



*The truth could make their one perfect night crumble into dust.*

It's Friday night and advertising agent Stella Sinclair's plan to catch the red-eye back to New York is fading with the Montana sunset. She'll do anything to land this western-wear company's account, but what's she going to do all weekend in this Podunk town?

On the way back to the hotel to watch paint peel from the walls, she makes a quick stop in a local bar to answer the call of nature. One slippery spot later, her stiletto heels are flying—and her fall is broken by the most delicious cowboy she's ever laid eyes on.

Heaven just dropped into JD Foster's arms. City girls—and city life—aren't his style, which made it easy to skip out on his grandfather's business meeting earlier today. For this classical beauty, though, he just might make an exception.

A drink, a dance, and their chemistry takes the reins. Then JD remembers why Stella's name seems familiar. She's courting the family business. JD wants her sighing in pleasure tonight, but for the right reasons. And he's not above withholding a vital detail or two in order to seal the deal...

Warning: This book contains lies, explicit sex, and betrayal. All necessary elements to light a fire between two people and lay the foundation for some really hot makeup sex.

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# A Little White Lie

*Mackenzie McKade*

## Dedication

To all those women out there who love to read about men in tight blue jeans, boots and a Stetson. I hope you enjoy *A Little White Lie*.

# Chapter One

Life was a variety of choices, which included the current assignment Stella Sinclair had agreed to accept—chasing a new account halfway across the United States. She squirmed behind the wheel of her rented car and looked out into the darkness surrounding her.

“Montana,” she moaned. Not exactly a city girl’s preference for the weekend. Yet if it could jump-start her career, she might even consider facing that rustic old barn they called a bar looming in the distance. ‘Cause this girl had to go and go badly.

As if her bladder spoke telepathically to her foot, she pressed the gas pedal, shooting from forty-five to sixty. For a moment she pondered her options. Grin and bear it for the remaining twenty minutes of her drive to her hotel or risk soiling her favorite red cocktail dress. Of course she could pull over and squat. The thought of the possibility of urine and mud splashing on her two-hundred-dollar stilettos made her cringe.

Mouth pulled into a thin line, she inched her chin higher. “I’d rather die.” Once again she eyed the lights ahead.

The lounge hadn’t appeared threatening when she passed it previously this evening. Then again night hadn’t fallen and she hadn’t paid a lot of attention to the place earlier, choosing to focus on her meeting with Jonathan David Toliver.

An eerie glow rose against a pitch-black night as she neared the bar. The large building, stuck out in the middle of nowhere, made her think of one of those horror movies where the girl goes into an establishment but never comes out—alive.

Nervous laughter followed her wayward thought. “How’s that for an overactive imagination?”

Served her right for leaving the Tolivers’ ranch without stopping to powder her nose first, but her potential client had insisted on walking her to the car. A smile found its way to her lips.

Seventy-two-year-old Toliver was the epitome of a gentleman. The western-wear mogul had prefaced every sentence with “Ma’am”, which had made her feel beyond her twenty-four years. Yet she had to admit it had been nice, and tonight she had scored points.

Toliver liked her.

“It would have been nicer if he had agreed to give me—Maritime Marketing—a chance.” She’d counted on landing this account tonight. Instead he’d required the weekend to make up his mind.

Fine.

But the man hadn't fooled her with his laid-back, charming personality and "aw shucks" manner. He was sharp as a tack. The gleam in his eyes and the way he scrutinized her every word spoke loudly. Two-to-one odds he was verifying the stats she had shared with him regarding her company. Not to mention thoroughly checking out her credentials.

By tomorrow he'd know she'd been with Maritime for less than eight months and that she'd graduated with honors from Columbia University. She'd lay a bet he would even uncover that she was an only child born to career-minded parents. Her life had consisted of nannies, boarding schools and college. She wouldn't put it past him to discover that she was single and that the last time she'd had sex was six months ago. Even that had been nothing more than a night of pleasure.

Stella briefly glanced at herself in the rearview mirror, not liking what she saw. She had become her mother. "Guess it's true. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. So, girl, you're stuck in the boondocks until Tuesday morning. However will you entertain yourself?" She chuckled.

A coworker had informed her that country towns had little-to-no nightlife. The number of vehicles pulling in and out of the establishment contradicted her associate's appraisal. In fact, it was Friday night and the large barn-like structure appeared to be bursting at the seams.

"That squashes my haunted-house theory," she mumbled as a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. Maybe a toss in the hay with one of the local yokels would pass the time and take away the itch to feel a naked body pressed to hers. She'd always dreamed of making love to a cowboy. Something about their primitive reputation appealed to her. Besides, it would be a welcome change from the suits she'd dated in New York.

The glaring headlights in the rearview mirror made her avert her gaze and attention briefly to the multitude of boxes lying on the passenger seat. Toliver had gifted her with a variety of different clothing samples, including a pair of boots she never planned on wearing. The three-inch Pradas she wore were more her taste in shoes. Designer jeans were the closest thing western she had ever touched.

As the bar drew closer, she raised her eyesight to the large neon sign glowing "Rusty Nail". Beneath it the words "Everyone gets nailed here" blinked off and on.

"Catchy and inviting." Her amused grin died instantly when the urge to pee pinched her thighs together. Her entire body shook, fighting the inevitable. "Oh God."

Should she? Stop that is.

A glance in the rearview mirror at her perfectly styled updo reminded her she was overdressed for a place like this. "City girl" might as well be tattooed across her forehead. Wearing a strapless red evening dress that brushed midway up her thighs, she would stand out like a sore thumb amongst the crowd. Of course, if she had known Mr. Toliver's plan was to eat at the ranch, she would have worn a suit.

Foot on the brake, she slowed the car down. Weathered wood siding sported burn spots that made her think they'd rescued the lumber from a forest fire, perhaps a hundred years ago.

Stella squinted. What was that out front? A hitching post?

Lord. She had truly fallen back in time, finding herself smack-dab in the middle of an old western. Broken laughter tickled her throat as she looked around for the horses, maybe a carriage or two. But it was a truck that tore out of the parking lot, swerving as someone chucked a beer in its direction, that caught her attention. Glass shattered as the bottle struck asphalt. The man inside the vehicle leaned out of the window cursing as he flipped the assailant the bird.

She shook her head. “Rednecks.” Thank God she lived in a city of civilization and culture. Okay. The finger was universal and now that she was being honest so were the obscenities. Still, the Rusty Nail didn’t appear to be the safest place. Peeing could wait until she was tucked safely in her hotel room.

Mind made up, she accelerated, turning her gaze back to the road. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a man stumbled into her headlights.

She gasped. Her eyes widened. A million possibilities flashed before her eyes, including her striking the pedestrian and ejecting him into the air.

Slamming her foot on the brake, she jerked the steering wheel sharply to the left, barely missing the cowboy. Tires screeching filled her ears along with a silent scream that shook her from limb to limb. The scent of burnt rubber rose as the car came to an abrupt stop, propelling her forward before throwing her against the seat and forcing the seat belt to bite across her chest.

Startled, the man flailed his arms. He almost fell on his ass as he staggered backwards. For a moment he swayed back and forth, managing to get out of the street without tumbling over.

Ohmigod. Was the man injured or just drunk?

As white-hot adrenaline flooded her veins, her pulse sped. God. That was close. She released the air held captive in her lungs before sucking in a cleansing breath. When she had a second to clear her mind, fear turned to anger.

Her fingers curled around the steering wheel, knuckles turning white. “Damn idiot.” Anxiety played across her bare shoulders, arms and legs, making goose bumps rise. Her bladder squeezed, taking the opportunity to remind her of her predicament. “Dammit.” She couldn’t hold out twenty minutes. “That’s it.” The choice had been ripped from her hands. It was pee now or pay later.

Frowning, she pulled into the parking lot where trucks outnumbered cars. Then again, what had she expected? She was just outside Billings, Montana. The hayseed town specialized in western wear, cattle, sheep and cowboys.

“Yes.” Her luck was holding out as she spied a parking place up front and pulled into it. As she turned off the engine, the booming sound of country music and someone crooning flooded the car. A couple wrapped in each other’s arms walked out of the double doors that swung wide, giving her a brief glimpse inside.



The immediate urge to pee washed away her curiosity as well as her concern. She wasted no time exiting the vehicle and heading for the front door. A cool breeze brought the scent of evergreen sweeping around her and raised the hem of her dress. A small squeak pushed from her pursed lips. Her hands grasped to take control of the material before she bared it all. A couple of wolf calls followed her hastened steps. Another time she might have had something witty to say, but at the moment she had only one thing on her mind—the restroom.

As she approached the two large doors, alcohol, cigarette smoke and a hint of wood shavings assailed her. The brawny bouncer gave her a toothy smile. “Hey, little lady. You look to be far away from home.”

“Bathroom?” was all she managed to say.

He nodded to the left, directing her attention to the neon sign that glimmered her salvation. Restrooms. But first she had to finagle her way through an ocean of cowboys, across the largest dance floor she had ever seen, and negotiate with four women all waiting to get inside what appeared to be the only available bathroom.

Her feet were already in motion when she wheezed out a taut “Thank you.” Narrowing her eyes on her goal, she made a beeline for it. She wasn’t prepared when her foot struck a small patch of sawdust. Her arms flailed and both feet went forward.

She was going down.

Right place. Right time.

The classic beauty released the cutest cry on her way down. JD Foster caught her around the waist, pulling her safely against his chest. The scent of expensive perfume surrounded him. Damn. She felt good against him.

Setting her on her feet, he took a moment to slide his gaze down her exquisite body. Her heels had given her a statuesque appearance as she walked through the crowd. But now as he stared down upon her, he realized that she couldn’t be more than five-five barefoot, compared to his six-two frame. The light-haired brunette quickly pulled farther away from him, but not before a tendril came tumbling out of the coil atop her head. The silky strand begged him to reach out and touch it. His hand stopped midway when a panicked expression made her round eyes grow even wider.

“Oh God. Bathroom. Now.”

He would have chuckled, but the urgency in her voice made him grab ahold of her hand. As they weaved in and out of the crowd, the number of cowboys’ eyes pinned on her grew with each step.

*Not tonight, boys. This one is mine.*

When they reached the restroom the line had thinned out. He winked. Releasing her hand, he tipped his black Stetson.

Her cheeks were pink over porcelain skin. A tiny smile crept across her full lips. “How embarrassing.” Without another word she disappeared behind the bathroom door.

Her scent still lay sweet in his memory when Taylor Johnson sidled up beside him. The cattle rancher had a shit-eating grin from ear to ear. He slid the brim of his cowboy hat between his fingers. “Yours?” He watched the entrance as if he would snatch her up the minute she reappeared.

JD didn’t think twice. “Yep. All mine.”

As Johnson turned to look at him, JD saw the envy in his friend’s eyes. “Quite a looker. Visiting or staying?”

Half the bar had their hungry stares on the ladies’ restroom door. For some odd reason, their attention raised the small hairs on the back of his neck.

“Depends.” The single word came out defensively. He didn’t offer anything more. Perhaps that was because he didn’t know the answer. Hell. He didn’t know the woman. Yet he planned to discover everything about her tonight. Especially what those full lips would feel like against his. All he had to do was keep the other rowdy stallions away from her while he wooed her into his arms. “Later,” he said more curtly than he should have.

Johnson took the hint and ambled away, but not far enough to suit JD. The man leaned against the bar, his eyes still focused on the ladies’ room. Like the rest of the cowboys in the bar, JD wanted her, instantly and unequivocally.

How ironic that he would be attracted to this woman. The city girls he had gone to college with had been shallow and self-indulgent, which had disgusted him. He liked a woman who didn’t mind getting her hands dirty or putting in an honest day’s work.

Country was in his heart.

His jaw tightened, while his belly churned with the memory of the argument he’d had with his grandfather that morning. Why the old man couldn’t understand that his only grandson wasn’t a suit-and-tie kind of guy was beyond him. JD tugged the brim of his hat down to hide the emotion he felt.

Since his father’s passing a year ago, his grandfather had pestered JD to take over the reins—manage the company. But he wasn’t meant for the corporate setting. He was content making their Montana summer ranch a year-round home, overseeing their cattle and horses, instead of their Los Angeles estate where he had been raised. Someday he would marry and start a family. A big city was no place for rearing children. Nor did he want to spend his days and nights at a cold office. No. He wanted a warm woman waiting eagerly for him after a long day.

When the city woman reappeared, thoughts of his grandfather and family duty dissipated. Her tongue swept languidly over plump lips as she lowered long, dark eyelashes around decadent honey eyes. The coy smile she gifted him set his heart aflutter. But it was her soft, sexy voice that tightened his groin. “Thank you. Can I buy you a drink for your heroics?”

That would do for a starter, but he had something different in mind. “How ’bout you repay me with a name and a dance?”

“Stella Sinclair.” She extended her hand and for a moment he hesitated.

*Sinclair?* Wasn’t that the name of the high-falutin’ advertising agent his grandfather had wanted him to meet tonight? The wily S.O.B. had forgotten to mention the agent was female and a damn good-looking one too.

JD swallowed nervously, staring at her hand like it was a sidewinder ready to strike. What a quandary.

