder. "I'd love to feel you taking both our cocks."

Her heart bolted like a runaway horse. "What?"

Jasper's lips quirked in a smile. "Oh, hell, that would be sexy." Before she could ask what they meant, Jasper had rolled over with her on top of him and Goyo momentarily disappeared from the bed. When Goyo returned, Jasper's hands slipped down her back to her

ass.

“We’re going to make you well and truly ours,” Jasper said as he kissed her. She wanted to again ask what they meant but his tongue distracted her and chased all coherent thought from her brain. Jasper spread her cheeks, and that’s when she felt Goyo’s finger gently probing her virgin entrance.

When she tried to protest, the words were cut off by her moan as one of Goyo’s fingers slipped inside her puckered hole. She wiggled her hips against Jasper, his cock deeply embedded in her pussy.

“That feels good, doesn’t it, *mami*?” Goyo asked. She moaned again when she felt his lips feather down her spine even as his finger slowly pumped into her. “Rock your hips, baby. Enjoy it.”

As wicked as it was, she did enjoy it. She closed her eyes and rested her head on Jasper’s chest as she let the men possess her body. Just when she thought she would lose her mind from need, Goyo added a second finger to her dark hole, and she let out another moan.

After a few minutes of this, he withdrew his fingers, then added more lotion before working three into her, a slight burn as he stretched her that turned her insides into melted butter as she slid her body along Jasper’s rigid cock.

“All right,” Goyo hoarsely said after a few minutes of that. “I can’t wait any longer. I need to be inside you.”

She bit her lower lip as Jasper spread his legs, spreading hers even further in the process, and Goyo knelt between them. Then the feel of his hard cock pressed against her rim and she let out a long, low moan as he slowly and carefully thrust his cock deep inside her.

When she thought she couldn’t take it anymore, he kept persisting, until he’d sank his entire length inside her virgin ass.

“Oh, baby!” he gasped. “You’re so tight!” He waited for a moment, holding back until she was used to the feel of him there before he started moving.

That’s when it got really good. Every stroke seemed to drive Jasper’s cock tightly against a sweet spot inside her, drawing moans

from him and her both. And when Jasper started rocking his hips beneath her, she tried to thrust with them and finally gave up, letting go as passion turned her muscles limp.

Jasper kissed her, long and hard. "You're ours, always, Callie. We're never letting you go." She forced her eyes open and saw the passion and pain mingled in his sweet brown eyes.

Pleasure built inside her, feeling different than the intensity of their mouths on her, from the inside out, winding tighter with every stroke of their cocks inside her, until it finally burst, shattering her into a million fragments as a sweet explosion turned her inside out. "I'm there!" she cried out.

The men thrust hard and fast, trying to catch up, until both of them exploded inside her, and they all collapsed in a tangle of limbs.

Goyo was slow to move. "I'm worn out," he mumbled against her back. "I'm dead. You killed me."

"We didn't kill you," Jasper said from the bottom of the pile. "Now get off me, or you will kill me. I'm getting squished."

He laughed as he sat up and gently withdrew his softening cock from her bottom. She felt him get up but was too tired to open her eyes and see where he went. She heard water pour from the pitcher, then heard him set it down again before she felt him wiping her down.

When he climbed back into bed, Jasper rolled them onto their sides with her in the middle. "I think we can sleep a little late tomorrow morning," he mumbled, already falling asleep. He did manage to kiss her. "Love you, baby."

She felt her heart swell nearly to bursting. "Love you, too, Jasper."

Goyo kissed the back of her neck. "Love you, *mami*."

Callie chuckled and squeezed his hand, which he'd slipped around her waist. "Love you, too, Goyo."

As Callie fell asleep, she knew life could never get more perfect than this night.

Chapter Eight

Despite Jasper's declaration that they could sleep late, Callie awoke before dawn the next morning to find herself pleasantly sore and firmly sandwiched between her men. She lay spooned against Goyo, his arm draped over her and Jasper, who lay in front of her with his arm draped over both her and Goyo.

The musky scent of their passion lingered over them. In the cool morning air that would soon heat to a thick, warm soup, their bodies felt comfortably warm against hers.

No cold nights with them to warm me.

She suppressed a happy giggle. The thought that she should feel ashamed for the wicked things they did came to mind, but she kicked that out of her brain. She loved them, they loved her. She was "properly married," and who cared what anyone thought? It would be far less shameful for people to think her a hussy than for people to look down on her men for loving each other. She was more than willing to bear that burden for them if it ever came to pass.

Then Goyo made the mistake of rolling over in his sleep. He tumbled off the bed and landed on the floor with a startled cry, awaking Jasper.

He sat up with a start. "What happened?"

"Nothing, *papi*," Goyo moaned from where he lay on the floor. "Just me. We need a bigger bed." He sat up and swept his hair back from his face. "Good morning, sweetheart."

"Do you mean me or her," Jasper teased.

Goyo rolled his eyes as he climbed back into bed. He kissed her, then him. "Both of you. Now that I'm awake, I'll get the coffee

started.” He got back out of bed and pulled on a pair of trousers and work boots before heading to the kitchen.

Jasper propped himself up on one arm and stared down at her. “Good morning, Mrs. Collins.” He laid his palm over her tummy. “You realize we might be a family of four in a year or less at this rate?”

She smiled as she laced her fingers through his. “I don’t mind if you two don’t.”

He stood, helping her from the bed. She opted to wash up in the back room. Already anticipating it, Goyo had started a pot of water boiling for her. By the time the men had breakfast ready, she’d dressed in trousers and boots, ready for work.

Goyo pulled her to him and kissed her. “We need to take you to town and buy you some dresses.”

“I don’t need to dress fancy. We can buy some yardage and I can make some.”

His hands settled on her hips. “We want to give you the best.”

Jasper agreed, stepping behind her. “Only the best for you.”

“You two aren’t gonna start treating me like some delicate thing now, are you? I’m the same woman I was yesterday.”

Goyo smiled. “But you’re officially our woman, and if we want to spoil you, we will.”

* * * *

They had to ride out to check the herd that morning. In another week they would move them to the lower pasture to graze. By next spring, Jasper and Goyo anticipated at least thirty calves would be born, adding to their numbers.

When they could, they rode three abreast, the men flanking her. “Are you in the mood for a story?” Jasper asked.

From the sad tone of his voice, she suspected he was about to reveal his past.

“If you’re ready to tell it.”

They reached the herd, but Jasper didn’t dismount. He leaned back in his saddle, studying the cattle as they grazed on prairie grass. “Mary and I fell in love young, but I didn’t have anything. I didn’t want to marry her until I knew I could take care of her properly. I worked long and hard. When I was twenty I had enough saved to buy us a small farm. Then I asked her to marry me.

“She was nineteen, and her daddy didn’t want her marrying me. He wanted her to marry some guy from Richmond that she’d never even met before. None of us understood why, he just kept insisting that’s what she would do.”

He chewed on his lip for a moment, but Goyo and Callie didn’t interrupt him. Eventually, he continued. “Finally, Mary’s momma, she helped Mary sneak out one night, and we met up with the preacher in Powhatan. She was a real good woman, smart woman, too. She told me, ‘Jasper, I don’t know what’s going through that fool man’s head, but any mother would be happy to have you as a son-in-law.’ When Mary’s father found out what happened the next morning, he was furious. But by that time we were already back at my farm and properly married.” He sadly smiled. “And had us one right proper wedding night.”

He paused again but didn’t look at them. “He came by a few days later and tried to force her to come back home with him, and she flat-out refused. I’ll never forget the fire in her eyes as she stood her ground and ordered him off our land. Our son, Joshua, was born a little over nine months after we got married. Mary was such a good mother. Her momma would come over during the day when her father was working so she could see the baby. Then we had Sarah about a year later.”

His voice hitched as his eyes misted. “We had several good years together, even though we didn’t have much to do with her father. One day I was out, and this man stopped by our house looking for me. Told Mary he needed to talk to me but didn’t say about what. She

didn't like the looks of him and ordered him off our land. When he refused, she showed him the business end of a rifle. Turns out her father owed him a lot of money. Gambling debts. Her father had a love of cards no one knew about, and he had promised this guy he could marry her to clear his debts. He was the one her father had wanted her to marry."

One of Jasper's hands rested on the saddle horn and tightly gripped it, his knuckles turning white. "He demanded money, or he said he'd get his revenge. He killed her father three days later, then he showed up at our place again. I had been over at the neighbor's with the sheriff and a posse, organizing a search party for the bastard. We stopped by my place, and the son of a bitch had barricaded them inside and lit fires at the doors and windows."