If she knew he was a member of the esteemed Toliver family, would she hightail it out of here or would the prospect of cinching the deal through him seal their night together? The last thought stuck in his craw. He wanted Stella Sinclair sighing in pleasure and wanting only him tonight, but not because of some deal.

Her brows dipped as her smile faded. “Something wrong?”

His pride kept him quiet as he reached out and accepted her hand. Instead of shaking it he pulled her closer. Warmth spread through him like a wildfire heating every part of his body, including his cock which flickered again with interest. “No, darlin’. You just look familiar.” It was only a little white lie.

Light laughter greeted him. “I was thinking the same thing about you, but I can’t place where we’ve met.” Her expression fell serious as if she were attempting to recall their meeting.

Remembering that family pictures hung on almost every wall at the ranch, he quickly offered, “JD Foster.”

She leaned nearer before she locked gazes with him. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, JD.” His name was sultry on her lips. She didn’t even try to escape the hold he had on her hand. His heart skipped a beat when she placed her palm over his. Slowly she slid her tongue between her lips, making his pulse leap.

Nice mouth. Decadent. Sexy. Just right for lovin’.

Liquid fire surged through his veins. He pulled her even closer so that their bodies almost touched. “Dance with me.”

Her body melted against him, unashamed and willing. Through thick, feathered lashes she peered up at him. “Love to.” Her sensual voice was fuel to the flame raging inside him.

So, the city girl wanted a cowboy tonight. Lucky for him, he was just the man to make all her fantasies come true. In fact, if he knew his grandfather, JD had the entire weekend to satisfy all her dreams. His grandsire’s philosophy was to never make a snap decision. The man preferred to take a couple days to scrutinize every aspect of a deal. For once JD was glad for his grandfather’s diligence.

JD couldn’t wait to feel Stella in his arms.

As they made their way through the throng, the gentle sway of her hips turned every male’s head. On the other hand, the local ladies were frowning big time. Damned if the attention she received didn’t turn him on.

When their feet struck the dance floor, he possessively placed one hand to the small of her back and grasped her other hand in his. Their gazes locked, and then the music began, a slow rousing beat. He couldn't have asked for a better choice of song as he moved his feet and she followed. Self-assured and elegant, she floated lightly across the floor. Amazingly, each step was executed in unison as though they had been dancing together for years.

On a turn their bodies came together. With his cheek next to hers, he inhaled her soft feminine scent. He increased the pressure at the small of her back, holding her tight against him. A grin found its way to his mouth when she didn't pull away. His palm slid lower, riding the gentle swell of her ass. They were so close now he felt the rapid beat of her heart, her elevated breathing. The lady was aroused. On another turn he wedged his thigh between her legs and ground his hips in time to the music.

She gasped. Her tongue darted out, wetting her lips and drawing his attention. He leaned into her, capturing her mouth.

Soft and pliant, her lips parted and invited him to taste. His tongue slipped between her lips and in the next minute he found himself tumbling into heaven. There was no innocence in her caress as she sucked on his tongue, pulling him farther inside her heat. He tilted his head and deepened the kiss. She released his hand and wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing him back with fervor.

The sultry glance she gave him as the caress ended made his heart flutter. For a moment they just stood there, and then they began to dance again. Damned if she wasn't fucking him with her eyes, mirroring the unquenched desire he knew reflected in his own eyes. When she rubbed against his thigh, his cock hardened even more with anticipation.

"Darlin', you're playing with fire." The growl came from his diaphragm.

Long eyelashes brushed her cheeks. "Who's playing?" she whispered seductively.

His pulse sped. "Your place or mine?" He almost choked on the last word. She had already been to his place once tonight. Shit. Every muscle inside him clenched. JD could see their night of ecstasy screeching to a halt.

"Mine," she said without hesitation.

A breath of relief eased from his lungs. Taking her hand in his, he began to lead her through the crowd.

When he pushed open the door a fresh breeze swept over the pine trees, washing away the scents of the bar. People were hanging around outside. Several of his friends nodded, giving him a grin of approval. They stopped in front of a black Lexus, and a warning sign flickered in his mind.

Materialistic and superficial. City girl.

Everything he was against, but his body didn't seem to be cooperating. Instead of releasing her, he trapped her against the vehicle, one arm on each side of her. Lowering his head so that their lips almost touched, he asked, "Where are you staying?"

“Marriott.” Her warm breath brushed over his face.

“Springhill?”

“Yes.” She closed the distance between them, pressing her lips and body to his.

He tasted the sweetness of her kiss again. As her hips moved seductively across his, a twinge erupted in his groin. He moaned into her mouth. He couldn’t wait to strip her naked and feel the warmth of her surrounding him. Breathlessly he broke the caress and stepped aside.

“We’ll take your car and come back for my truck in the morning.” It might have been presumptuous of him to think he’d be spending the night, but instinctively he knew that one taste of her would not be enough. He reached for the door and allowed her to crawl inside before he moved around the vehicle and started to enter. Several boxes strewn over the seat stopped him. “Shopping?” Each package contained his family’s crest, a large T in Roman script.

“No. Gifts from a potential client.” She grew quiet. Then she twisted the key and the engine started. When she looked at him again her expression grew serious. “I’m only passing through.”

He read her unspoken words clearly. Tonight was for pleasure, nothing more.

One night—no commitments. Exactly what he wanted too.

## Chapter Two

Seconds after the hotel door opened to Stella's suite she found herself locked in the dark-haired cowboy's warm embrace. JD's large frame folded around her, consuming her thoughts as his lips caressed her bare shoulder. She traced her palms along bulging biceps wrapped in a cotton T-shirt. Curling her fingers, she pulled his shirttail from his jeans. The growl that came from deep in his throat thrilled her. There was something untamed and rugged about this man as he stared down at her with a predatory glint in his eyes. Without a doubt she knew this night would be one for the memory books. She skimmed her hand up the best six-pack she had ever felt.

Mmmm... Solid. Defined. And oh so sexy. She inhaled JD's musky scent along with the disinfectant used to cleanse the room.

A gentle tug at her back caught her attention as the zipper of her dress fell in a whisper. The silky material teased and tantalized her skin on a path to pool at her feet until she wore nothing but stilettos, a strapless red bra and matching lacy panties that rode high on her hips. Delicious chills raced up her spine. When he stepped back to assess her, a tremor of anticipation shook her. Standing in the middle of the room with a complete stranger staring at her, she felt exposed and wanton.

He jerked his hat off and tossed it upon the coffee table. "Damn, darlin'. You're beautiful." There was no hesitation as he removed his shirt to display a muscled chest and dusting of dark hair that swirled around his bellybutton before dipping low to disappear into his jeans.

Her pulse leaped. "You're not so bad yourself, cowboy." He was even better looking in full light. Rich black hair cut short on the sides, but long on top to reveal natural waves that framed an almost square face with an obstinate jaw and eyes bluer than this morning's Montana sky. Yet it was the sex appeal he exuded that made her heart race as if she'd run a hundred-yard dash. It had been way too long since she'd had a man. The thought of taking him to bed made her nipples grow taut and heat release between her thighs.

Unable to resist, she reached for his belt buckle and pulled him to her. "Show me more." Her voice dropped an octave.

His eyes grew smoky with desire. "Yes, ma'am." Taking her hand off him, he unfastened his buckle, button and zipper. She looked down to see his cock push against his skivvies. A dot of moisture on the white cloth gave her the incredible urge to taste him. Visions of her mouth wrapped around him, sucking until he burst, danced in her mind. Wings of arousal fluttered low in her belly.

Instead of revealing himself to her, he sat on the small loveseat and reached for a boot. With a tug he removed the shoe and sock, before reaching for the other. There was no hurry in his movements as he set his boots neatly to the side. The mischief on his handsome face told her he was teasing her, building the storm of need inside her that apparently glowed like a beacon.

Lord knows it was working.

She swallowed hard, waiting—wanting.

When he raised his hips and pushed his jeans and underwear down around his ankles, “Oh sweet Jesus” slipped from her mouth. Warmth rushed her face. Shamelessly she pinned her gaze on his rock-hard erection arching against his belly. He had to be eight, nine inches at least. He crammed his hand in his jeans pocket and extracted a condom before he tossed the pants aside.

Stella took several steps toward him and then stopped.

What a gorgeous specimen of masculinity. She had never seen anything like him in the throngs of New York.

He took a moment to sheathe himself before he spread his arms along the top of the couch. There was wicked playfulness in his expression. “Your turn.” His cock twitched invitingly.

A burning ache spread throughout her body. Without any hesitation she reached behind her and pinched the clasp of her bra. The scrap of lace fell upon the carpet. The coolness in the room washed over her nipples, creating a delightful sting as they tightened.

“Beautiful.” He lowered one arm, folding his fingers around his erection. Stella inhaled a shaky breath as his hand slid up and down, his hips rising to meet each thrust. “More, darlin’. I want to see all of you.”

Rubbery legs kept her standing as her palms smoothed down her body, igniting sparks of sensation against her skin. Hooking her thumbs into her panties, she glided them lower, keeping her gaze on the firm pumping of JD’s hand.

Would he like her Brazilian wax, the landing strip designed into a downward arrow?

When the lacy material slipped over her hips, he released an animalistic growl that made her heart beat faster. Her hands shook as she dragged her panties down her thighs and past her knees to her ankles, leaving her standing in nothing but red stilettos.

His hand stilled. “Come here.” The thickness in his tone swept over her skin like a caress.

She stepped out of her panties, her heels silent against the carpet as she curved around the coffee table toward him. One knee on the couch, she spread her legs and straddled him. Placing her palms on his shoulders, she lowered her body. The moment his cock touched her sex, moisture anointed him. She stopped to enjoy the tingles rippling through her.

“Mmmm...” He ran a finger between her breasts, straight to the small line of pubic hair. “I like this.” He fondled the arrow, tracing it several times before he dipped lower, skimming across her clit.

She flinched as thunderbolts shot upward from her core. “Oh.” The word burst upon a gasp.

He didn't smile, but his eyes sparkled. "Wet. I like that in my woman."

Stella couldn't remember any man referring to her as "my woman". It had a nice ring to it. She stared into his dreamy eyes and thought, *For tonight I am yours, cowboy.*

His warm hands settled on her waist. "I want to feel all of you." Slowly he guided her down so that the head of his cock parted her sex.

Oh. God. Yes.

She wasn't sure he'd fit. For a moment there was resistance. His hips rose and with more tenderness than she expected, he took the time to ease in, until he was seated so deep he was all she could feel. Her breath caught at the fullness.

His touch was firm but gentle as he caressed his palms from her waist up her rib cage, skimming the undersides of her breasts, and then back. "Damn, darlin', you feel good." He nudged her nose with his before he brushed his mouth across hers, once, twice. Seductively he nibbled on her bottom lip. She leaned into him, wanting a real kiss. Their gazes connected in an exchange of heat and passion. Feather light, he drew his tongue along the seam of her lips and then he pushed. When her lips parted, he pressed his mouth to hers in a long, consuming kiss that made every bone in her body soften. Her arms slid around his neck and she held on.

There was no denying the man could kiss. He didn't demand—he tempted her, thrusting in and out to conquer, releasing power so arousing she became lost within it. Her breasts swelled, ached for more, and more was what she got as his tongue swept across her mouth, leaving no area untouched.

When the caress ended, she eased back and licked her lips, tasting his dark desire. The slight adjustment of her hips pushed him deeper. The sensation was so exquisite, she started a slow, sensual rocking.

Strong hands held her stationary. "Don't move." The hardness in his tone rang an order, not a request. For some reason that made her hotter and the need to move even more desirable.

JD looked at the woman straddling him as he sat on the sofa stark-ass naked. Her chest rose and fell with each heavy breath, drawing his attention to her rosy nipples. His mouth watered to taste them. He could fuck her hard and fast, right here—right now. Then again, the fire in her eyes said she expected this cowboy to give her more than a slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am ride. No. There was something in her passionate expression that demanded she be loved all night long, and he was just the man to fulfill her dreams.

His palms smoothed up her back, feeling the coolness of her hair float across his hands. Her skin was as silky as the long tresses he ran his fingers through before fisting his hands to pull her head backwards. Her mouth parted on the sweetest sound of surprise, but the flames flickering in her eyes said she enjoyed her lovin' a little on the rougher side.



“Like that, darlin’?”

“Yes,” she hissed.

Leaning forward, he licked a path over one of her nipples, felt it bead against his tongue. He took the nub into his mouth, sucked long and hard, before scraping his teeth across the sensitive skin.

She flinched, inhaling a sharp breath. Her neatly groomed nails bit into his shoulders. Her hips moved against his once again as if she couldn’t control herself. This time he gave her rein.

The ride began slow and seductive. Each voluptuous sway of her body set his heart to flutter. Her breasts gently bounced and he brought his hands up to cup their soft weight. Rolling each nipple between his fingers, he squeezed and tugged. Heavy eyelashes brushed against her cheeks. The sultriest expression fell across her beautiful face as she increased the rhythm, fucking him hard and fast.

Blood rushed his groin. His toes curled against the carpet. He fought the incredible sensation. “Damn, darlin’—” Liquid fire shot up his dick, stealing his breath. Every muscle in his body tensed in his effort to keep his orgasm at bay. With his hands at her waist, he moved her quickly off his lap and onto her feet.