His gaze dropped to the ground as his voice grew hoarse. "We tried to get in to them. They were in there screaming and I burned my hands trying to rescue them." He broke down sobbing. "They finally had to pull me back away from the flames. Held me down as my family burned to death, and we couldn't do nothing to save them."

He took a moment to regain his composure, wiping the tears from his face. "I knew what that bastard looked like. The sheriff deputized me, and I went after that son of a bitch. I've never been a violent man, but when I tracked him down I ordered him to turn around, and I made him drop to his knees and beg for his life the way they begged for theirs. I tortured him for a while before I put the end of my gun in his mouth and blew the back of his head out."

Silence settled over them, nothing but the sound of the morning breeze rustling the pine trees and the cattle grazing. "I didn't have the heart to rebuild. I sold my farm and took that money and the bounty I earned from tracking him down and left Virginia for good. I ended up in St. Augustine and decided that was as good a place as any to die. So I started getting drunk." He looked up, his eyes red from crying, and met Goyo's gaze.

"That's when we met," Goyo softly said, picking up the thread of

the narrative. “I was in the saloon having a drink, and he came in and started drinking like a man trying to die. I started talking to him a little, but I could tell he had other things on his mind. So I watched him. When he left, I followed him. He walked behind the building and pulled out his gun. When he dropped to his knees, I realized what he planned to do and grabbed the gun from him before he could shoot himself. I had to hit him, knock him out. He’d got so drunk, he passed right out. I worried I’d killed him at first. I have to admit that’s another reason I took him back to my room, to make sure he wasn’t dead.”

He laughed. “Although if I had killed him, I’m not sure what I would’ve done with him then.” He pushed his hat back and winked at her. “He was just flat-out too handsome to let him go ruining his face with a bullet. I carried him back to my room and sat with him until he woke up and he told me what happened.”

“Why?” she asked. “Not that I’m complaining, but if he was a perfect stranger, what drew you to him? Why’d you follow him?”

His face reddened, and she knew it wasn’t from the sun. His gaze dropped to the ground, and he looked bashful. “I noticed him when he first walked in because I liked the way he looked. It’s not always easy to find a man who wants you back, and I didn’t even know if he would. So I thought maybe if he got drunk I might be able to talk him into going home with me. I just never thought it’d be like that.”

She looked at Jasper. “But you were married before.”

He nodded. “I didn’t want to stop getting drunk at first. It took Goyo a while to talk me out of wanting to kill myself. He got me a job where he worked so he could keep an eye on me. And by the time I quit drinking and sobered up a few weeks later, I realized I didn’t want to be with another woman. If my soul was damned for taking another life, what difference did it make if I loved a man or not? He was the only thing that made my soul quit hurting. I didn’t want to let him go, no matter what.”

She looked at him in shock. “You can’t honestly think you did

anything wrong by killing that man?"

He shrugged. "I'm not proud of what I did. He wasn't exactly a man before I killed him. Not after I cut his balls and dick off."

She felt a little sick. She couldn't imagine her sweet and gentle Jasper doing anything like that. She looked at Goyo, who sadly nodded.

"I know you don't know much about Florida," he continued, "but my mother came here from Germany when she was a teenager. Her family died on the voyage over. She was the only one from her family who made it off the boat alive. She married an older man who was a Seminole Indian, but he died when she was pregnant with me. She went to work for the local priest, and her best friend, my *abuela*, she was a Cuban Negress. She took me in after my mother died giving birth to me. *Abuela* raised me as half-Cuban, not half-Seminole. She told me the truth about my father before she died when I was ten, then I fought my way through the orphanage until I was old enough to get out on my own."

Goyo swung off his horse and walked over to her. He looked up into her face and she read the caution guarding his emotions. "You sorry you hooked up with us now?" Jasper dismounted, but didn't walk over to her.

She jumped off her horse and threw her arms around Goyo and kissed him. "No, I'm not sorry. I love both of you." She turned to where Jasper still stood apart from them. She handed her reins to Goyo and walked over to Jasper, where she grabbed his chin and forced him to look at her. "You're a good man," she insisted. "You've got a good heart. I'm proud to be your wife."

Callie couldn't miss the pain in his eyes. "I'd understand if you didn't want to be with us now," he softly said.

"Are you even listening to me, Jasper Collins?" She wouldn't let go of his chin. "You are stuck with me till death do us part. I meant my vows. Did you mean yours?"

He looked shocked. "Of course I did!"

“Do you love me?”

“I wouldn’t have married you if I didn’t.”

Goyo laughed. “Thank God! I finally have someone to help me beat sense into that thick brain of yours, Jaz,” he teased. “Someone who will help me convince you you’re not a bad man.”

Callie let go of Jasper’s chin and poked him in the chest. “And I don’t care what any preacher man says, the way you two love each other, that can’t be wrong. We can all be damned together if that’s the case, because I won’t give up either of you, and I don’t want you to stop loving each other.”

She slipped her arms around him and kissed him again until he finally responded. “Like you told me,” she said when he lifted his lips from hers, “we’ll just carve out our own little slice of Heaven right here, the three of us together.”

* * * *

After a long, hot day of chores, it felt good to return to the spring to clean up. She left her clothes on the bank and slipped into the clear spring water. Jasper and Goyo joined her and caught her in the middle of the spring where it was deeper than she could stand.

“We’ve got you trapped, *mami*,” Goyo teased as his arms snaked around her waist. “You got nowhere to go.”

She felt his hard cock pressing against the seam of her ass. She wanted to do that again, have both of them take her, just not right that moment. Her thighs and other parts still felt comfortably sore from the evening before, combined with a day of being on horseback. “Take it easy on me this evening, boys,” she warned. “You’ll plumb wear me out.”

Jasper grinned. “We a little too much for you?”

“Nothing I can’t get used to.” She leaned back in the water, letting Goyo support her while Jasper moved between her legs.

The men drifted back into the shallows where they could stand.

Jasper bent his head to her left breast and grazed her nipple, which had already hardened in the cool water, with his teeth.

Callie moaned. "Don't stop," she whispered as her fingers tangled in his shaggy hair.

"He's not gonna stop," Goyo said, sounding amused. "And neither will I when I get my chance."

Jasper alternated between her breasts, back and forth until every touch had her aching and burning for more.

"Please!" she begged. "Don't tease me!"

He took her from Goyo, his hands reaching around to cup her breasts, plucking at her nipples. "You first," he said, his voice husky. "It's only fair."

"Ah, *papi*, you take good care of me." He leaned in and kissed her, his hunger reaching through her body and pulling more pleasant aches from inside her until she thought her body would split at the seams. Just when she thought she couldn't take it anymore, he lined his stiff cock up with her pussy and plunged hard and deep inside her.

Callie's head lolled against Jasper's shoulder as she thrust her hips in time with Goyo's strokes. "Yes!" she cried, aching, needing him, her body racing toward climax as his cock perfectly slid along her clit with every stroke.

"Come for me, baby. Squeeze my cock."

Her release surged through her as her muscles clamped down on him and she cried out. "Yes! God, yes!"

Jasper held her tightly pressed against him as her body shuddered in his arms. "Fuck her hard, man. Let me hear you come."

Goyo's eyes dropped closed as he fucked her, the heat of his body reaching her even through the cool spring water, until she felt him throb inside her as his seed flooded her body. "Ai! Oh, fuck yes!"

Goyo's head ended up resting on Jasper's other shoulder as his breath brushed over her shoulder. They stood there for a moment, still and recovering, as silence descended around them. Goyo nipped her shoulder.

“You feel so good, baby,” he moaned. “I can’t hold back when I take you.”

“My turn,” Jasper said, pulling her away from him and moving to the edge of the spring. He lay back against the sand and pulled her onto his hips, sinking his cock inside her. “Ride my cock, baby. I want to watch you when you come.”

She already felt wrung out. “I don’t know if I can,” she weakly protested.

His hands moved to her breasts, his thumbs rubbing her sensitive nipples. “Try.”

Goyo knelt behind her and reached around her hip, his fingers finding her clit. “I’ll help you, baby.” He nuzzled the sensitive spot behind her ear. “I’ll help you real good.”

She relaxed against him even as she rolled her hips, taking Jasper’s cock deep within her. Sure enough, Goyo’s talented fingers soon had her squirming and growing close to release.

“Fuck her good, *papi*,” Goyo warned. “She’s almost there.”

Jasper’s hands dropped to her hips. His fingers dug in as he thrust hard and fast into her. Goyo’s fingers worked her clit faster until her body gave in and climaxed, shattering apart in that sweet way she was quickly coming to crave with them. Her back arched as her pussy throbbed around Jasper’s stiff cock.

“Oh, man!” Jasper gasped, his own orgasm soon following. “Take me, baby!”

With one last thrust he came, adding his seed to Goyo’s. Exhausted, she collapsed on top of him while Goyo sat back on his heels and chuckled.

“I have a feeling she’s gonna need a nap before tonight.”

Without opening her eyes, she shook her head. “I need more than a nap. I could go to sleep right now and sleep all night.”

Jasper’s fingers gently brushed through her hair. “How we gonna play with you if you’re asleep, baby?” he teased.

She poked him in the ribs. “You’re not. You’re gonna let me sleep

or I'll get really grouchy."

Both men laughed. "Well, it didn't take her long to set us straight about who's boss around here, did it, *papi*?" Goyo said.

"I don't want it any other way," Jasper assured him.

Chapter Nine

Three weeks after they married, the bank repossessed the ranch on the other side of them. Jasper and Goyo returned from a supply trip to Sarasota talking about it. As she dished out their dinner, she listened to their conversation while they tried to figure a way to purchase it.

Goyo shook his head and leaned back in his chair after the men had tossed several ideas back and forth. “No, *papi*. I don’t see how we can do it. It would mean spending all our savings. Sure we can afford it, but what happens if we need money and it’s all tied up in land? We wouldn’t be getting any cattle from that deal.”

She sat across from Jasper. “How much do you need?”

“The bank wants two hundred dollars for it,” Jasper said, “free and clear, no mortgage. That pays off the back taxes and the existing mortgage. It’s just land, no cattle, and barely a house. It’s just a shack. Couldn’t even rent it out for anything. Not much of a barn, either.”

She thought about the jewelry hidden in the cloth belt. Goyo had built a hiding place into the wardrobe for her to store it.

“We could sell my jewelry,” she suggested.

Jasper shook his head. “No, sweetie. I appreciate it, but I’m not asking you to do that. Besides, I don’t want that son of a bitch to come looking for you if he finds it.”

“I wouldn’t have to sell all of it, just some of it. And I have fifteen dollars still that I took from him.”

Goyo reached for her hand and kissed it. “No, *mami*. *Papi’s* right. Besides, if we can’t afford it now, it’s best we let it be. We’re doing well as it is.” She loved how Goyo called them that all the time now. *Mami* and *papi*.

“Don’t I get a say? I thought we were all equals in this. That’s what y’all told me.”

The men exchanged a glance. “Sweetheart, I don’t feel right making you sell your jewelry,” Jasper protested. “We can take care of our wife.”

“I know you can. But it doesn’t hurt to see how much it’d fetch us, right?”

“She’s not giving up,” Goyo said.

“No, I’m not giving up. We can go to Tampa. Surely they’d have someplace there that would buy it for a fair price. I didn’t spend much time there, but it was a fairly large town.”

A week later, Callie and Jasper took a stage to Tampa. They paid a neighbor boy to come over and help Goyo with chores while they were gone. “Charlie” had to go take care of family business, or so they explained to everyone so that his absence wouldn’t look suspicious.

After stepping from the stage at the Tampa depot, they received directions and got a hotel room where they freshened up before dinner. Sarasota was a tiny town compared to Tampa. While she finished her ablutions, Jasper went downstairs and talked to the desk clerk for a few minutes. When he returned, he carried a piece of paper.

“There’s a jeweler just two blocks away,” he said. “The clerk said he’s a good man, honest and fair.” He looked into her eyes. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

“It’d be awful foolish to come all this way and not do it, don’t you think?”

“Callie, that’s not what I meant.”

She grasped his hands in hers. “I know what you meant,” she softly assured him. “No, I haven’t changed my mind. What on earth will I do with some of that stuff? My momma never wore most of it, and what I feel most strongly about, her wedding rings, we’ve put them to good use.” She slipped her arms around his waist and enjoyed

the feel of being in his embrace. "I think it's a good investment. We'll only sell what we need to sell. That way if we ever have a problem later, we can sell more if we have to. A little nest egg in case of emergencies."

He pressed his face into her hair. "How'd we get so lucky?" he murmured. "How'd we ever find a woman like you, so loving and understanding and with a heart as big as the Gulf of Mexico?"

"I blew in on a storm," she joked.

After dinner, they returned to their room. She let Jasper coax her to bed, where she lay in his arms as her fingers brushed along his chest, toying with the curly hair that dusted his chest. The men were vastly different in temperament and body. Goyo had just the barest traces of hair on his chest, his smooth, firm skin always hot to the touch. Jasper's body, while strong and hard, always felt cooler to her, softer in some ways.

"You seem troubled, wife."

She rolled on top of him. "We're a body short in bed." She rested her chin on top of her hands and started to say something else when a long yawn escaped her. "Excuse me."

He chuckled. "I miss him, too. I suppose not many men wish there was a second man with them on their honeymoon." He brushed a stray hair from her forehead. It was already starting to grow out, although it would take another few months to reach her shoulders, at least.

"Honeymoon, hmm? I didn't think about it like that."

He pulled her against his side, nestling her in the crook of his arm. "Why don't we rest up tonight? Just go to sleep. That was a long ride today, and I for one am bushed."

She nodded and soon felt herself drifting off to sleep.

* * * *

Jasper studied her while she slept in his arms. Their beautiful

wife. He couldn't think of her in any other terms than that. She didn't—couldn't—belong only to him. It'd been years since he and Goyo had spent a night apart.

He didn't like it, not even with her cradled against him.

Goyo took away his nightmares. He always wrapped his strong arms around him and held him tightly pressed to his body, rocking him, soothing him back to sleep with softly sung Spanish lullabies and gently whispered words.

Although the nightmares didn't happen nearly as often as they once used to. Which was why he'd turned to drink in the first place, as a way to sink into blissfully dark oblivion without their screams chasing him through the night.

He nuzzled Callie's forehead with his lips. He did love her, despite how short a time they'd known her. He never expected to be with a woman again, thought his entire life would be spent sidestepping innuendo and rumors about him and Goyo.

And that Goyo loved her as much as he did, that had to be God's hand on their life, right? Not that he'd ever been a religious man, and Goyo only invoked the Pope when he needed to guilt him into not killing himself in the early days.

He tried closing his eyes, worried what would come to him in the night, afraid he'd wake her with his screams without Goyo's solid body there to anchor him to the present. But he soon found himself in their small room in the boarding house in St. Augustine. After Goyo had saved him, he'd had their room changed to one with two beds, but it didn't take long for Goyo to talk him into using only one of them.

The first time occurred when Goyo refused to let him get drunk one night and forced him to stay home. When he awoke screaming and crying from the dreams, there was Goyo, holding him, whispering to him, reassuring him until he cried himself back to sleep in his arms. Repeated every night until the dreams grew less and less frequent, and then came the night when he realized that firm length pressed against his ass was Goyo's excited cock.

And then he rolled over to face him and let Goyo suck his cock, sending him straight into a deep, dreamless sleep he didn't awaken from until the next morning.

Goyo's playful smile the next morning was the first thing to make him smile since Mary and the babies had died. "*Ai, papi*, good dreams?"

He'd nodded before he rolled on top of Goyo and kissed him, hard, wanting that brief bliss back. This time he got it as well as learned how to reciprocate, sucking Goyo's cock and realizing it felt right loving him like that. That next night after dinner, they'd walked down to the beach together to assure they were alone, and that's where they fucked for the first time, under a vast blanket of stars while a cool Atlantic breeze kissed their skins.

He wanted Goyo. Wanting it every night with him, that hard, passionate loving Goyo could give him so well, whether it was his hot mouth sucking his cock or fucking his ass, Jasper didn't care. All he cared about was the respite from his grief, until one day he woke up next to Goyo and stared down at his still-sleeping face and realized he loved Goyo as hard and deeply as he'd loved Mary, down through his very soul. How and when it had happened exactly, he couldn't tell. All he knew was no way in hell would he ever let go of Goyo.

* * * *

The next morning after breakfast, they found the store and talked with Mr. Jules Brenner about Callie's jewelry. Altogether, the pieces were worth over five hundred dollars. Jasper refused to let her sell more than what they needed, and after parting with three of the pieces, they ended up with one hundred and eighty dollars.

"I think my momma would definitely approve of this," Callie assured Jasper. "It's not like we're frittering it away on something foolish."

Mr. Brenner paid them out the money. "What's it for, anyway?"

She smiled as she looked up at Jasper. "It's to make our little corner of Heaven just a wee bit bigger." When the jeweler looked confused, Jasper laughed.

"We're buying a neighbor's ranch down in Sarasota," he explained. "Expanding ours."

"Ah. Smart man. Land is always a good investment."