Her eyes sprung wide with surprise.

In a heated rush he rose and adjusted them so that he stood behind her. A pang rang through his lower midsection. He wouldn’t last long. “Put your knees on the couch and grab the back.”

In nothing but red stilettos she knelt and bent over.

Holy shit!

His hungry gaze followed the delicate line of her body. She was the sexiest woman he had ever seen. A taut ass and the delicate arch of her back made him impossibly harder. For a moment he couldn’t move, only stand there and breathe in her essence.

When she glanced over her shoulder, those honey eyes turned to molten gold, tightening his chest. He found himself drowning in them as if she weaved a spell around his heart and was reeling him in hook, line and sinker.

Then her perfect lips parted. “Fuck me, cowboy.”

She boldly wiggled her ass. A deep groan formed in his chest. He swallowed hard. The way she watched him move behind her made his balls draw flush against his body. He placed his hands on the swell of her hips, leaned in between her splayed thighs. One thrust and he buried himself deep inside her wet haven. He didn’t move. Instead, he held their bodies together and relished how right she felt.

Control barely within his grasp, he started a slow, steady pace. “Is this what you want?”

A primal cry of satisfaction met his question before she screamed, “Yes.” Her hands gripped the back of the couch.

His fingers pressed into her hips as he watched his cock slide in and out of her warm, wet pussy. Damn. Their bodies coming together was so arousing goose bumps spread across his skin. Pressure built at

the base of his cock. His hips pumped hard and fast. The musky scent of sex filled the air. He couldn't get enough.

A whimper pushed past her lips. The tightening and release of her inner muscles signaled the beginning of her orgasm. A particularly strong contraction squeezed him. Her head fell back in a waterfall of golden-brown hair and her lips parted on a gasp. The next time she looked at him flames of desire stared back. With her insides clenched greedily around his cock, he shoved a hand between her legs, found the beat of her sex and stroked.

"Oh God," she breathed.

Each thrust was deep as he ground his hips against her ass. The tremor that quaked through him felt like a dam bursting. His body jerked once, twice, and liquid fire ripped from his erection. Another groan rose from deep inside him, mixing with her cries. Over and over her pussy spasmed, leaving his knees weak, his mind and body spent. It took all he had to step back and ease from her warmth.

Offering her his hand, he assisted her off the couch. Without hesitating, she turned into his arms. The awkwardness that usually occurred after sex with a complete stranger was surprisingly absent. She gazed at him with such tenderness that he held her a little closer—a little tighter. Pressing his lips to her forehead, he heard the soft sigh she released as she tipped her head back and glanced up at him.

He kissed her briefly on the lips. "Let me clean up, and then we'll take this party into the bedroom." Cupping her ass, his fingers closed around the globes, squeezing. "I haven't had enough of you."

The cutest grin spread across her face. "I like the sound of that." She stepped out of his arms, heading for the kitchenette that sported a coffeemaker, microwave and a mini-bar. Turning toward the bathroom, he heard her open the refrigerator. "Do you want something to drink? I think there's a beer in here."

Before he closed the door, he said, "Sure." He took a moment to stare at himself in the mirror. The truth was written in his worried eyes. He closed them briefly then switched the water on, thrusting his hands beneath the cool spray to splash and rub his face. Letting this one go would be difficult. There was something special about her, something that made his insides knot. Quickly he cleaned up and re-entered the room.

Naked, lying on her belly across the bed, she made the sexiest picture. Her gaze followed him as he retrieved the beer bottle from the nightstand and took a swig before he climbed upon the mattress. The bed moaned beneath his weight. Brushing aside her hair, he breathed in her silky skin. The gentle curve in the small of her back called to him. Pressing his mouth to the spot, he trailed kisses up her spine.

"How 'bout spending the weekend with me? I mean that is— Uh, when did you say you were leaving?" he corrected.

"I fly out Tuesday morning."

"Perfect." The word left his mouth and he froze, remembering he had another commitment for tomorrow. Every other Saturday he took a couple of the boys horseback riding and fishing. Of course, these

types of activities were nearly everyday occurrences to the boys living in Montana. Still, they looked forward to their time together. It was another opportunity for them to run wild without their parents' supervision. In fact, they did more pranks and getting into trouble than fishing. JD was just there to make sure they didn't drown each other.

He stared at Stella. Would she be interested in going? Four eyes on the little hellions would be better than two.

She rolled over, giving him a delicious view of plump breasts and that arrow landing strip. "What's wrong?"

He couldn't help himself from tracing the dark hair at the apex of her thighs. "I forgot that I promised to take my Boy Scout troop fishing tomorrow morning."

"Boy Scouts?" A delightful giggle spilled from her lips. "You're kidding."

"Nope." He enjoyed giving back to the community. Plus, the boys were all children of work hands at his ranch.

She rolled into a sitting position. "Do you want me to take you back to get your truck tonight?"

His fingers danced across her nipple. "Absolutely not. Why don't you join us?"

Her eyes widened. "Me? Fishing?" A you-gotta-be-kidding-me expression blanketed her face. Obviously she had never held a pole or enjoyed the thrill of reeling in a trout.

"Yeah. You." He pulled her into his arms. "Maybe afterwards we can come back here—get naked."

"Or maybe after your jaunt in the wilderness you can join me for dinner?"

"C'mon, darlin'. I'll have a picnic prepared. Do you like to ride?"

"Horses?" A smile peaked through her apprehension.

He grinned, nodding. Clearly she liked to ride.

"As a child I rode, but—" The cutest blush spread across her face. "I couldn't possibly interfere with your plans."

He drew her back into his arms. "Yes. You can. If you don't want to fish, you can just sit beneath a tree and watch me chase four rowdy boys." He paused. "Besides, you haven't seen anything like the majestic mountains of Montana. Water so blue and air so clean and crisp you can see forever. The trees so—" He grew silent when she stared at him with something akin to wonder.

The way she looked at him made him feel exposed, as if she could see his soul—what lay deep in his heart. "You love this place." It wasn't a question, but a statement. In seconds she had seen in him what his grandfather could never see or refused to see.

"Ranching. Montana. They are in my blood." It was all he had ever wanted.

She cupped his face. "I wish I had your passion, knew what I really wanted." Sadness darkened her eyes.

For some silly reason his heart ached for her. At that moment she looked like a lost girl. “Come with me.” He ran a palm up her arm. “Let me show you my world.”

She smiled, softly shaking her head. “Not my thing.”

As he laid her back on the bed, he traced a finger between her breasts. “If I can make you scream my name in less than three minutes, will you join us?”

She raised a haughty brow. “Three minutes?”

“Three minutes.” Already his mouth watered with the thought of parting her thighs and tasting her. “Is it a deal?”

Raising her arms above her head, she stretched like a slinky cat. Her eyes sparkled with impish merriment. “Why not.”

Without delay he covered her lips with his, plunged his tongue into her mouth and devoured her. His fingers plucked at the tips of her breasts, which firmed with each pull. She cried out into his kiss and he deepened the caress. One thing he had discovered about this woman, she loved to be kissed. Her body became putty in his hands as she softened beneath his touch. It was fucking hot. Easing his assault, he sipped lightly from her mouth, before he finally broke the connection. A smile crested on his face as her hands clawed at his shoulders, begging him for more.

Instead of giving her what she wanted he trailed kisses down her chest, abdomen, to the strip of hair below. When he spread her thighs, revealing the smooth, shaven mound beneath, he wanted to moan in hunger. The pink flesh glistened with her juices, the earthy scent making his mouth water. Blood rushed to his head. For a moment he felt dizzy with anticipation. His cock instantly hardened as he leaned in for a taste.

He slid his tongue across her slit, and she whimpered a sound of naked longing. Jesus Christ. The woman tasted as rich and slick as honey. His hands caressed her waist, moving upward to cup her breasts. Slowly he traced intricate designs around her taut nipples. When she parted her legs and raised her hips asking for more, his tongue plunged between her swollen folds.

She arched violently against him. “JD, please.”

Drawing her thick juices into his mouth, he lapped at her heatedly. As he stared up at her from between her thighs, she was the most erotic creature he had ever lain with.

Her fingers were clenched in the blankets beneath her, an expression of sheer rapture upon her face. “Ahhh.” A shiver raked her and she writhed.

He grasped her hips, sucking her farther into his mouth. His tongue teased the pulse of her sex before circling her clit with firm strokes. Spreading the folds of her pussy apart, he drove his tongue deeper, drinking like a man dying of thirst. He couldn’t get enough.

His pounding erection pressed against the bed and his belly. Engorged testicles throbbed with need. He moaned against her flesh. Damn. He could come this second, but he wouldn’t.

She trembled, thighs quivering. Then her body convulsed. “JD!” The sweetest cry of ecstasy exploded in his ears.

Beneath a whiplash of sensation, pleasure coursed through him. He moved up her body. She was friggin’ hot as he positioned himself between her legs. No sooner did he seat himself deep inside her warmth, fire lanced down his cock. A jet of semen spewed from the narrow slit. Each hard discharge set his heart to pumping wildly.

As the heat of their bodies cooled, he held her close and whispered, “I win,” in her ear.

## Chapter Three

Stella Sinclair fishing?

Her girlfriends would be rolling with laughter if they could see her now. She had donned jeans and a short-sleeve western shirt that Toliver had gifted her with. The black boots she wore felt strange and a little stiff, but they were more functional than her stilettos. A chuckle rose. If she was being honest with herself, she didn't look half bad.

Inhaling the cool, clean air untouched by human hands, she wondered at the differences between this crisp morning and the ménage of scents that would be assailing her in New York. As she gazed across acres and acres of rolling hills and open space, she could see why JD was so drawn to this area. If she had to choose one word to describe the panorama it would be "heavenly".

The fishing hole, as JD had called it, was tucked away on the Yellowstone River. Not a soul was present, but her and him and the four sharp-eyed little eight- to ten-year-olds who hadn't appeared happy that she had tagged along.

As she stood by the horses they'd ridden to this obscure location, she heard the boy who had been introduced to her as Clifford grumble, "This is a man-card violation." The lanky youth with angular features pinned his heated gaze on JD as the other three boys snickered.

Stringing a worm on a hook, JD glanced at Clifford. "Man-card violation?"

Stella stifled a giggle behind her hand, which now smelled like horsehair. She knew exactly where the brat was going with the comment. What tickled her was that JD seemed completely oblivious.

"Girl. Fishing." The "duh" attitude rang in his tone as he shook his black mop of hair so that it swept across his eyes. "This is lame." He pushed the wayward tendrils aside.

"Shhh." JD darted a glance her way, but she pretended to be intrigued with the beautiful bay gelding she stroked. "Mind your manners," he muttered.

"She looks like a city girl," Chucky, the little redheaded freckle face, added.

For some odd reason the child's comment hurt. Even with her decked out in authentic cowgirl clothes, the kids recognized that she didn't belong in Montana or any other Podunk town.

Out of nowhere unexpected tears welled. Her gaze fell to the ground to hide the sudden show of emotion. She swallowed hard, pulling her thoughts to the grin of approval she had received from JD this morning at how she looked. It had made her heart flutter. But now—

Rolling her head from shoulder to shoulder, she attempted to vanquish the rising tension. *Remember, you're just passing through. Don't let them bother you.*

But it did.

She'd had the evening of a lifetime wrapped in the arms of a cowboy who gave her more than a night of pleasure. Amazingly, he had held her and talked after they had made love once more. Not about superficial things. He wanted to know about her and even shared his joy of Montana and his life. It had been a soul-enriching experience that had mesmerized her. It sucked that she would have no more than a weekend with this man.

Raising her gaze, she took a moment to watch Trevor, the youngest and smallest of the boys. In one fluid motion, he eased back his pole and flung it forward. The line gracefully soared through the air and splashed a couple hundred feet before him. The gentle current pulled the slack out of the string. He eased down upon the ground, sitting Indian style. Hope and patience played across his adorable face.

Inching her chin higher, she squared her shoulders. *How hard can it be to fish? If he can do it, I can do it.* Fact was she had always been able to do anything she put her mind to.

Fishing? No problem.

Steps of determination carried her to JD's side. "Which pole is mine?"

One brow rose as he attempted to hide the grin that pulled at the corners of his mouth. "You sure?"

"Absolutely." She spoke with an air of confidence that made her proud.

He handed her the pole he'd been baiting. "Here. You can use this one."

Stella watched the poor little worm wiggle, wrapping itself around the hook. Her confidence slipped. Nerves skittered across her skin, but she forced a grin and a bleak "Thank you" as she accepted it. With a show of feigned confidence she hid the gulp that swallowed the knot in her throat.

*I can do this.*

The pole felt awkward in her hands, which trembled slightly. Out of the corner of her eyes, she saw Clifford press the little thingy on the reel down as he pulled back his rod. When the pole whipped forward, he released his thumb and the line went soaring.

Stella inhaled another shaky breath.

"Do you want some help?" Harrison, a scruffy-looking blond asked. He wiped his runny nose on his sleeve and Stella fought not to cringe. Instead she pulled a tissue from her pocket and handed it to him.

"Help? Me? Of course not, but thank you," she said loud enough so all the boys heard. They turned and looked at her with merriment in their eyes.

Brats.

JD grabbed her free hand. "Let's go farther downriver."

Each step brought a wave of trepidation upon her. Still she silently repeated, *I can do this.*

“Your grip should be similar to holding a tennis racket.” He spoke softly as he glanced back at the boys. All four had their interested gazes locked on them. “Press down firmly on the release button and hold it there.” His directions were quiet but swift. “Turn your body about a quarter turn. Bend your arm at the elbow, raising your hand with the rod until it almost reaches eye level. Gently sweep the rod forward, releasing the button.” They stopped where the river widened, and the sound of the rushing water filled her ears. “Oh. One more thing”—he leaned closer and gave her a quick peck on the cheek—“after you cast, reel in the line until you hear a click.” He must have read her confusion because he added, “Secures the line. Have fun.” He gave her the cutest wink, and then he walked back toward the boys.

Unsettling feelings bombarded her. She could face the shark-infested waters of New York, but toss her amongst a handful of kids and one gorgeous cowboy and she literally fell apart. Not only did she want to show the boys she wasn’t just a city girl, she wanted to show JD.

A little voice in the back of her head asked, *Why are you making such a big deal out of this adventure? This cowboy?*

Bottom line, she liked JD. She pressed the button down on the reel. Their night together had been beyond amazing. She had never had a man speak so freely about his dreams and aspirations. He wanted to increase the stock, maybe start breeding his own cattle and horses.

Cocking her arm, she pondered the idea of what he would look like in a suit and tie. Without a doubt she knew it would kill his spirit. He loved Montana, his ranch, and he hated New York or anything big-city.

She watched him sneak up behind Trevor and tackle him to the ground. Harrison and Chucky dropped their poles to dog pile atop JD. Their laughter was contagious. Hers bubbled up and spilled out. Stella wasn’t even aware that she had flicked her pole forward, releasing her thumb, until she saw the line soar high and at least ninety feet before her.

Eyes wide with amazement, she cried, “Ohmigod. I did it.” At the last minute she remembered to reel in the line, listening for the click.

JD and the boys stopped what they were doing and streams of approval came her way. Her chest squeezed with excitement. She had actually cast her line without making a total fool of herself. But her enthusiasm died when a firm tug almost pulled the rod out of her hands.

Her fingers tightened around the pole. “Help,” she squealed like a girl.

“You got one,” Harrison yelled. The boys flocked toward her like a gaggle of geese, each chattering and throwing out suggestions as she stood frozen, feet rooted to the ground. Her line zigzagged from one side to the next.

“Fish or reel your lines in,” JD ordered. The boys screeched to a halt and turned, running back to their poles. Chucky and Harrison reeled their lines in and joined JD on his way toward her.

The tension in her pole relaxed and she breathed a sigh of relief, but it was short-lived when the line jerked once again. “What do I do?”



She thought she heard Clifford snort, while Harrison and Chucky yelled in unison, “Reel it in.”

When JD was beside her she pushed the pole toward him, but he held up his hands. “It’s yours, darlin’. Hold the rod with one hand and reel that fish in.”

“Reel?” She glanced down at the lever thingy and mentally shook her head. What an idiot. Heat flared across her cheeks. The tenderness in his eyes and his encouraging smile renewed her confidence.

*I can do this.*

Gripping the rod, she began turning the handle. The resistance was immediate, surprising her with the strength of the creature on the other end. The pole bowed lower and she feared it would break.

“It’s a big one,” Harrison yelled.

Her heart nearly stopped when a rainbow of color broke the water and leaped into the air. Her breath caught. The beautiful sight was something straight from the wildlife channel minus the symphonic arrangement. The animal gracefully soared through the air, twisting and turning, before diving. A splash three times its size was the result.

It was the coolest thing she had ever witnessed. A girlish giggle bubbled from her throat. “What now? What do I do now?”

The fish fought desperately, slapping the surface of the water before submerging and pulling the line tight. All the while she continued to crank the shaft.

“You’re doing great,” JD said encouragingly.

By the time the fish was up against the bank, Harrison reached out with a net and scooped it out of the water. She hadn’t known she was smiling until her cheeks began to ache. It was the most astonishing feeling of success.

She had caught her first fish.

JD watched with amusement. Stella widened her hands and swayed her body, reliving the excitement of capturing the fish. All grins and nods, the boys were captivated by her story, which was quickly becoming a fable. The size of the animal became larger and larger, even though the real proof of her catch now swam confined just below the crystal waters.

Yet it was the woman who held JD’s attention. Rays of sunlight beamed behind her. She glowed with a beauty that took his breath away. How a hoity-toity city girl could change into the warm, earthy woman that stood down the river from him was beyond him. In one night she had enthralled him, his infatuation not diminishing with the morning light.

As if she were aware of his thoughts, she turned and gifted him with a brilliant smile. Harrison plucked the stringer, a metal line with clips, from the river. The rainbow-striped fish thrashed, unable to dislodge itself from the link fastened through its gill and mouth. The mischievous child shoved the animal toward her. She let out the cutest little scream, scrabbling to avoid touching the slimy thing.

Boys will be boys. Harrison moved closer.

In seconds he was laughing and chasing her around the banks. Chucky joined the pursuit with a worm in hand. A misstep over a stone hidden amongst the tall green grass and she stumbled, falling face down. A second of silence followed as she lay unmoving.

JD's heart stuttered.

Worried expressions flashed across both boys' faces as they halted in their tracks. When she flipped over on her back laughing, the boys joined her.

Harrison cautiously offered her the fish. "Touch 'em. He don't bite."

She pushed into a sitting position. "Oh here." She grabbed the fish. Her lips thinned into a straight line. "Eewww." She wrinkled her nose. "Kind of slimy, isn't it?" When the fish started to wiggle, she nearly dropped it, but held on tight. "Now what?"

The boys glanced at each other, clearly unsure of what to say next.

"How 'bout we put the fish back into the water and grab our poles. One fish does not make a supper," JD informed them. He extended a hand and assisted her to her feet.

She went rigid. Her brows rose. "Supper?"

In the sunlight her eyes looked like gold, sparkling. He couldn't help himself. He leaned in and brushed his lips across hers.

"Eewww," Chucky groaned.

As Harrison secured the fish back in the water, he said, "We eat what we catch and yours is a big one." He grinned ear to ear, picking up his fishing pole.

She started to brush her hands down her jeans and then stopped. "He's kidding. Right?" A sniff of her hands and she cringed.

"It's the law of the land," Clifford slung over a shoulder. Before JD could explain, Clifford's pole bent. "I got one."

She narrowed her sight on JD.

"Don't look at me in that tone of voice." He chuckled. "Harrison's mother prepares what we catch. She's a damn good cook. You won't want to miss her hush puppies."

"JD." The growl in her voice as she said his name tickled the shit out of him.

He rubbed his palms up and down her arms. "Trust me. You'll have fun. Now let's get your pole baited."

Time flew by so quickly. The sun had moved to the west and already begun its descent. It had been a good fishing day and an even better opportunity to see the real Stella. She was comfortable in the wide-open spaces, especially with children. Nothing like what he expected. Between the six of them they had caught seven rainbow trout, three brown trout, four walleye, three smallmouth bass and five mountain

whitefish. She had snagged five out of twenty-two fish. Yet when it came to cleaning them she had bowed out, offering to help Trevor pack the picnic basket.

As JD cleaned the last fish, the three youngest boys gravitated toward her. Clifford tossed them a disconcerted look. The boy's mother had passed away two years ago last fall—breast cancer. He watched Stella gently wipe Harrison's nose before she ran her fingers through Trevor's hair as they headed for the horses.

Cleaning his knife in the flowing water, JD looked up. "Missing your mom?"

"Sometimes," Clifford mumbled. "She's pretty."

Flashes of the boy's dark-haired mother popped into JD's head. "Yes. Your mother was very attractive."

"No. Yeah. I mean her." The boy threw a nod toward Stella. "She your girlfriend?"

JD paused. What did he call someone who'd drifted in only to soon drift out of his life? Stella would be leaving after his grandfather's meeting. "Just a friend."

"But you like her?"

"Yes, I do," he answered without hesitating. In fact, he liked everything about her. His knife closed with a snap before he pocketed it in his jeans. He pushed to his feet and started to move. "Best be getting back." Stopping next to Clifford, he ruffled the boy's hair. "You know the womenfolk hate for us to be late." With his arm around Clifford's shoulder they walked toward the horses. The other three boys had already mounted their ride. "Ready?" he asked Stella.

She nodded.

As he assisted her atop her horse she leaned down. Her full lips tempted him, but he restrained from closing the distance between them. "Thank you," she whispered.

"For what?" He gave the cinch on her saddle a tug to ensure it was tight.

Her smile sparkled. "Today. I really enjoyed myself."

He stroked her leg, remembering how slender and soft it felt against his skin. "My pleasure." His body heated with the memory. "Sorry about dinner, but the boys expect it." Usually so did he, but tonight he would rather be locked in Stella's arms.

"Of course. I understand." There was no resentment in her tone or expression. She spoke the truth, which made him like her even more. He needed a woman who could roll with the punches, not keep a schedule and expect him to abide by it.

He reached for the reins of his buckskin, placed the toe of his boot in the stirrup and swung his leg over, taking a seat upon the saddle. "Will you join us?"

"Sure. Why not." She nudged her horse with her heels and the gelding trotted off.

Clifford hung back with him as the other three boys rode alongside Stella. They were full of questions about her and where she lived.

“Are there lots of bad guys in New York?” Trevor asked, adding, “Have you ever seen Spider-Man?”

Clifford shook his head. “What a jerk.”

JD quieted him with a “*Shhh*.”

“I guess New York has its share of bad guys,” she answered.

Chucky gave his pony an extra kick to stay up with the rest. “What about Spider-Man?”

Sun glistened off her silky hair. “Spider-Man, no, but I did see someone who looked a lot like Clark Kent.”

“Superman?” JD didn’t miss the awe in Trevor’s small voice.

“I can’t really say it was Superman, but he wore glasses and had a notebook and pen in his hands.”

“That’s so cool,” Chucky cooed.

The chatter continued, only stopping when they reached the truck and horse trailer. Several of his ranch hands had returned to where he and Stella had met them earlier that morning. Trevor jumped into his father’s arms, already spinning tales about the fish he’d caught, while the other boys headed for her rental car instead of the crew-cab pickup pulling the horse trailer.

JD shot them a frown. “You boys are riding with your dads.”

“We’re riding with you. Stella said so,” Chucky informed him with a huge grin.

He shot her a glance. “She did, did she?”

So much for spending a little time alone with her before dinner. Still, he had the night.

## Chapter Four

From where Stella sat on a picnic bench, she glanced around at the large gathering. It looked like people from around the county had been invited to join in the fish fry. Almost every person had a bowl or plate of food to contribute to the barbeque. Of course, it was more like a down-home get together. Simple. Warm. So unlike the soirées she attended in New York where everyone put on the ritz to impress.

She continued to tear lettuce into smaller pieces and toss them into a bowl. “I don’t think we caught enough fish.”

Hazel, Harrison’s mother, a young blonde, began to slice a tomato. “There’s always plenty. Throughout the week the men go fishing after work. I freeze their catch and then thaw what I think we’ll need.”

“Good planning,” Stella acknowledged.

The silence between them stretched, but it wasn’t an awkward silence. She watched in awe as everyone pitched in to assist. There was laughter and chatter; even the children seemed excited, helping wherever they could. The smell of fish cooking on an open flame made her stomach growl.

Placing the sliced tomatoes in the bowl, Hazel glanced at her. “How long have you known JD?” The woman’s question came out of left field.

“Actually, I met him last night...” Stella slid her gaze toward the woman, “...at the Rusty Nail.”

Hazel’s greenish-brown eyes widened. “Really?” Her voice warbled. “Wow.” A sweet smile touched her lips. “You must have made some impression. JD doesn’t take any of his women fishing with the boys or for that matter to our barbeque.”

Women? Heat rushed up her neck, flaring across her cheeks. Her mouth tightened.

Hazel placed her palm over Stella’s hand. “I’m sorry. I’ve embarrassed you.”

“No. Of course not.” Truth was she wasn’t embarrassed. For a moment jealousy had stung her, which was irrational and plain stupid. After Tuesday she’d be gone. “I’m here on business, just passing through.”

Hazel’s blonde ponytail bobbed. “Too bad.” She paused. “Well, I’m glad you’re here.” Sincerity rang in her voice. “I’d better check the fish.” As she hurried toward the grill, Harrison flew into her arms. Mother and son looked so happy. When Jerry, Harrison’s father, joined them, they looked like the perfect little family.

From somewhere nearby she heard the gentle melody of a guitar and then someone began to sing. A hand settled on her shoulder and squeezed. When she glanced up she peered into JD’s soft blue eyes.

He bent down and gave her tender kiss on the cheek. "Everything okay?"

"Great," she lied. Everything wasn't okay. For the first time she was seeing life in a whole different way, friends and family spending time together. Enjoying and caring about others throughout the year instead of only meeting up on holidays and vacations and then going their separate ways.

She swallowed hard, fighting a tear that threatened to emerge.