There wouldn't be another stage to Sarasota until the next day. Jasper took Callie shopping while they were in town, made her buy two new dresses. She picked modest ones that weren't expensive, and several yards of pretty calico and thread to match to sew her own. Later, curled up together in their hotel room that evening, it felt odd not having Goyo's solid presence on her other side in bed.

She cuddled close to Jasper. "If this is a honeymoon, I'm afraid I'm not enjoying it much. I miss him."

He kissed her forehead. "I miss him, too."

"I know. You were restless last night."

His body tensed. "I was?"

"You called out for him."

"That's all?"

"What do you mean?"

Hell, she was his wife. Eventually he would have a nightmare with her in bed with him. "Sometimes I have nightmares still."

She grinned. "This didn't sound like a nightmare. Your cock was hard, and you started humping against me."

His face reddened. "Sorry. I didn't realize."

She laid her palm against his cheek. "I think it's cute." She studied his face. "Promise me something, Jasper Collins."

He nodded.

"Promise me you won't ever quit loving him as hard as you already do?"

He kissed her as he rolled on top of her. "That's a promise I'll have no problem keeping."

She spread her legs for him, using her hips to nudge him into

place until his stiff member slid home inside her. She sighed, content. She loved the feeling her men inside her, especially so when it was both of them at the same time. That wicked experience she'd quickly learned to crave, able to give over to pure passion as their hands and cocks took total control of her body and brought her to heights of ecstasy she never dreamed possible.

He slowly stoked his member inside her as she tipped her hips to give him better access. The hair on his chest rubbed against her nipples, pleasantly chafing them in a way that made her entire body crave more of him.

"Come for me like this, baby," he whispered as he maintained a slow, steady rhythm. "I want to hear you come for me."

She hooked her legs around his, her heels digging into his firm ass as her body melded to his. Her clit throbbed as his body rasped against it, a sensuous slide of his flesh over hers. She stared up into his sweet eyes as he watched her face. He was always more serious during their lovemaking than Goyo, who tended toward playful and teasing, whether with her or with him.

Her palms slipped over his chest as she felt her climb start. She finally held on to his arms, thrusting with him, harder, faster, until that sweet explosion shattered her core and he muffled her loud cries with his mouth, swallowing every moan until he added his own and filled her with his hot seed.

She wrapped her arms around him as he dropped his forehead to her chest and lay there quietly for a moment. Stroking her fingers up and down his spine, she let out a content sigh.

He softly chuckled. "Good?"

"Always."

He kissed the valley between her breasts before he lifted himself off her and lay next to her to cool off for a moment in the warm night. Then he gathered her into his arms. "Promise me something, Callie Collins."

"Anything."

“Promise me you’ll never stop loving him as hard as you love me.”

She smiled in the dark and cuddled even closer. “I’ll never stop loving either one of you. Try and stop me.”

Chapter Ten

It was late afternoon when they stepped off the stage in Sarasota. The bank lay only three blocks from the depot, and within an hour they'd signed the paperwork making the ranch theirs.

The banker had his driver take them home, saving them the trouble of hiring a carriage. Callie felt more than a little relief when they pulled into their yard. It felt good to be home.

She ran into the barn looking for Goyo but didn't see him. One of the cow ponies was missing from the corral. She'd have to wait until his return to tell him the good news.

Despite Jasper's teasing to stay in the dress, she changed into trousers. Truth be told, it might not be very ladylike, but she preferred them to the hot dresses. She had dinner cooking when she heard hoof beats approaching the house and the barking of the dogs. By the time she flew out the front door to greet Goyo, he was already racing up the front steps.

He picked her up and swung her around before planting a deep kiss on her lips. "I missed you so much. I hate being here alone. It's not the same without you both."

Jasper walked over from the barn. "You miss me, too?"

He grabbed the front of Jasper's shirt and pulled him close to kiss him. "You'd better believe it."

She could barely keep Goyo's eager hands and lips off her long enough for them to explain they now owned three hundred acres of land.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed with a smile. "I can quit worrying about that blasted fence now. There was another break today, another

deadfall.” He picked her up, making her put her legs around him. He was fumbling open her trousers even as he carried her into the bedroom and unfastened his fly. He pulled her trousers down and off her before plunging inside her as she sat on the edge of the bed.

“*Ai*,” he whispered against her throat, “there’s my baby.” He nipped her, sending tingles down her body as he fucked her hard and fast. “I can’t hold back, I need you. I’ll make it up to you.” Standing like that, with his hands holding her ass, there was nothing calm or easy about him as he surged inside her.

She closed her eyes and threw her head back, giving him better access to her throat. He liked to nip love bites across her flesh. She loved the sensation. He didn’t disappoint, practically growling against her flesh as he fucked her.

From somewhere on the other side of the bed, Jasper laughed. She never heard him come in. “You are horny, Goyo.”

“Damn right, *papi*.” He sucked on her chin. “You both go away and leave me alone, and you know the Pope says self-pleasuring is a sin.”

That was enough to make her laugh and open her eyes. “You are so full of malarkey.”

His blue eyes playfully twinkled. “Well, I didn’t say I always followed that rule. But I kept myself plenty horny thinking about what I’d get to do with the two of you home.” He thrust even harder than before, finally climaxing with his teeth gripping the slope of her neck where it curved into her shoulder. As he relaxed, he laid her back on the bed and kissed and licked at her flesh.

“Feeling better?” she asked.

He sighed. “In your arms I feel fantastic, *mami*.” He waved Jasper over to him and kissed him, long and hard “Now you, *papi*. I need you.”

Jasper grinned. “You greedy thing. You just got laid.”

“I want to taste you. Get your ass up here.”

Jasper shucked his clothes and climbed into bed with them. Callie

moved over so he was in the middle. His cock had grown hard, and Goyo stroked it. "That's what I wanted to see." Goyo leaned over Jasper and licked the head of his lover's cock.

Callie's heart raced, turned on by the sight. She loved watching them make love to each other, the raw, rough, hard loving and the tender, sweet caresses. She leaned in too, reaching down and palming Jasper's sac as she kissed him.

"How's that feel?" she asked.

Jasper nodded, his eyes closed. His hips thrust in time with Goyo's actions, his fists grabbing the sheets as his body surged closer to climax.

Goy lifted his head, drawing a low moan of disappointment from Jasper. "You want me to keep going, or you want to fuck my ass, *papi*?"

"I don't care, just please don't stop!"

Callie giggled. "Quit teasing him. Take care of him."

With a melodramatic sigh, Goyo lowered his head to Jasper's cock again. This time, he deep-throated Jasper, which drew another low, lustful moan from the man.

Callie brushed her hand up Jasper's body, playing with his nipples and raking her fingers through the hair on his chest. "That feel good?"

"Oh, fuck yeah!"

She nipped his earlobe. "I love sucking you, too. I love it when you put me in the middle of the two of you, and then one of you fucks me while I'm going down on the other."

That won her moans from both men. She suspected it wouldn't take much to get Goyo ready for action again. "And I really love it when—"

"Yes!" Jasper grabbed Goyo's head and thrust into his mouth as his entire body tensed. A minute later, he relaxed on the bed, eyes closed and a smile on his face.

Goyo sat up. "How was that?"

Jasper nodded. "Great."

Goyo curled up on his other side. “This woman’s gonna wear us plumb out, you realize that, right?”

“Hey, there’s two of you and one of me. I have to do something to keep the upper hand or you two would never let me out of bed.”

Jasper grabbed their arms and pulled them tightly across his chest without opening his eyes. “Can we continue this discussion after I have a little nap? Then we can see about wearing our wife out.”

Goyo laughed. “I’m all for that.”

* * * *

Two weeks later, Callie was cooking bacon and eggs for breakfast when her stomach upended. She barely made it outside to the porch in time to retch into the dirt below.

Goyo, still in the house, heard her and came running. “What’s wrong?”

She shook her head and spit, then went and pumped herself a cup of water to rinse out her mouth. “I don’t know,” she said. “I was cooking. All of a sudden I just felt real poorly.”

Jasper emerged from the privy and spotted them on the porch. “What’s wrong?”

Goyo laid the back of his hand against her forehead. “You don’t feel like you’ve got a fever, sweetheart.”

“I don’t feel like I’m feverish,” she said. “Just my stomach isn’t right.”

Jasper frowned. “What happened?” he asked again.

“Nothing. I was cooking and then I got a whiff of the bacon—oh my goodness, the bacon’s still on the stove!”

Goyo raced to rescue it. “It’s okay,” he called from the kitchen. “It’s only a little burnt.”

Her stomach rolled again as another whiff of the usually luscious aroma hit her senses. She thought she might be sick again. “I think I’m gonna skip breakfast,” she said, feeling queasy.

Jasper went still for a moment, and she wasn't quite sure she liked the look on his face. "What is with you?" she asked.