"Will you be okay here for a little longer? It's my turn to crank the ice cream." The boyish grin he gave her tightened her chest. The man was gorgeous.

"Sure." She'd just wallow in her own self-pity a tad longer.

He bent down and this time he kissed her passionately, a caress that made her drop the lettuce she held. Gently she cupped his warm cheek, drinking from his lips.

When they parted all eyes were pinned on them. "Sorry. I couldn't help myself." He licked his lips as if tasting her again. Devilment danced across his face. "I can't wait for tonight."

She inhaled his spicy, masculine scent. "Neither can I." Even now her body was heating with desire, her nipples pebbling against the short-sleeve western shirt she wore.

With a wink he was gone, disappearing amongst the men and children.

Was that man for real? She sighed longingly. For lack of a better word, JD was perfect. Her thoughts were interrupted when someone cleared his throat and said, "What a surprise to see you here, Miss Sinclair."

No. The surprise was all hers. When she looked up, before her stood Mr. Toliver. "Sir." She started to rise, but he brushed her off with a hand.

He took a seat across from her and he didn't look happy. "I see that you've met my grandson."

"Grandson?"

He must have read her confusion because he said, "Hmmm. Could it be you don't know?"

A burst of uneasy laughter greeted his question. "I'm afraid I'm at a loss, Mr. Toliver. What exactly is it I'm supposed to know?"

"Jonathan. Oh. Yes. You probably know him as JD."

Her jaw dropped. "JD? Jonathan David," she whispered more to herself. A chill clawed up her spine. She turned to see the subject of their conversation laughing as he cranked the handle of an old ice cream maker. "But he said his last name was Foster."

"It is. His mother is my daughter."

"Oh God." She had screwed her client's grandson. Did Toliver think she was after his account through JD?

He reached out and patted her trembling hand. "It's all good. You didn't know and evidently he wasn't forthright."

A wave of anger rose. *No shit*. JD had forgotten that one little detail. Anger turned to hurt. Had he been playing her all along? He knew where her clothes had come from. He probably even knew who she was.

Still, she didn't like the cunning glint in the old man's eyes. He narrowed them on her. "How much do you want my business?"

"Excuse me?" Now he wanted to talk business?

"I'll make you a deal." His tone dropped as he leaned across the table.

Unease skittered across her shoulders. She pushed the bowl aside. This couldn't be good.

"I've been trying to get Jonathan to take over the business, but he keeps refusing." He glanced at his grandson as he eased back and then pushed to his feet. "Get him to take the reins."

"But—"

"Clearly the boy is infatuated with you. Get him to agree to run the company and the account is yours." He tipped his hat. "I'm counting on you."

In disbelief she watched Toliver move slowly through the crowd, making his way toward the parking lot. The sonofabitch wasn't staying to watch? Of course, it made sense. How could she seduce his grandson in his presence?

Stella couldn't win in this situation. She started to tear at the lettuce with a vengeance. If she did nothing, she'd lose the account. If she convinced JD to accept his family obligation, then when he discovered her betrayal she might lose the account and maybe the man too. Either way, it sucked.

"Got something against that lettuce?" Thumbs tucked into his jeans pockets, Clifford tossed his head, sending his black mane out of his eyes. He stared at her with a cocky grin.

She looked down at the bowl and shredded lettuce, and then back at him. "No." She forced a smile as she pushed the bowl away. "Guess that's good enough."

"I'd say it is." He chuckled. "Hazel said to bring it on over to the food table."

As Stella stood and reached for the bowl, she turned to see Clifford watching her. "Are you still angry that I crashed your fishing trip?"

Color dotted his cheeks. "Nah. You're okay," he paused adding, "for a girl."

"Thank you." She walked beside him. "Where's your mother and father?"

"Dad's working late and my ma died a couple years ago." He hung his head and kicked at a stone lying in the grass.

"I'm so sorry."

He shrugged. When he looked up at her again she saw pain swimming in his eyes. She hung her free arm around his shoulders and gave him a squeeze. She was surprised he didn't move away from her. Instead, he leaned into her.

"I like the way you smell," he said quietly.

“Uh.” She slowly withdrew her arm, feeling a little awkward as she placed the bowl on the table laden with potato and macaroni salads, breads and cakes, casseroles and an array of other delicious-looking food. “Thank you.”

“You and JD have a thang?” Stella was surprised at the boy’s question.

“Thang?” She couldn’t help laughing. “No. I’m just here on business.” She couldn’t believe the mess she was in. Then there was the fact that JD hadn’t been honest with her. He knew damn well why she was here and didn’t say a thing. Maybe it was just a fling to him. For some reason that hurt more than she wanted to admit. Yet both had known their relationship wasn’t going anywhere when they started.

“You okay?” Clifford asked.

“Yes. I’m peachy.” She couldn’t help the sarcasm or the sad revelation that people were the same no matter what part of the country they lived in. Everyone lied.

“My turn.” Harrison crowded JD out of the way, eager to take over the task of churning the ice cream.

JD tousled the boy’s hair before stepping aside. “Remember, we eat dinner before dessert.”

He scanned the area for Stella, smiling when he found her talking to Clifford. His steps hastened toward the woman and child. Easing up next to her, he wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her close. “Miss me?” Strangely he had missed her touch, her sweet kiss. He brushed his lips across hers.

Her expression appeared wary or perhaps she was just tired. They hadn’t had much sleep the night before. “Of course.”

He settled his chin atop her head. “Thought I’d better get over here before this young hoodlum stole my girl.”

Color spread across Clifford’s cheeks. “Yeah. Right.” Clearly uncomfortable, he changed the subject. “Hazel says it’s chow time.”

“Good. I’m hungry.” His tone dropped an octave. “For you,” he murmured in her ear.

She shot an uneasy glance toward Clifford, who was busy dishing a big scoop of potato salad on a paper plate. She squirmed out of JD’s arms, staring quietly at him for a moment. The pause between them was uncomfortable.

“Uh. Me too.” Something in her response lacked the excitement he’d been looking for.

Slipping his finger beneath her chin, he raised her gaze to meet his. “Did Clifford say something to upset you?”

Her tongue slid nervously between her lips. “No. He’s a lovely boy.”

JD could detect a lie when he heard one, but if she didn’t want to share what was disturbing her, then he had no right to meddle. “Hungry?”

“A little.”



He grabbed her hand, leading her toward the beginning of the table where the paper plates, napkins and silverware lay. “You’ve got to try Hazel’s hush puppies.” They were his favorite. He loved a woman who could cook. Watching Stella as she began to take small helpings from various plates of food, he wondered if she cooked or if her life was one of parties and dining out. A plate of fried fish pulled his attention to his stomach, which released a rumble.

Plate loaded down with a variety of cold and hot foods, he followed Stella to an empty picnic table. Before he could scoot in beside her, they were bombarded by their little fishing buddies. Clifford sat on her right, while Harrison slipped beneath JD’s arm and sat to the left of her. The cutest grin spread across her face as she looked up at him.

He shook his head and took a seat.

“So what does the Statue of Liberty look like?” Chucky asked.

“Duh.” Harrison rolled his eyes. “The same as it does on TV.”

Stella ignored Harrison. “Did you know the Statue of Liberty was a gift of international friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States? It’s a universal symbol of freedom and democracy.”

Chewing on a piece of bread, Chucky said, “Really?”

As they chattered on, JD watched how comfortable she appeared with the children, answering each of their questions while inserting bits of history and stats. Each boy stared at her, intrigued as she spoke of Ellis Island and the hardships of the immigrants who arrived so many years ago.

What he discovered from listening to her was that she wasn’t a superficial woman. He popped another hush puppy into his mouth, continuing to watch her animated movements. She was passionate, patriotic and so damn sexy he couldn’t wait to get her back to the hotel, strip her naked and have his way with her. When he caught her eye, she paused. The same desire that coursed through him reflected in her eyes, but there was something else he couldn’t identify.

“Enough questions,” she said. “I need to get back to the hotel and get back to work.”

A chorus of groans met her words.

Trevor looked up with a sorrowful expression. “Do you hafta?”

JD pushed away from the table and got to his feet. “Sorry, boys.”

As Stella rose, each of the boys flocked to her for a hug. Even Clifford stepped into her open arms. She whispered something to the child, but JD couldn’t hear it. The boy nodded and stepped aside.

JD took her hand as she joined him. A sense of pride filled him. “You’re amazing.”

“Amazing?” Confusion furrowed her brow, which made her even more desirable to him. She had no idea how special she was.

“You won those boys’ hearts.” He stopped, pulling her into his arms. “You’ve won my heart.” Lowering his head, he kissed her softly.

As their lips parted, moisture filled her eyes. “Please don’t say that.”

She tried to look away, but he placed a finger beneath her chin and forced her to confront him. “Why?” he asked, even though he knew there were tons of reasons pursuing a relationship with her was wrong. Hell. The miles between them were enough of a deterrent. Yet like a moth to a flame, he felt mesmerized by her.

This time she smoothed the back of her hand across his cheek. “We live two completely different lifestyles—two different cities.” She inhaled a heavy breath, and he could have sworn regret flickered in her eyes. “Let’s leave this for what it is, a weekend fling—nothing more.” Her chin rose slightly, even as she nervously bit her bottom lip.

Damned if her words didn’t sting. Something inside his gut twisted with the thought of letting her go. Even though he knew it was ridiculous, he could see himself settling down with her. She was everything he had dreamt of.

The truth was they knew nothing about each other.

She was right.

He took her hand and placed a kiss on it. “Ever made love beneath the stars?” The sun was sinking in the west. In an hour it would be dark.

She shook her head. Together they headed toward her car.

After he opened the passenger door, she slid inside. JD wasted no time moving around the car and getting behind the steering wheel. The thought of taking her beneath the Montana sky made blood rush to his groin, creating an ache that pulsed between his thighs. He wanted this woman. He turned the key and the engine roared. “How ’bout we swing by the Rusty Nail and pick up my truck? I know just the place to strip you naked and have my way with you.”

In fact, it was the perfect place for her to fall in love with Montana and maybe even him.

## Chapter Five

As JD walked beside Stella, she curiously eyed the sleeping bag tucked beneath his arm. A smile touched her lips. Her cowboy was a Boy Scout at heart. He had insisted on bringing a lantern and a first-aid kit which he carried in a backpack over a shoulder. Even in the twilight of the remaining day, he moved confidently through the secluded forest. She, on the other hand, watched every step, working hard not to fall flat on her face.

A red-orange sun peeked over the mountaintop. A cool breeze whispered through the treetops, giving off a piney scent, which made her think of a warm fire, naked bodies and a night of hot, passionate love. The delicious image disappeared when a deteriorating tree trunk found the toe of her boot and she stumbled. Releasing his hold on the sleeping bag, JD reached out and caught her around the biceps, pulling her safely to his chest.

Her face flushed as she gazed up at him. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome.” His sexy smile set a hundred pairs of butterfly wings loose in her stomach. Her nipples grew taut. Her jeans felt a little too tight as her body heated with his touch.

*What the hell am I doing? I can’t win in this arrangement.* Toliver had seen to that with his proposition.

JD bent and retrieved the bedroll. “I’ll go ahead and clear the path. Make sure there aren’t any bears or fallen trees.” He winked.

Her skin prickled as she jerked her head from side to side looking for big furry things hiding in the shadows. “Bears?” Her voice squeaked.

He chuckled. “Darlin’, you have nothing to worry about. I’ll keep you safe.” His reassurance did little to ease her anxiety. Her disquiet was twofold. Bears and grandfathers. Time was running out.

As JD continued ahead of her, she pinned her sight on his firm, jeans-covered ass. What would it take to convince him to accept responsibility for his family business? Truth was she wanted Toliver’s account and she wanted more time to get to know JD. Maybe, just maybe, there was a chance—

A little voice in the back of her mind interrupted her wayward thoughts, reminding her that she was fooling herself thinking there could be anything between them. Her earlier words had said it all. They lived two completely different lifestyles—two different cities.

The sound of rushing water pulled her from her wanderings. A waterfall was near.

When they broke through the trees into a small clearing, the exquisite sight took her breath away. Clear water gushed from a small opening in a wall of stone and flowed into a pool that trickled into a stream. Large stones jutted out of the ground, surrounded by a bed of green grass sprinkled with wildflowers. She could barely make out their colors in the moonlight. “I’ve never seen anything so gorgeous, so serene.”

He laid the lantern and backpack on the ground and began to unroll the sleeping bag. “I stumbled over this place hunting one year.” When the large blanket was spread wide, he turned to her. “I’ve never brought anyone here. It’s been my place to unwind or just think.”

Her chest squeezed at the look in his eyes. Raw affection stared at her. She took the necessary steps to close the distance between them. Leaning her body against him fully, she nudged his lips apart with the tip of her tongue. He willingly gave her access and she swept inside to taste him.

Mmmm. Masculine. Sexy. His spicy cologne engulfed her senses. When his arms locked around her, every bone in her body melted.

Her kiss of soft exploration turned heated when he tilted his head and deepened the caress. His tongue pushed against hers, gliding past to delve into her mouth and take control. He left no place untouched or unclaimed.

Wrapped in his arms, she didn’t resist when he drove them to their knees on the bedding. Instead she held on tight, refusing to break the sensual touch of his lips against hers. He gave her a little tug, and she felt her shirt pulled from her jeans. Warm hands smoothed around her waist, up her rib cage, raising her arms to remove the garment. Cool air swept over her skin, chills rising. She was breathless when their lips parted.

Calloused hands cupped her face. His thumbs stroked her cheeks. “You’re so beautiful.” His voice was husky with desire. Moonlight bathed his features in shadows. “I want you. Here. Now.”

It wasn’t what he said but how he said it that made the throb between her thighs thicken. An all-consuming need rushed over her, leaving her flustered. She wanted this man and not for just a weekend of unadulterated sex.

Fisting her fingers into his shirt, she jerked his shirttails out of his jeans. The feel of his sinewy abdomen, the strength beneath her hands, made her cry out, “God. Yes.” Her hands shook as she pulled his shirt over his head, knocking off his Stetson. “Need you naked.”

Deft fingers twisted the snaps of her bra and the lacy material released, falling to the ground. As her nipples drew into diamond-hard peaks, stinging rays shot through her breasts. In seconds JD’s warm, wet tongue laved one of the tips. Threading her fingers through his thick hair, she pulled him nearer. He closed his mouth around the flesh and sucked long and hard.

Stella threw back her head, lips parting on a groan. When his teeth skimmed across the sensitive nub, she let out another cry. Moisture dampened her panties. A fireball of need burned low in her belly.

She reached for his belt buckle, fingers fumbling to unfasten it. “I need you inside me.”

Maybe it was the stars burning so bright they sparkled like gems against the now-velvety sky that heated her body. Or perhaps it was the fact she had never had sex on a sleeping bag, the melody of a waterfall lulling her, or the romantic scent of pines all around. Then again, maybe it was the man who’d captured her lips and possibly even her heart.

She met his caress with a hunger of her own, sucking his tongue deep into her mouth. Images of her going down on him, that delicious cock in her mouth, made her squirm impatiently against him.

“Please,” she murmured against his lips.

His eyes darkened as he got to his feet.

Kneeling, she looked up through heavy lashes. “I need to taste you.”

He took his time unfastening his belt and jeans, staring at her with an intensity that sent her desire spiraling.

She didn’t wait—couldn’t. With both hands, she grasped his pants and yanked downward, revealing an impressive bulge against his white skivvies. Her tongue glided between her lips, her mouth watering. Slipping a finger between his waistband and skin, she traced a path and paused.

“Don’t stop.” He weaved his fingers into her hair and eased her forward. “Fuck me with that gorgeous mouth.”

Stella didn’t need any encouragement. She pulled his briefs and jeans down to his knees.

His cock arched against his belly, jerking several times beneath her scrutiny. Folding her fingers around the hard shaft, she began a casual glide from base to head and back again. She heard his sharp intake of air. The veins in his neck protruded as his hold on her hair tightened. Bittersweet pain exploded at her roots, exciting her even more.

She leaned inward, licking a path around the sensitive tip. “More.” There was a thickness in his tone. He thrust his hips forward, and she took him into her mouth.

He was so large that she felt him at the back of her throat. Her gag reflex threatened, but she inhaled through her nose, focusing instead on JD’s lustful expression. She slid her mouth up and down, pausing to suckle and work her throat muscles and tongue.

“Yeah. Suck it hard.”

Long, firm draws forced little sounds from him that excited her. Her nipples ached to be fondled. Her pussy convulsed and at one point she thought she might come in her jeans. She loved everything about this cowboy. The fire in his eyes, the way he made her feel as if she belonged in Montana—in his arms.

He rocked back on his heels, breaking their connection. “Dammit.” The sandpapery growl she loved so much greeted her and something snapped inside him, because he knelt, grabbing a hold of her jeans. Within a blink of an eye he had her pants undone and down around her knees. His movements were smooth as he repositioned her on her hands and knees away from him. She looked over her shoulder to see him

extracting a condom from a pocket. He stared at her with such longing it made her struggle for her next breath. As he sheathed himself, he inched closer.

Threads of sensation made the small hairs on her back stand up as his fingertips smoothed down her spine, dipped into the small of her back and then the crease of her cheeks. When he stroked her puckered skin, she gasped.

“You have a beautiful ass.” With his knuckle he exerted pressure that made her pussy weep. “Not this time, but soon.” He teased her with his wicked promise. Dragging his fingers lower, he parted her folds and delved inside. “Tight. Wet.” He pumped in and out of her body, making her inner muscles clamp down. “Damn, you feel good.”

She closed her eyes. Every nerve in her body came alive as he stroked close to her G-spot. Out of nowhere her orgasm rose to the surface, but immediately faded into the background when he moved away from the spot. Desperately she reached for fulfillment, riding his hand, pushing against it so that his fingers penetrated deeper.

Easing back, he pulled out of her.

“JD.” Her whimper was dashed when his cock slid between her thighs. Hard, thick and oh so good.

He grasped her hips, his fingers digging into her skin. In seconds he was rocking against her with a momentum that stole her breath. With each thrust her breasts swayed. It was the most sensual sensation. Spasms clenched her womb. White-hot need washed through her, and her climax exploded with the strength of an earthquake. In fact, she could have sworn the ground shook beneath her as she tossed her head back. Her scream of ecstasy cut through the night, joined by JD’s as he reached completion.

As the aftermath of their loving lingered, he eased out of her, guiding her onto her back. Silently he removed her boots, socks and jeans before he did the same for himself. Heart racing, she couldn’t find the right words to express what she was feeling. A hiss and the smell of sulfur drew her attention back to JD. He touched the flame to the mantle’s mesh fabric and the lantern came to life. Its soft glow brightened with each turn of the knob. He reached for the backpack and extracted several wet wipes to clean up, and he disposed of the condom before lying down beside her. The sated sigh he released put a smile on her face. As if he were tucking them in, he pulled the sleeping bag over their shoulders and drew her into his arms.

Silence stretched between them, while nature was everything but quiet. Above the flowing water, crickets sang. Somewhere high in the branches an owl released a hollow hoot.

The moment felt so right, and for the first time since Stella had arrived in Montana she felt like she belonged—here—in his arms.

JD cuddled her closer. “Do you really have to leave Tuesday?”

She swallowed hard. “Why don’t you come back to New York with me?” The words tumbled from her mouth before she even knew it, and so did the regret. The pit in her stomach tightened when a glimmer of light from the lantern revealed the sadness on his face.

The fantasy JD had conjured in his mind of the two of them together and living happily ever after at the ranch began to crumble right before his eyes. Instead a big dose of guilt took its place. Someday the option of stepping in and taking control of the family business wouldn't be a choice. Yet he had hoped it would be later rather than sooner. A rustling beyond the trees forced their attention toward the darkened forest.

"Bear?" she creaked.

He couldn't help chuckling. She was so damn cute as her grip on his arm tightened.

"Come on." He pushed to his feet and extended her his hand. "We'd better get you back to the hotel where there aren't any bears or mountain lions."

Her eyes widened. "Mountain lions?" She scrambled to her feet. "You didn't say anything about mountain lions. Where are my clothes?" She jerked her head from one side to the other. Spying her jeans, she moved toward them and quickly pulled them on.

As he got dressed, he attempted to calm her with a little trivia. "Most animals are as afraid of you as you are of them."

Briefly she lost her balance, but righted herself before she crammed a foot into a boot. "Don't bet on it. Oh—" Awe filled the soft sound. She held perfectly still.

A fawn about six months old stepped from the tree line. Cautiously she looked around. Raising her nose, she sniffed the air and ventured closer to the water at the farthest point from them.

"It's so adorable," Stella whispered.

They watched the animal until its mother appeared from behind a large pine tree. The doe dug a hoof into the ground and snorted, clearly issuing a warning that they were too close to her young.

Without rolling the sleeping bag, JD folded it quickly and tucked it beneath an arm. He put his hat on before slinging the backpack over a shoulder, and then he reached for the lantern. Stella followed quietly as he led her away. Neither spoke until they were closing in on his truck.

She hesitated, turning to face him. "I'm sorry."

Placing the sleeping bag and backpack in the truck bed, he doused the lantern's light and set it aside the rest. "For what?"

She bit her bottom lip. Her fingers closed around the passenger handle and she opened the vehicle door, light flooding the cab. "Nothing. Forget about it." She climbed inside and closed the door.

Now that was strange. He opened his door and slid behind the wheel. "What's up?"

"It's just—" She dragged in a heavy breath. "I mean— I've had a great time." Her smile didn't reach her eyes.

He shut the door, throwing them into darkness once again. With a turn of the key the truck engine roared to life. "Me too."

Anxiety skittered across his skin. Was she attempting to say goodbye?

The trip back to the hotel was void of conversation. The wall she erected between them disturbed JD. He knew they had found something special. Did she feel it too?

*Fool*, he thought. What the hell was he thinking losing his heart to a city girl anyway? Of course this type of life wasn't her thing. She had even spelled out their differences.

As he maneuvered the truck into a parking spot in front of the hotel, melancholy rose to the surface. He tried to shake off the disquiet, but it refused to release him.

His hand trembled reaching for the ignition key. He switched off the truck and the engine fell silent. "Would you like me to walk you to your room?"

Leaning over the console, she gave him a chaste kiss. "No. I'll be fine." For a moment she stared at him. Then she smoothed her hand over his cheek.

JD's heart raced. He wasn't aware of his actions until he had her in his arms, his lips pressed to hers. She whimpered. The cry tightened his chest.

"Stay with me." He muttered the plea against her mouth.

She closed her eyes. "I can't."

The voice of reason pushed past his building emotions. She was right. Regretfully he released her. In less than a heartbeat, she was out of the truck and for all he knew out of his life.



## Chapter Six

Stella turned over in bed for the umpteenth time. Frustrated and tired, she doubled up her fist and punched the pillow next to her.

“What’s wrong with me?” But she knew the answer. Her bed was empty. Why hadn’t she just let JD spend the night? “Because you let your guard down and got too close.” She rolled her eyes. “Great. Now I’m talking to myself.” She turned over once again, almost falling out of the bed with the sudden pounding on her hotel door. “Who the hell could that be?”

As her feet touched the carpet, she scanned the room for her bathrobe, but it was nowhere to be found. Her hesitation caused the thumping to grow louder.

“Hold on.” Another look around the room and she gave up. Whoever it was would get a good look at her body through her almost transparent negligee, and right now she didn’t give a flying fuck. She was exhausted, cranky and it was only Sunday.

As she peered through the peephole her breath caught. JD was standing in the hallway, and by the scowl on his face he wasn’t happy.

“Crap.” She looked away. He must have spoken to his grandfather.

“I know you’re there, Stella. Open up.”

Glancing back at the clock, she saw that it was only seven o’clock in the morning. If he kept this up, he’d wake everyone up. Her hands shook, fingers fumbling with the lock.

When she pulled the door open, he pushed inside and jerked her into his arms. The brim of his Stetson creased her forehead. She didn’t have time to even take a breath before his mouth captured hers. Every bone in her body went limp when his tongue pushed past her lips. His kiss was demanding and possessive. The caress ended as roughly as it had begun, leaving her stunned.

“Get dressed.” He didn’t offer a request, but an order.

“But—”

“We need to talk...” he paused spearing his fingers through his hair, “...about this thing between us.”

Excitement and trepidation surged through her veins. She studied his face noticing the dark circles beneath his eyes. Evidently he hadn’t slept any better than she had last night.

Stella quickly gathered a pair of jeans, socks, a cotton T-shirt and a clean pair of underwear from a drawer, her mind whirling. For some reason she felt shy, so she stepped inside the bathroom to change. Her hands slid beneath the straps of her negligee and tugged it down, cool air caressing her body as the fabric

floated to the tile floor. With each piece of clothing she put on, she became more nervous. Where was he taking her and why?

When she exited the bathroom, JD held up her boots. "You'll need these." He pinned his dark glare on her, his gaze traveling from head to toe, making her feel self-conscious.

Without a word she took the shoes, sat on the edge of the bed and put them on. Damn. She wished he'd stop looking at her like he was the wolf, which left her to be Little Red Riding Hood. Slowly she pushed to her feet. He pivoted on a toe and headed for the door. She followed, grabbing her purse. Silently he opened the door and eased aside to let her pass.

The hairs on the back of her neck rose. She could feel his steely glare from behind as she walked through the hotel lobby and out the glass doors. Cool, clean mountain air surrounded her. She inhaled deeply. Spying his truck parked in front, she made a beeline for it, wanting to get to the door first and help herself in. Being near him, smelling his spicy cologne, only added to her anxiety. As her hand rose for the truck handle, the locks clicked, startling her. She jerked the door open and climbed inside. JD did the same.

He crammed the key into the ignition and the engine started. Shifting the truck into gear, he pulled out of the parking space and headed for the street.

Neither spoke on the trip. The quiet made the time stretch along the winding roads, but when they passed the Rusty Nail, Stella knew exactly where she was. Yet she had no idea where he was taking her until they grew closer to the Toliver's ranch. Disbelief widened her eyes.

No way. He wasn't going to take her home to meet his grandfather, was he?