"You haven't had your monthlies, have you?"

She felt her face turn beet red. "Jasper Collins! You do *not* ask a lady questions like that!"

"Like what?" Goyo said as he stepped out of the kitchen and rejoined them on the porch. As another cloud of bacon aroma followed him, she turned to the porch rail and tried to hold on to her stomach.

"You didn't answer my question," Jasper reminded her.

Could her face feel any hotter? "And I'm not going to!" she indignantly shot back. "If you were a gentleman, Mr. Collins, you could deduce that answer for your very self considering how busy you and Mr. Valdes here keep me on a nightly basis!"

Goyo's eyebrow arched. "*Ai, papi*, you really riled her. She's using our last names. Kiss and make up with her. I don't want her mad at me because she's mad at you."

Jasper not only didn't kiss and make up with her, his face broke into a large, beaming grin as deep, amused laughter rolled through him. Callie felt her ire grow as he collapsed against the porch railing and doubled over with laughter.

It was almost enough to make her forget her upset stomach. She swatted at him, which made him laugh harder and only made her madder. When Goyo made the mistake of laughing, she turned on him and started swatting at him, too. As he held up his arms in surrender, Jasper gently grabbed her and pinned her arms to her sides.

"Baby, settle down," he gently warned, but she still heard amusement in his voice. "It's not good for you. I know exactly what's wrong with you."

She wanted to stomp his foot, but he hooked one leg around hers and kept her still. "Then what, pray tell, is wrong with me that has you laughing at my discomfort?"

His hands cupped her breasts. She gasped, from pleasure and from

something different. They felt tighter, her nipples more sensitive.

“They feel different, don’t they?” he asked. “Like maybe they’re getting bigger?”

She nodded.

He nuzzled the back of her neck. Despite her rolling stomach, the familiar sensation of wanting him fought for control of her attention. “You’re pregnant, sweetheart,” he softly said.

Goyo’s shocked expression probably mirrored hers. “What?” they both asked.

Jasper laughed and kissed the back of her neck again. “Mary suddenly couldn’t stomach the smell of bacon, either, when she got pregnant both times.” His voice softly trailed off. “It’s morning sickness. It goes away usually by the third month.”

She went still in his arms. “Pregnant?” she whispered, not believing it.

Goyo stepped close and wrapped his arms around both of them. “Really, *papi*?” He sounded hopeful. “You think so?”

He let out a long, content-sounding sigh. “I’d be willing to bet on it. We need to take you to see the doctor, but I’m sure he’ll agree with me.” His hands dropped from her breasts to her still flat tummy, his fingers splaying across her shirt. “The timing’s right. Were your monthlies regular?”

From stunned back to mortified again. “Yes,” she mumbled. Come to think of it, her last one had been two weeks after she’d arrived, and none since.

He turned her in their arms and kissed her lips. “Our family’s gonna grow.” He closed his eyes and rested his forehead against hers. “Do you know how happy you’ve made us?”

“This is incredible,” Goyo chimed in, still sounding stunned.

Jasper laughed and leaned past Callie to kiss Goyo. “We’re gonna be fathers!” he said.

“Shouldn’t we let the doc tell us that?” Callie grouched. Now that her initial shock had worn off, her upset stomach was clamoring for

attention again.

Goyo laughed as his arm wrapped around her, and his hand rested on her stomach. "I'm willing to bet Jasper's right, *mami*. Get used to it. You've got two proud poppas to deal with."

* * * *

On their next trip to Sarasota, all three went. The men nervously sat in the waiting room while the doctor examined Callie. When she emerged, the doctor wore a happy smile while she looked stunned.

He extended his hand to Jasper. "Congratulations! I think you're gonna be a father. She's got all the symptoms."

Out in the wagon, the men stared at each other with stupid grins on their faces before they turned to her. She'd been in a foul mood since awaking that morning, and their silly attitudes weren't helping.

"I'm not wearing a dress all the time," she said.

Jasper laughed. "Whatever you say, sweetheart."

Goyo laughed with him. "What he said, *mami*."

* * * *

A week later, Callie was convinced. Her morning sickness progressed to the point that she could barely stomach any food in the morning other than bread, and even that was an iffy proposition. She felt so badly that the men wouldn't let her ride out with them, made her stay home and take care of things around there.

That chafed her, that they were coddling her. Yet when gripped by the worst of her nausea, she felt silently thankful the men were so considerate.

Not that she'd admit it.

* * * *

The two men stepped off the stage and looked around. “Not even a damn train, Bart. How the hell we supposed to find her? We don’t know she came down here. She could be anywhere.”

“Then we keep searching,” the other man growled. “The jeweler in Tampa said they’d come in on the Sarasota stage and left by it the next day.”

“You don’t need the money. You sold the damn farm. What more do you want?”

“I want a strip outta that girl’s hide for whacking me, that’s what. She wants to leave, that’s her business, but she took what’s mine by rights, and I want it back.”

They found a boarding house and took a room. It was late in the day when they took their dinner in the dining room. For lack of anything better to do, one of the men read a month-old newspaper from the stack sitting on a corner table.

“This is a backwater town, Bart,” the guy said. “Look at this, they got nothing in this paper but who got married and died and the church social schedule.”

Bart grabbed the paper from his hands and studied the blurb he’d spotted on the back side. He triumphantly jabbed his finger at it as he showed him a column recounting the previous month’s marriages. “What’s that say?”

The man squinted. “Jasper Collins married his fiancée, Callie Johnson, last month when the Methodist circuit rider came to town. The new Mrs. Collins is recently arrived from Mr. Collins’ home state of Virginia.” He looked at Bart. “So? Johnson is a common last name. And story says she’s from Virginia, not Tennessee.”

Bart shook his head in disgust. “You’re worthless, you know that? It’s her. It’s gotta be. Callie is what her momma always called her, and that is not a common name.” He studied the paper. “Now we just need to figure out where she’s livin’ and track her down.”

Chapter Eleven

Goyo whistled to himself as he milked the cows and took care of other chores. A baby. Maybe that bit of light would finally lift the last weight from Jasper's soul. It didn't matter if it was born with brown or blue eyes, or even if it would bear Jasper's last name.

Their baby. Jasper had been so much happier since Callie entered their lives, and now with a baby on the way, he acted like a new man.

He grinned. She would have to start wearing dresses all the time, like it or not, once her belly swelled. As it was, at three months along she already had a little bump. It would be fun to hear the swish of her skirt as she worked in the kitchen. When she wasn't nauseous, she was randy, her breasts starting to swell and begging for them to touch her all over, wanting their hands on her.

He wondered how long until she got so big she didn't want them touching her at all?

He laughed to himself. Jasper had already warned him this was normal, that Mary had acted very similar. And to expect during the birth that she might cuss them out something fierce and swear to castrate them with her bare hands once she got done having the baby.

He stared at the house. They could add on another room, a larger bedroom for them and turn one of the other rooms into a nursery.

Maybe both of the rooms could be nurseries. He laughed out loud at that thought. A houseful of kids underfoot.

He turned to walk across the yard and get back to work, his heart light. *Wouldn't that be something*, he thought. *A large family of our own.*

He was working in the barn mucking out stalls when he heard a

noise behind him. When he turned, he barely had time to catch sight of a strange man before the world went black.

* * * *

When he awoke, he found himself trussed on the barn floor and staring at two pairs of boots. His head hurt like a son of a bitch.

“Where is she?” one man asked.

“Who?”

“Callista Johnson. Where is she?”

Goyo thought fast. “Ain’t no one here by that name.”

He had just enough time to tense before the man’s boot slammed into his ribcage. As he lay there coughing and trying to catch his breath, the guy knelt down, grabbed him by the hair and wrenched his hair back.

“Isn’t this Jasper Collins’ place? Are you him? We heard she married Jasper Collins. Where is he?”

“I’m Gregorio Valdes, asshole. This is my place. Collins is my business partner. He owns the spread next door, further down to the east. Don’t you think you shoulda asked me that before you punched me when my back was turned, you damned coward?” He prayed the lie would hold long enough for him to get to a horse and race to town to intercept Jaz and Callie.

If he lived that long.

The two men exchanged a glance. The one standing looked nervous. “Look, Bart, I never signed on for beatin’ up no innocent man.”

“He ain’t innocent. We found dresses in that house, didn’t we?”

“They belong to my wife.” Goyo coughed again, setting off more pain in his ribs. “Mary. She rode into town with Jasper and Mrs. Collins.” He tested the rope around his wrists, tight, but he thought he might be able to wiggle free if given enough time. “There ain’t no Callista Johnson here. I don’t know who you’re talking about.”