JD glanced at her. "I see you recognize this place." He turned his attention back to the road. "I haven't been completely honest with you. I'm JD, Jonathan David, named after my grandfather. I recognized the boxes in your car that first night. I know I should have revealed who I was, but I didn't feel it was important at the moment."

So he knew who she was all along. "And now?" she asked.

"I don't want anything between us." For the first time today his expression softened, making her heart flutter. Uneasy laughter preceded "I know it sounds stupid, but it feels so right with you." Glancing back toward the road, he swallowed hard. His eyes grew serious when they met hers again. "Truth is it's only a matter of time before I have to take over Toliver's Western Wear. My grandfather's health is failing. Believe me, if I could walk away I would, but I can't."

Every muscle in her body tightened. "So what are you saying?"

"I want to see where this thing between us is going. If it means taking up the reins of the family business earlier than I had planned, then so be it." He pulled in front of the large ranch-style house and braked, switching off the engine. He faced her. "I just need for you to tell me how you feel. Do I have a chance with you?"

Chills raced across her arms. She fought back welling tears. *Yes*, whispered through her mind, but she was still in shock. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. JD cared for her.

A squeal squeezed from her throat as her door opened and she nearly fell out. Standing outside the truck with a shit-eating grin plastered across his face, Toliver met her surprised stare.

"Miss Sinclair, it is so good to see you again."

It took Stella longer than she cared to admit to compose herself. When she did, she sat erect, clearing her throat. "Mr. Toliver." She extended him her hand, and instead of shaking it he assisted her from the vehicle. "Purse." She leaned in and retrieved her bag. Before she knew it she was sandwiched between the two men who ushered her toward the large oak doors leading into their summer home.

Stepping inside the foyer, JD turned to his grandfather. "Will you show Stella into the dining room? I'll ask Mary to fix us some breakfast."

"Of course." Toliver weaved his arm through hers. He didn't say anything, merely escorted her toward a big leather couch. "Sit."

She sat, landing on her purse. Using as much decorum as possible, she pulled her bag from beneath her.

For a moment the old man just stared at her with those eagle eyes. "You're good," he finally said with a look of satisfaction that made her stomach churn. For an elderly gentleman he moved with confidence, taking several more strides before sitting in an overstuffed chair across from her. Again he trapped her within his gaze.

She scooted to the edge of the couch. "Excuse me?" She raised a single brow.

Propping the heel of his boot across a knee, he eased back, relaxed. "I hadn't expected my grandson to come around so quickly. He's quite enamored with you. Of course, you will let him down easily. I will see that you remain on the account for a time. It will be up to you to patch things up with Jonathan and develop a working relationship in the future."

Stella was about to tell Toliver he had it all wrong when she heard footsteps. She whipped around to see JD standing in the doorway.

"You played me." It wasn't a question. The icy glare in JD's blue eyes made her blood run cold.

She sprang to her feet. "It's not what it appears to be." Oh God. This couldn't be happening. "I—"

He held up an imposing palm toward her. "Grandfather, you will ensure Miss Sinclair makes it back to the hotel?" The animosity in his voice made her take a step backward. She nearly fell back upon the couch, but righted herself.

Toliver straightened in his chair. "Boy, we made a deal this morning that you would take over business. And by God you'll—"

His eyes smoldered with contempt toward his grandsire. “Don’t worry, Grandfather. I stand behind my promises.” Something in his delivery felt like a knife straight to her heart. Without another word he spun around and disappeared into the hall.

Staring at the empty doorway, Stella felt a tear fall, followed by another. An unexpected sense of loss squeezed her chest. “C-could you p-please call me a cab?” She closed her eyes to hide her emotion, but a sob betrayed her. Dammit. She wouldn’t make a fool of herself. With the back of her hand she swiped several times at her eyes, and then raised her chin. “A cab,” she repeated.

Toliver approached her as if he planned on comforting her but stopped before reaching her. “You really care for him?” The cunningness in his eyes was gone; concern took its place.

“Mr. Toliver, I think our business has come to a conclusion. I’ll see myself out.” Her boots padded quickly across the wooden floor, her purse striking against her thighs with each hastened step. She didn’t chance taking a breath until she was outside. Her hand shook as she pawed through her purse for her cell phone. Before she could call information, Toliver exited the house and a truck pulled up beside her. Harrison’s father sat behind the wheel.

Toliver grew closer. “Miss Sinclair, I wish you would come back into the house so that we can discuss this matter further.”

She held on to her control, but barely. “Sir, you have achieved your goal. There isn’t anything more for us to discuss.”

For a moment he just stared at her. “Jerry will take you back to your hotel,” he conceded.

Her fingers closed around the door handle and she tugged it open, praying the conversation was over. Sliding inside, she shot a quick glance toward Jerry. “Thank you.”

He tipped his straw hat and smiled. “My pleasure, ma’am.”

As they pulled out of the driveway, Stella couldn’t help looking back. Her heart sank a little lower. There was no reason to stay in Billings any longer. She was leaving Montana today.

Stomping his feet to shake the mud off his boots, JD pushed open the front door of his house and stepped in. Exhausted in both body and mind, he jerked off his hat and placed it on one of the pegs of the hat rack hanging on the wall. With a brush of his hand he wiped his sleeve across his sweaty brow and released a heavy sigh. The more he thought of Stella, the harder he had worked.

The joints in his fingers were stiff as he splayed them wide before closing them into a fist. He had strung fence wire for half the day, spent an hour restacking hay, followed by branding several calves, but the final *coup de grace* was a cow that had wandered into a watering hole and gotten stuck.

“Oh my.” Mary pulled to a sudden halt. The tiny dark-haired woman always moved like she was hell-bent for leather. She dried her hands on the apron around her waist. “Something amiss, Mr. Foster?”

“No,” he grumbled. Not something—everything.

She narrowed her eyes, clearly not convinced. “Supper will be in five minutes.” Her gaze slowly scanned his caked boots and clothes. “I’d better make it fifteen.” As quickly as she’d appeared she was gone, disappearing into the dining room.

Leaden feet carried him down the hall to his bedroom and straight into the adjoining bathroom. Sitting on the edge of the bathtub, he jerked one boot off and then the other, and crusts of dry mud sprinkled the floor. He sat there for a minute feeling numb.

How gullible could he have been to let a city girl reel him in like a damn fish? Hell. She must be laughing her ass off.

“You fool.” He tore at his soiled clothing as the memory of her betrayal did the same to his heart. Naked, he crossed the room toward the shower and stepped inside. The first spray of water was ice cold. “Sonofabitch.” Cringing, he gritted his teeth, goose bumps rising quickly across his body. It didn’t take long for the hot water to kick in, and he reached for the soap.

No leisurely shower was in the cards for him. With agitated swipes he lathered his body, trying to wash away her memory, but it did him no good. He closed his eyes and stepped beneath the water, but she was there in his mind—her smile—her laughter—her betrayal.

“Enough.” He turned the faucets off and reached outside the stall to grab a towel. Each brush of the cloth as he dried off was rough, filled with anger. What a fool he had been, but there was no way to dismiss the hurt he felt inside. Towel-drying his hair, he strolled into his bedroom, heading for the closet. Draping the linen over his shoulder, he pulled a T-shirt and a pair of sweatpants off a hanger. For a moment he hung his head.

Man. How did everything get so screwed up?

Raising his head, he walked back into the bathroom and tossed the towel into the hamper. Then he jerked the shirt over his head and crammed his arms in the sleeves before he finger-combed his hair and slipped into the pants. Without putting on shoes he walked out of his bedroom and down the hall.

As always Mary had a feast laid out on the dining room table. Steaming roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, rice pilaf, freshly baked bread, and a melody of vegetables picked from the garden in back of the house. To his dismay his grandfather had beat him to the table.

He looked up as JD entered the dining room. “Casual tonight?”

JD ignored him. Instead he pulled out a chair and took a seat.

Mary, on the other hand, didn’t give him a second look as she waltzed back into the kitchen that was attached to the dining room. The woman was a gem, returning with a beer in her hand.

“I’ll take one of those,” his grandfather said before he added, “We need to talk.”

JD tipped the bottle and took a long drag of the beer. The cold amber felt good against his parched throat. Slamming the bottle down on the table, he growled, “I’m not in the mood for conversation.”

“Not even to hear the truth?”

Was that sorrow or regret he saw in his grandsire's long face?

Yeah. Right. This was Jonathan David Toliver he was talking about. A man who had built an empire on his business savvies.

His grandfather sat erect in his chair. "My meddling has caused you pain and that wasn't my intention."

A short, bitter laugh escaped between JD's thin lips. "You got what you wanted. Let's end it here. I've had a trying day. I'm sore, hungry and I want to go to bed." He forked a piece of roast beef and placed it on his plate. He picked up his knife and fork, attacking the meat with a vengeance.

"Son, Miss Sinclair didn't know who you were until I spoke to her at the barbeque yesterday. In fact, I was surprised, may I say pleasantly so, when I saw how much attention you extended her. Truth is I offered her the account if she could convince you to agree to manage the company. I really left her no choice. Either way she couldn't win."

JD shook his head. "Win? She got what she wanted. She sure as hell didn't try to stop me from walking away." He crammed a bite into his mouth, but the tender meat felt more like shoe leather as he chewed.

"You're wrong, Jonathan. You and I both know how hardheaded you can be. Would you have stayed or listened to her?"

No. But that was beside the point.

"The woman cares for you," his grandfather added.

Chewing a little slower, he paused before swallowing the meat like it was a block of wood. "Grandfather, please." Dammit. He didn't need to hear this bullshit.

He pushed away from the table and started to rise, stopping midway when his grandfather continued. "You didn't stay long enough to see her tears or the pain on her face. I may be nothing but an old fool, but I know affection when I see it."

Affection? No way. Stella was just looking out for herself. Even as the thought entered his mind, he knew it couldn't be true. Not if she hadn't known who he was from the beginning. The connection he felt between them happened that first night. Saturday had only made it stronger. He drifted back into his chair.

"Don't let this one go." A sly grin spread across his grandfather's face. "I think she might be a keeper. In fact, she's just what this family needs."

Unanswered questions bombarded JD all at once. What if his grandfather was right? What if Stella did care? JD hadn't given her any opportunity to explain. Was she as miserable as he?

Again he pushed away from the table, but this time he stood and left the room, heading straight for his bedroom. Inside, he slid his feet into a pair of loafers. After retrieving his keys from his jeans in the hamper, he wasted no time exiting the house. In seconds he was in his truck heading down the road.

Each minute that ticked by increased his anxiety. Would she even speak to him? As he passed the Rusty Nail, he pondered how the trip seemed to take longer than usual, or was it that he couldn't wait to see her again—to hold her?

When the hotel came into view he tensed. He was parked, out of his truck, through the hotel and standing at her door before he knew it. He rapped his knuckles on the door, praying she would answer.

"Sir." He turned to see a young housemaid pushing a cart toward him. "That room is unoccupied."

His throat thickened. "There must be some mistake."

"No. I serviced it myself."

"Thank you." She couldn't have left, he thought as he made a beeline for the front desk. But he had no better luck when he inquired about her.

"I'm sorry, but Miss Sinclair checked out earlier this morning. She's gone," the gentleman behind the desk said. He must have read the panic on JD's face because he asked, "Can I be of further assistance?"

"No. Thank you. Guess I'm going to New York."

## Chapter Seven

Stella stared out the twenty-fifth floor window of the building that housed Maritime Marketing. She had never realized how much the yellow cabs darting around below looked like tiny bugs and the mass of people traveling about appeared to be specks. It made her feel small—insignificant.

Then again it was Monday and she had to meet with her boss and inform him that she had lost the Toliver account. She wasn't a fool. No way JD would work with her now. Yet the loss wasn't what had stolen sleep from her last night. A cowboy's smile, his tender touch and the memory of a kiss that could melt her were the cause of the exhaustion she felt.

Stella inhaled and then exhaled, easing the air from her lungs. "This too shall pass." That's what her mother always said when Stella would approach her with a problem. The ringing of her telephone pulled her away from her thoughts. Slowly she walked toward the obnoxious sound and picked up the receiver.

"Stella, Mr. Toliver is on line one," her secretary, Ann, revealed.

"Toliver?" No. This couldn't be. What else could ruin her day? She pushed the first button. Maybe she'd just ignore it, but in the end she reached for the receiver. "This is Stella Sinclair."

"Miss Sinclair, are you available this evening to go over the particulars of our agreement?"

"What?"

"Dinner. Tonight," he asked.

"But—"

"What happened in Montana is forgotten. What matters is that the right person is handling my account. You."

*My account?* She breathed out a sigh of relief. Toliver must have released JD from his promise to take over the business. For the first time since the dreadful confrontation with him, Stella felt her tension ease. A weak smile touched her lips. JD belonged in Montana—not New York or any other large city.

"Of course. When and where?" she asked.

"I've made arrangements at Ruth's Chris Steak House in the Theater District for eight. Until then." The telephone clicked.

Stella hung up the receiver and walked back to the window to stare blindly at the high-rises. Shouldn't she feel elated with the outcome? Both she and JD got what they wanted.

Then why did the win feel so empty?