“He’s lying,” Bart growled. “We’ll go to the ranch next door and wait on ‘em, but before we do, we’re gonna pass a message along to Jasper Collins. And if we find your wife with ‘em, you can get her back when I get what’s due me.” He grabbed Goyo’s shirt and drew back his fist.

Goyo’s conscious faded with pain.

* * * *

Jasper gently teased Callie on the way home from Sarasota. At least her stomach had settled, and she didn’t need to make him stop anymore so she could be sick over the side of the wagon. But she felt tired and weak and leaned against him all the way.

Sammy Ingalls rode in the back of the wagon. He’d spend at least the next month helping them out with their small patch of crops, the cows, and everything Callie was quickly having trouble doing because of her morning sickness. It meant the three of them would have to be careful around Sammy, but they’d only need his help for a while.

Callie felt a chill despite the heat as they pulled into the yard. She grabbed Jasper’s arm. “Something’s wrong.”

He looked around. “What do you mean?”

“I mean something’s not right. Can’t you feel it?”

He helped her down from the wagon. “Goyo!” he called.

No answer.

“Sammy,” he said, “go look in the barn while I help Mrs. Collins inside.”

“Yes, sir.”

Jasper had helped her to the front porch when Sammy screamed for him from the barn. “Mr. Collins! Come quick!”

“Go inside.” He turned to run to the barn.

Callie refused to be left behind, her heart pounding, fear in her throat. She saw Sammy kneeling on the ground next to Goyo.

“Goyo!” she screamed as she raced to his side and dropped to her knees next to him.

Jasper firmly grabbed her by the shoulders and made her get out of his way. “Sammy, saddle one of the horses and ride as fast as you can back to town for the doctor and the sheriff. Now!”

“Yes, sir!” He ran to do it.

Callie cried. “Is he dead?”

Jasper grimly shook his head. “No, he’s alive. But someone damn near beat him half to death.” He untied Goyo’s hands and carefully rolled him onto his back. He moaned, but he didn’t open his eyes. At the sight of his wounds, she cried even harder. Both eyes blackened, a deep cut across his right cheek.

“Go to the house right now and get my revolver,” Jasper said. When she didn’t move, he looked at her, murder in his eyes. “Callie, I told you to go!”

She scrambled to her feet and ran to the house. With trembling fingers she pulled it from its hiding spot and checked the cylinder to make sure it was loaded. As she turned around, Jasper was carrying Goyo into the house. He brought him into their bedroom where he gently laid him on the bed. Tears ran down her face as Jasper started unbuttoning Goyo’s shirt.

“Go get some water and a wash rag,” he said. “We need to get him cleaned up.”

Goyo’s eyes finally opened. Jasper clutched his hands, brought them to his lips, and kissed them. “Who did it?” he growled. “Who did this to you?”

His upper lip was split and swollen. “Bart Packer,” he hoarsely whispered, which set off a coughing fit, making him moan in pain. “I told him you and Callie live next door. The new place. They were goin’ there to wait for you.”

“Take care of him, sweetheart,” Jasper ordered. He stood and reached for the revolver in her hand, but she stepped away from him and held it behind her back.

“Just where do you think you’re going?”

“I’m going to kill that bastard right now.” From the look on his face, she knew that was exactly what he wanted to do.

“No, you’re not! You’re gonna stay here with us until the doctor and the sheriff get here! You can’t leave us alone!”

* * * *

No, he couldn’t leave them alone, not with that animal still roaming out there. He got Goyo’s shirt off him and winced at the sight of the bruises already forming on his lover’s body. They’d kicked him half to death, and no doubt some of his ribs were broken.

Callie brought in a bowl of water and a rag and gently washed the blood off his face. He hated seeing her so upset, almost as much as he hated seeing poor Goyo like that. It couldn’t be good for the baby, either.

He tried not to think about the past as he impatiently waited for the doctor and sheriff to arrive. It was nearly an hour later when Jasper heard hoof beats in the yard.

He looked grim. “You stay here,” he told Callie.

Goyo’s eyes opened. “*Papi*, what are you gonna do?”

“Make sure it’s the sheriff. Then I’m gonna hunt that bastard down.”

Goyo’s hand gripped his arm. “Be careful. Come back to me.”

He leaned in and kissed Goyo, knew it might be the last time he could for a while, especially if there were others present. He tenderly stroked his forehead. “I’ll be back. I promise.”

“I’ll hold you to it.”

Jasper stepped out onto the porch, relieved to find it was the doctor and Sammy.

“Where is he?” the doctor said as he dismounted.

“Inside. He’s awake, but he looks poorly.”

He started to follow the doctor into the house when the sheriff

rode up with a couple of deputies. “What happened? Sammy said someone attacked Gregorio?”

Jasper felt his body trembling from rage. “Yeah. I don’t know the bastards’ names. Goyo said they were looking for a woman, and he lied and sent them over to Jack Porter’s old place to get them outta here.”

The sheriff nodded. “That’s where we’ll go lookin’ for them.” He wheeled his horse around. “Come on, boys.”

Jasper waited for them to disappear down their road before he sprinted to the barn for a saddle and bridle.

* * * *

Jasper tried not to let ghosts from his past intrude at this critical time. He needed to focus his rage on one sharp point: Bart Packer.

He hurt Goyo. He’d tried to hurt Callie. He *would* hurt Callie if given half a chance.

The bastard would pay once and for all. He wouldn’t have his wife or any of them looking over their shoulders and always wondering when he’d show up again.

He rode hard and fast, pushing his pony through the scrub woods. They would no doubt be watching the main road leading to what passed for a house on that spread. He could sneak in the back way, through the new break in the fence, and take them by surprise. It didn’t take him long to find the break and ride through it. He slowed his horse as dusk stole in on purple light. Once he knew he neared the house, he dismounted and tied the pony to a tree. Unholstering his pistol, he crept up on foot.

There were no lights in the house, which was little more than a one-room shack with a privy out back. The pole barn had a decided lean to it, no doubt from the storm earlier that summer. He hadn’t really looked at the property, only interested in the acreage for grazing their growing herd.

He crouched behind a large palmetto bush and waited as dark fell. He heard nothing except mosquitoes, birds, crickets, and frogs.

Then, through what appeared to be the only window near the front door, he saw the strike of a match and a brief glow as someone lit a cigarette before it flared out again.

Aha.

He waited until full dark to slowly creep across the yard on the back side of the house, where there were no windows. When he heard boots on the floor inside, he flattened himself against the siding and listened through the thin wall.

“Come on, let’s go, Bart. I’m tired of this.”

“No. We’re fucking close.”

“This place don’t look like no one’s lived here in a while. He lied, and by now they’ll have a posse looking for us.”

“I want what that bitch took from me!”

Jasper’s blood boiled, but he waited, wanting the perfect opportunity.

“Look, what more do you want? You got the farm. Everyone knows you only married Widow Johnson because you knew she’d never live long, so you could screw that girl out of her land. And that’s what you did. You know what? This is crazy. I never shoulda let you talk me into this.”

“You want me to forget that money you owe me or not?”

“At this point, I don’t care! I could kill you myself out here, and no one would ever know! Mebbe that’s what I should—”

The sound of a sudden scuffle split the night, followed by a shot, a heavy thud, then silence.

Jasper waited, listening, trying to determine who’d won. If it was the other man, Jasper would let him go.

If it was Bart Parker, he’d never leave the cabin alive.

Boots scuffed across the floor. “Kill me, will you?” a dangerous voice muttered.

Jasper stepped around the front of the cabin and quietly waited by

the door with his gun cocked. When Packer emerged, Jasper jammed the muzzle against his temple. "Back inside," Jasper growled.

"Who the hell are you?"

"Your worst nightmare." Jasper took Packer's gun from him and forced him back inside the cabin. The other man's body lay sprawled on the floor in the middle of the room.

"Why are you looking for Callista Johnson?" Jasper demanded.

"You her husband?"

Jasper jabbed him with the gun, making the man grunt in pain. "I ask the questions."

"She took somethin' that belongs to me."

"You mean she took her own mother's jewelry."

"Goddamned cunt took—" He howled in pain as Jasper shot him in the left knee.

Jasper leaned over the man, who now writhed on the floor in agony, holding his wounded knee. "You don't talk about my wife like that," he growled. "Why'd you try to rape her, you son of a bitch?"

"What? I didn't—" He howled again as Jasper shot him in the right knee.

Now sobbing, Bart Packer started begging for his life.

"You callin' my wife a liar? You won't live long if you do that. Tell me the truth. I want to hear it from your mouth."

"Fuck! All right! Yeah, I got drunk. She didn't have to hit me, she damn near killed me! Not like she's some kid. She's a damn grown woman. I wouldn't have touched her if she was a kid. Then she fuckin' stole what belongs to me!"

Jasper hauled off and kicked him hard in his wounded left knee. Another storm of pained howls filled the cabin.

Jasper cocked the revolver and pointed it at him. "Why shouldn't I kill you?"

"Look, if you're a friend of that other guy, I didn't mean nothing by it! I just want what's mine!"

Jasper shook his head. "She's right. You are evil."

He pulled the trigger.

* * * *

Jasper met the sheriff on the main road as he and three deputies were riding toward the other ranch. They pulled up short when they saw Jasper leading the two horses with their grisly cargo slung across their backs.

The sheriff pushed his hat back as he studied the two bodies in the dim moonlight. "Holy hell, what happened? You shoot 'em, Jaz?"

"I wish. They were already dead when I found them. Looks like they fought and shot each other. The one guy's got several holes in him. Best I can tell, he must have shot the other one before he died." One of the deputies rode over to take the reins of the two horses.

"Any idea who they are?" the sheriff asked.

Jasper shook his head. "Nope. Never seen 'em before in my life." He spit in the dirt. "Too bad. I would have liked a crack at them myself."

"Gregorio said he didn't get a good look at 'em. They didn't say who they were, either. Said they told him they were looking for some woman named Mary."

Jasper shrugged. "Don't know. How's Goyo doing?"

"Doc said he'll be okay, but he won't be getting out of that bed for a few days, at least. Ribs cracked, but he'll recover."

"Good." Jasper started to ride away when the sheriff stopped him and leaned in close, his voice lowered.

"Any way to identify these guys?"

Jasper's jaw tightened. "I didn't find nothing on them to give me their names. Far's I'm concerned, they're drifters looking to cause honest people trouble. I don't care to know nothing else."

The sheriff nodded and winked. "Sounds good to me." He leaned back in his saddle and ordered his men to follow him to Sarasota.

Jasper nudged his pony into a gallop back to their road. Sammy

Ingalls was waiting for him on the front porch when he rode into the yard. He ran over and grabbed the horse's bridle. "Miz Collins is awful worried 'bout you. I'll take care of him. You best get in there before she worries that baby right out."

He patted the boy on the shoulder and raced into the house. The doctor was sitting in the front room and nodded to him. "Go on back, son. He'll be okay. Just hurtin' a bit. Nothing a few shots of whiskey can't ease him through over the next day or so."

When Jasper walked through the bedroom door, Callie looked up from where she sat in a chair next to the bed. She started crying as he crossed the room and gathered her into his arms.

"Shh," he whispered into her hair. "I'm back, and I'm fine. Everything's fine now."

"What hap—"

"Shh," he repeated, then kissed her. "Everything's fine. That's all you ever need to know."

Goyo's eyes had been closed. At the sound of Jasper's return, he forced them open and looked at him. "You okay, *papi*?" he hoarsely asked. "You in one piece?"

Jasper smiled, leaned in, and kissed him on the forehead. "I'm fine, buddy." He gently stroked Goyo's battered cheek. "Everything's gonna be okay from now on. Don't worry."

"You get 'em?"

"You just go back to sleep."

Jasper led Callie out of the bedroom and to the kitchen, out of the doc's hearing. She tried to ask him again, but he kissed her, silencing her questions. Once he released her, he nuzzled her forehead.

"Don't ask me, please," he whispered. "Just trust me that it's over and done with."

Tears filled her eyes. "He's dead?"

"I'll tell you that much. The rest don't matter. And if anyone ever asks you what happened, I found them dead, and we don't know who they were. Understand? You have to trust me."

She stared at him for a moment in the dim light from the oil lamp. "Okay," she finally said.

He held her securely in his arms, his eyes closed while he breathed in her scent. She'd washed her hair that morning and it smelled sweet, like orange blossoms. "You don't have to ever worry about him again, sweetheart. Never again."

* * * *

The doctor left with instructions to fetch him if Goyo had problems breathing or coughed up blood. They put Sammy in a cot in the barn, and Jasper bolted the front and back doors before he and Callie carefully crawled into bed with Goyo nestled between them.

In the morning, his injuries looked worse, but his eyes were open and his voice sounded stronger.

Jasper sent Callie to the kitchen to make them all breakfast. Before he went to check on Sammy, he laced his fingers through Goyo's and brought his lover's hand to his lips, where he kissed it. "I can't lose you, Goyo."

"You're not losing me, *papi*. Doc said I'll be fine. I'm not real pretty right now, but I'll be okay."

"You have to take it easy until you heal up. Understand?"

He smiled. "Do you honestly think *mami* will let me out of this bed for a few days? She's already practicing how to be a mother, I think."

Jasper grinned. "We're having a baby. I still can't believe you and me are gonna be dads."

A dark cloud flitted through Goyo's expression. "You are, *papi*. Remember that."

"Stop that. This is *our* baby, yours and mine. Yeah, it's got to have my last name, but it's *our* baby."

Goyo finally smiled again. "You gonna be okay? 'Bout what happened out there?"

Jasper nodded. "Yeah. I'll be okay."

Goyo wouldn't let go of his hand when Jasper tried to stand. "What's our story?"

"I found them already dead. They killed each other. We didn't know them."

Goyo nodded and released his hand after a final squeeze. "Works for me."

Epilogue

Callie sat on the porch with Goyo. His ribs were still bound, but two weeks after the attack, the doc was happy with his healing and said he could go back to light duties as soon as he felt up to it.

Callie wouldn't let him.

Goyo didn't like staying cooped up while Jasper shouldered the burden, but neither man wanted to upset her any more than she already had been and risk hurting the baby.

He'd just finished his lunch and she ordered him off the porch and back to bed for a nap. He smiled and lowered his voice, even though Sammy Ingalls was all the way in the barn. "I'd rather not nap if we go to bed, *mami*," he softly teased.

She glared at him. "You can't injure those ribs!"

He pointed at his trousers. "I'm going to injure something else if you don't give me some relief, baby." He made a sad face that melted her heart. "Have a little sympathy for me. Can't we do something?"

She blushed despite the relatively cool day. "Hush," she whispered. "Sammy might hear."

"Not if I keep my mouth buried between your legs he won't." He grinned as he grabbed her hand and placed it on his crotch. His stiff bulge filled her palm through the fabric. "Please, *mami*. I need you badly."

She yanked her hand away, her face turning a pretty shade of pink. "You are an insufferable man!"

He grinned. "I know. That's why you two love me so much." He carefully stood. He still ached, but only a fraction as badly as he had at first. "Come to bed with me, Callie. Don't make me lay there

alone.” He held out his hand to her and she finally stood and took it, letting him lead her into the house.

She made sure to bolt the front and back doors before following him to their bedroom. He sat on the edge of the bed with only a slightly pained grunt. “You know you want me, baby,” he teased.

She smiled as she knelt before him and pushed his knees apart before unbuttoning his fly. “Of course I want you. I wouldn’t get away from either of you if I tried.” She had a hard time freeing his stiff shaft, but once she did it sprang loose from his pants, already dark and engorged.

He ran his hands through her hair, which now hung almost to her shoulders. He loved the silky feel of it through his fingers. “Love me, baby. You can take this ache away.”

She lapped at the head with her tongue before sucking it between her lips. He let out a long, satisfied hiss. “That’s it. You know what I love.”

In a few minutes she was bobbing her head up and down along his shaft, drawing moans from him until he couldn’t stand it any longer, and his release bubbled up from deep inside him. She swallowed, her tongue still caressing his shaft even after it started softening in her mouth.

He stroked her cheek. “If you don’t stop,” he warned, “you’re gonna get me excited again.”

She sat back on her heels and smiled up at him. “Think you can take a nap now?”

He grabbed her hand and made her sit on the bed with him. “Only once I know I’ve taken care of you.” He carefully laid back and made her kneel over him, dress and all. She hadn’t bothered with any undergarments with the skirts already frustrating enough for her. Her musky, aroused scent surrounded him as he ran his hands up her thighs until he found her hips and pulled her slick slit down over his lips.

She let out a low moan as his tongue stroked her. Jasper had

called it right, she was always ready for them now, it seemed. He took a long time teasing her, enjoying the way she ground her body against his tongue as he fucked her with it. Only when he had her squirming and nearly mindless with passion did he suck on her clit, triggering her release.

“Oh, Goyo!” she gasped as he licked her sweet juices from her until she finally rolled off him and collapsed on the bed.

He grinned. “Better?”

Her eyes had closed. She nodded.

He squeezed her hand. “Come on, *mami*. Let’s take a nap.”

She helped him change position and stretched out next to him on their bed where she snuggled against his side. “I love you, Goyo,” she mumbled, already tumbling into sleep.

“I love you, too. You’ve got no idea how much.”

* * * *

Later that evening, once they finished dinner, and after Sammy Ingalls was safely sleeping in the barn and Jasper had taken a quick bath in the spring, the three of them curled up in their bed with Callie safely tucked between the two men.

Jasper could stare at her for hours on end, it felt like. He loved resting his hand on her swelling belly and feeling the baby move and kick inside her.

A new life. A new start.

She smiled up at him. “What?”

“I spent most of the day adjusting myself,” he teased with a playful smile. “Do you have any idea how uncomfortable it is to ride a horse and work cattle when your cock is as hard as a rock?”

“Aw, my poor *papi*,” Goyo said. “Help him out, *mami*. Don’t make him suffer. He’s so good to us.”

She didn’t bother stifling her giggle. “You do the pitiful act as good as Goyo, you know that?”

“Is it working?”

“I don’t know.” She ran her fingers through the curly hair on his chest. “It depends on how much persuading you can do to get me in the mood.”

Goyo leaned in and kissed her, his lips hungrily devouring hers. “Is that sweet enough for you, *mami*?”

Jasper seized the advantage and trailed his fingers down between her legs, teasing her until she squirmed between them. “I don’t believe I’ve ever had a problem getting you in the mood, sweetheart.”

Each man bent to her breasts, taking them into their mouths and pulling long, sweet moans of pleasure from her. “Okay!” she finally gasped. “Consider me persuaded!”

The men laughed as Jasper changed position, kneeling between her legs and carefully sliding his stiff member inside her slick pussy. She moaned and rocked her hips against him as he sank all the way to the hilt.

“Don’t tease me!” she begged.

Goyo laughed. “Now who’s pitiful?” He captured her mouth again and kissed her as Jasper slowly fucked her. Jasper deliberately kept his strokes long and slow, taking his time, drawing it out for her until she writhed beneath him.

“Please, I need you!”

“I don’t know, *papi*. Has she begged enough?”

“Not yet.” Jasper smiled as she moaned again and tried to coax him into picking up the pace. Not only didn’t he oblige her, he stopped and leaned over to suck Goyo’s cock, which had grown hard as he watched them together.

“Oh, now that’s nice,” Goyo said with a content sigh. “You just wait until my ribs feel better. Then either one of you better bend over in front of me.”

“What about me?” Callie whined as she tried to make Jasper start moving again.

Jasper lifted his head for just a moment. “Well, as you said, he

does pitiful well. I just felt so danged sorry for him laying there and lonely.”

Both men laughed at her aggravation, but Jasper went back to licking and sucking on Goyo’s cock. It seemed Goyo took a little pity on her and reached between her and Jasper. His fingers unerringly found her swollen clit and started rubbing it, bringing happy moans from her this time.

“Let’s see who can come first, *mami*,” he breathlessly challenged.

Jasper nearly lost control as he felt her slick muscles grabbing him. Goyo took great pleasure in knowing her body as well as he knew Jasper’s, and it wasn’t long before he felt the tell-tale signs of her own release starting.

“That’s it, *mami*,” Goyo urged. “Give it to us.” From the sound of Goyo’s voice and the way his cock hardened, Jasper knew Goyo wasn’t far behind her. As she let loose with a sweet cry Goyo swallowed in a kiss, Goyo’s cock exploded in Jasper’s mouth. Only then did he start moving again, wanting to catch up with them as his cock throbbed inside her, hard and needing relief more than ever.

He sat up and grabbed her hips, thrusting as hard and fast as he dared until his balls bunched up tight and his seed exploded into her.

He caught his weight on his arms before he collapsed on either of them. She held him, a beautiful, content smile on her face, matched only by the content smile Goyo also wore.

“I love you,” Jasper whispered, kissing her and then Goyo.

“I love you, too.” She kissed him, then Goyo. “I love both of you so much. Nothing could ever make me stop loving you.”

* * * *

“I hate you!” Callie screamed as sweat streamed from her brow. “Both of you!” She glared at Jasper and Goyo. “I’m going to kill both of you when I can finally walk again—” Her rant devolved into an agonized scream that made both men wince.

Jasper looked at Goyo, who stood leaning against the wall on the other side of the room, his arms crossed over his chest. Fortunately, the doctor appeared to be too distracted with his feisty and temperamental patient to wonder about her insistence that both men stay with her.

“You were right, *papi*,” Goyo said, looking as distressed as Jasper felt. Her labor had started in the middle of the night. Now, almost twelve hours later, each contraction brought a new bout of tearful screams and rants. “She does not sound very happy.”

“I’m gonna string you both up by your balls!” she cried out. “I’m gonna tie you both up and geld you like we do with the herd!”

Jasper wiped her brow with a damp cloth. “It’s okay, sweetheart. You’re doing great—”

“Fuck you, Jasper Collins!” she screamed. When Goyo laughed again, she glared at him. “And fuck you, too, Gregorio Valdes!”

The doctor looked up from where he sat between her legs. “I need you to take a deep breath with the next contraction and push real hard, Callie. You’re doing great.”

She burst into tears. “No, I’m done. I don’t want to do this anymore. I’m too tired.” She looked up at Jasper. “I’m done. Make it stop. Please, make it stop!”

He held her hand. “Honey, you can’t stop. You’re having a baby.”

She looked over at Goyo, reaching for him. He walked over, and she grabbed him with what looked like the same painful death grip she held Jasper’s hand. “You love me, don’t you? You make it stop.”

He winked at Jasper before leaning in to kiss her brow. “*Mami*, you’re almost done. Just a little more. Listen to the doctor.”

They didn’t have long to wait. When the next contraction came, the two men could barely hear the doctor telling her to push over her screams until she fell back on the bed with an almost relieved cry.

“Very good!” A tiny wail reached their ears. “Jasper, come hold your daughter for me while I cut the cord.”

Callie started crying, this time in relief as Goyo leaned in to

comfort her. "You did it, sweetheart. A little girl!"

Then a moment later, she cried out again. "Ow! Make it stop!"

The men looked at the doctor, who laughed. "One more time, Callie. Looks like you've got twins!"

"What?" all three exclaimed, but Callie started screaming again. With Jasper's arms full of squirming, gory baby, Goyo was forced to face the brunt of Callie's pain alone as she clamped down on his hand while she pushed. A moment later, another tiny cry filled the room.

"Goyo, come here and help me out." The doctor quickly wrapped a blanket around the second baby. Stunned, he held out his arms and received the crying infant while the doctor tied off and cut the cord before returning his attention to Callie.

After an hour, with the babies cleaned up and Callie's sanity restored, she sat up in the bed as the men flanked her and they stared at their twins. A blue-eyed girl with a thick shock of jet black hair, and a brown-haired boy with sweet, brown eyes.

The doctor finished cleaning up and packing his gear. "I'll send Miz Gentry over to help y'all out as a midwife."

Jasper, still stunned, shook his head. "No," he whispered, "we'll do just fine." He'd briefly mentioned to the doctor he'd had two children with Mary.

The doc stared at them for a minute before laughing. "Well, congratulations, you three." He winked at Jasper. "I'll come back tomorrow to check on them, and we can fill out the birth certificates then. I'll let myself out."

Goyo finally looked up at Jasper. "You think he'll keep his mouth shut?"

"Yeah. He's a good man." He felt the prickle of tears, not the first time that had happened since the babies arrived. "They're beautiful, Callie."

She kissed him, then Goyo. "I'm sorry I said I hated you two. I don't hate you. I love you."

Goyo laughed. "Does that mean our *cojones* are safe, *mami*?"

“Until the next time you two do this to me.” Their son wrapped his hand around her finger. “What was your *abuela*’s name?”

“Beatriz.”

“I like that,” Jasper said. “Beatriz. It’s pretty.”

“What was your mother’s name, Goyo?” she asked.

“Liesa.”

Jasper smiled. “Beatriz Liesa. It’s beautiful.”

“What about you, *papi*?” Goyo asked. “How about Jasper Junior?” He smiled widely.

Jasper shook his head. “No.” He looked into Goyo’s eyes. “His name’s Gregorio. We can call him Greg.”

“*Papi*, that’s sweet, but—”

“Gregorio Michael,” Callie softly said. “After my daddy.”

Goyo apparently sensed he wouldn’t win this battle. He leaned in and kissed her forehead, then kissed Jasper. “How about Gregory Michael, *mami*. That’s not much different.”

After a long moment, she finally nodded. “Okay. Gregory Michael.”

The three of them lay there, Callie nestled between the men, and watched the babies sleep as the sun dropped lower in the skies out in the Gulf west of Sarasota, casting deep, green shadows over their steamy little slice of Heaven.

THE END



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