When the cab pulled up in front of the glitzy entrance of Ruth's Chris, a bellman opened her door and Stella got out. In one hand she carried her clutch purse, in the other a leather portfolio. Inside the briefcase were the ideas she had entertained Toliver with in Montana and several more new ones. After she had hung up with the western-wear mogul, she had dug into work, the only way she could keep the memories of JD at a distance. Anytime she let her mind wander, his handsome face would appear and then images of being wrapped in his arms materialized.

Rolling her neck from side to side, she searched for the professional she knew was inside, but tears misted her eyes. What happened in Montana was lost to her. What Toliver offered her was the beginning of a new career.

"Get it together," she whispered beneath her breath as she walked into the lobby. Delicious scents wafted from the kitchen, but they were nothing compared to trout cooking on the grill beneath a vibrant blue sky.

Dammit. She was doing it again.

As she approached the maitre d', he smiled pleasantly. "Can I help you?"

She glanced around the room, not immediately spying her dinner date. "Toliver party."

"You're the first to arrive. Thomas," he called to a waiter dressed in a white shirt, red tie, black vest and slacks. "Please show..." He glanced at her.

"Miss Sinclair," she offered.

"Miss Sinclair to table twelve."

Thomas was probably a college kid or perhaps a young man in his twenties looking to break into show biz, because his bored expression said he didn't want to be here. Without comment he led her to her table. She was surprised when he pulled out her chair and seated her.

He snapped her napkin into the air and laid it gently in her lap. "Would you like a cocktail or some wine? We have a delightful Chardonnay."

She set her briefcase on the floor by her leg, her clutch on the table. "A glass of Merlot, chilled, please."

When Thomas returned with the dark red wine and handed it to her, she didn't waste a second taking a sip. The fruitiness and rather light tannin was pleasant against her palate. Now if she could have half a dozen more drinks she just might be ready for this meeting.

Several minutes passed before Toliver stepped into the restaurant, minus the cowboy hat. Instead he wore a dark blue suit and boots. His gray hair was freshly cut. There was something distinguished about the older gentleman, but cunning all the same. Stella had liked the man when she first met him. Now she felt nothing. He had done what he deemed necessary for the company and his family. She couldn't fault him for it. Still, she didn't have to like him.

Rising from her chair, she forced a smile. "Mr. Toliver."

He took her outstretched hand and cradled it between both of his. "Call me Jonathan. Please sit."

Nervous didn't begin to describe how she felt taking her seat. She didn't speak, waiting for the waiter to take his order—a whiskey sour—before she started to speak. "I think you'll like my new proposal." Bending down to retrieve her portfolio that had fallen farther beneath the table, she continued. "I believe there just might be a market amongst the non-western audience." When she raised her head, her heart leaped into her throat. "JD."

The cowboy was gone. Before her stood the effigy of an executive right down to his Armani suit, tie and polished shoes. The light blue shirt he wore set off the color of his eyes, which scanned her bare shoulders with interest. The mid-thigh-length black silk dress she wore always gave her confidence, but as he slowly undressed her with those eyes she felt anything but confident.

"Stella." Her name sounded sensual upon his lips.

She blinked hard, trying to vanquish the naughty thoughts flowing through her mind. *Easy, girl, he's screwing with you.* Paybacks were a bitch and she had no doubt in her mind some were coming her way.

"Well." JD's grandfather eased back in his chair. He looked up at the waiter who handed him his drink. "Thank you." Raising the glass to his lips, he paused and then took a sip. "Seeing that my grandson is taking over, I think I'll just sit here and enjoy myself."

Stella licked her lips, looking as nervous as a mouse in a roomful of cats. She cleared her throat. The little shake in her hands didn't go unnoticed as she started to open her briefcase.

"I believe you were telling my grandfather that you have new ideas to show us." If JD had the opportunity tonight, he would show her exactly what he had in mind and it had nothing to do with what she was about to share with them.

Did she have silk or lacy panties on beneath that sexy black dress? His cock hardened with the thought of sliding his palms up her legs, hips and waist, easing the gown over her head.

She looked from JD to his grandfather. "Uh. Yes. I mean I learned a lot this weekend..." she cringed, "...about your clothing and shoe lines."

He held back a chuckle.

"Boots." The high pitch in her tone caught the attention of the couple at the next table. She lowered her voice to regain her control. "Take boots for example. Most people have no idea how comfortable they are. Jeans, slacks, shorts or skirts, your footwear blends with almost any ensemble." She held up several impressive sketches.

As the waiter approached, his grandfather set down his glass. "Let's table this subject until after we order. Hmmm. We'll start with the Crabtini, barbecued shrimp and Veal Osso Buco Ravioli. My grandson needs a whiskey sour. What are you drinking, Miss Sinclair?"

"Merlot."

“She’ll take another,” Toliver said.

After the waiter delivered their drinks, they gave him their orders. JD’s grandsire eased back into his chair. He narrowed his eyes on JD and then turned them to Stella. “This is how I see this arrangement evolving.”

There appeared to be a change in their plans. JD was to lead the conversation. After dinner his grandfather was supposed to excuse himself, leaving JD alone with Stella.

Instead the old man continued. “You will return to Montana with us for say about two weeks.”

“I can’t possibly do that.” Her face grew rosy in color. “My boss—”

“I’ve already spoken to Mr. Lyons, Stella.” His grandfather took another swig of his whiskey sour. “He has no objections to you visiting each of our stores so that you get the feel of their layout and inventory. JD will assist you.”

Blindsided by his grandfather’s new plan, JD chanced a look toward Stella.

Slack-jawed, she stared at him with something close to fear in her eyes. “I-I can’t—”

“Yes, dear, you can.” His grandfather leaned back in his chair, relaxed. “I’ve made all the arrangements. Two weeks should give both you and JD enough time to mend what I interrupted. If at the end of those weeks you want to go your separate ways, so be it. This agreement then becomes a business deal both of you will work out. However, should the two of you feel akin to tying the knot, well then...” he paused before continuing, “...I’ve got a plan for that union as well.”

“Grandfather?” Shock didn’t even begin to describe JD’s reaction. Though the old man’s plan did have an acceptable tune to it.

His grandfather held up a hand. “Hear me out. An attraction like the two of you have comes once in a lifetime. Your grandmother and I had such a relationship that drew us like magnets.” The old man’s eyes misted. The only other time JD had seen his grandfather weepy was when they buried Grandma three years ago. “She was quite a lady.” His throat croaked with emotion. Briefly he closed his eyes, pinched the bridge of his nose and took a moment to compose himself. “Boy, I just want to see you happy.” The indifferent exterior his grandfather usually wore dissolved and JD saw love glistening in his weathered eyes. “You love the ranch. Stella has a head for business.” He paused for only a moment, and then he raised a single brow, a sly smile tugging the corners of his mouth. *Uh-oh*. JD knew exactly what that expression meant. His grandfather was up to something. “You’re a match made in heaven.”

He pushed his chair back and stood, looking older than JD had ever seen him. “The two of you have some talking to do, and this old man is tired. I’ll ask the waiter to pack my dinner to go.” Making his way around the table, his grandfather kissed Stella softly on the cheek. “Please accept my apology for placing you in such an awkward situation. I meant well.”

She offered him a weak smile and nodded before he turned and walked away.

A pregnant moment passed and neither of them spoke.

What was she thinking? Her forehead was furrowed, her eyes moist as she looked at him. Damn. Tears he couldn't deal with. When JD opened his mouth to speak, the waiter was beside him delivering their appetizers.

Stella slipped her presentation back into her portfolio and placed it on the floor. "JD. I—"

JD reached across the table and placed his palm on her trembling hand. "No explanations are necessary." A grin pulled at his mouth. "Actually I like my grandfather's suggestion. Darlin', if you're willing, let's see where this relationship takes us."

A single tear rolled down her cheek. "Really?"

He stood, moving quickly around the table. With a finger beneath her chin he guided her to a standing position. "Yes. Really." His lips touched hers. "Should we have our food packaged too?"

"Mmmm." She leaned into him fully, evidently not caring whose attention they caught. Through heavy eyelids she looked up at him. "My place."

## Chapter Eight

Stella's soft, muted cries echoed throughout her bedroom, filling the hush as JD's fingers sketched her flesh like a painter's brush on a blank canvas. Naked, sprawled across the bed, she watched him beneath shuttered eyelids as he explored her body. Every stroke was meant to drive her completely out of her mind—and it was working.

Cupping a breast, he tweaked her nipple before leaning over her and laving it with his wet tongue. "You're so beautiful." His deep voice was smooth as silk, his breath hot against her skin. Scraping his teeth over the swollen tip sent a shiver up her spine. Another lick and then he closed around the sensitive bud, pulling and tugging, as the suction of his mouth intensified. When he groaned, the pleasure of the sound reverberated through her.

Fingers clenching in the pillow where she laid her head, she arched into his touch, wanting and needing more. She had no idea how much of his teasing she could take. "Please." A whimper churned in her throat as he released his hold.

"Please what?"

"Make love to me." His cock was hard against her hip. More than anything she wanted him to part her thighs and give her what she needed.

"Soon." He issued the wicked promise while blowing warmth across her dampness. Her bud drew taut. Rays of sensation shattered through her globe, heading south, forcing a moan from her parted lips. He pulled his mouth back from her breast and planted a tiny kiss on her shoulder. "I have plans to love you all night long."

That sounded so wonderful.

Even in the dimly lit room, she saw the faintest hint of amusement in his eyes. She could so easily fall in love with this man. Reaching for him, she locked her arms around his neck and pulled his mouth to hers. She continued to kiss him, loving his taste, the feel of his tongue against hers. As his hand slipped between her thighs and he plunged two fingers deep within her, she gasped against his lips.

Her heart pounded. "Feels. So. Good." He captured her mouth once more. His tongue pushed between her lips and he devoured her.

When the kiss ended he was breathless. "You're so wet. So fucking hot." He nudged her nose with his. "Darlin', do you have any idea what you do to me?" He circled her clit with his thumb, rubbing the sensitive organ as he worked his fingers in and out of her sex, driving her need higher and higher.

Heat flared across her skin. “JD.” His name came out a plea.

He increased the pace, thumb pushing against her clit. She squirmed beneath his assault, trying to find the right place that would make her body explode with pleasure.

“I need you inside me.” Her inner muscles clenched. “Oh God. Now.”

The heady growl that thrilled her so much met her demand. Crawling between her thighs, he spread them wide and hooked his arms beneath the bend of her knees. He looked down at her exposed center and she began to tremble. The anticipation was killing her.

“Please, JD.”

“I want to taste you,” he moaned. His eyes were dark with desire.

The image of him feasting on her flesh sent shivers up her back. He raised one of her legs and pressed a tender kiss along her calf. His delicate torture continued up her leg to her thigh. As he dragged his tongue steadily over her skin, goose bumps prickled and her pussy contracted. She could feel his breath against her pulsating flesh.

“Is this what you want?” He flicked his tongue lightly, caressing her clit. Electricity shot up her pussy and she nearly came off the bed.

“Yes,” she hissed. She made a feeble attempt to drag air into her lungs, but it was useless. Her pulse sped and her heart beat like warring drums.

“Mmmm, you smell good,” his low voice rumbled, humming against her sensitive skin. “Taste...” he moved his tongue back and forth in her moist crease, lapping gently, “...even better.”

“Stop playing with me,” she whimpered. “I’m dying here.” Every muscle in her body was strung tight. Her breasts were heavy, swollen, and damned if she wasn’t wetter than she had ever been. She ached to hold him in her arms, skin to skin, making love to him.

When his mouth closed around her clit and he began sucking, his tongue danced across the bundle of nerves. Her body quaked. She rocked up against his mouth and white-hot pleasure burst through her in shockwaves. The scream that rushed from her lungs was pure ecstasy. Stabbing her fingers through his hair, she mindlessly held him close. Her inner muscles flexed, pulling him farther inside. She wanted all of him.

Gravelly sounds of pleasure escaped his throat, vibrating her clit to set off another string of spasms that shook her violently. He dug his fingers into her hips, keeping her from escaping his hold, and drank deeply.

When he raised his head and their gazes met, Stella shivered. Slowly he guided her legs onto the mattress. Without speaking he draped his large body over hers and lowered his hips against her cradle. His hard cock nudged her slit, sending rays of excitement through her. The juices of her sex allowed him to glide inside with little resistance. He stretched and consumed every part of her.

He fit perfectly.

There was no way JD would hold out for much longer. Already he could feel the tingles drawing on his cock. Over and over he thrust, moving slowly in and out of her hot core. She was so tight—so wet.

Heat rolled off their bodies, producing the musky scent of sex. He inhaled the fragrance and savored the feel of her pulsing around him. Leaning into her, he sucked her full lower lip between his teeth and nipped it before stroking its softness with his tongue.

Man. He loved kissing her almost as much as making love with her.

Her eyes were closed, her fingers like silk sliding up and down his back. The tiny part of his brain not completely wrapped up in the feel of her fingers felt her legs lock around him. The action spread her wider, allowing him to push deeper. Any rational thoughts were instantaneously destroyed. Blood filled his balls to a pulsing ache. He ground his teeth to keep his orgasm at bay.

Desperate to tell her how he felt before completing the moment, he clasped her hands over her head. “Look at me.” Her heavy eyelids rose. Her full breasts tempted him to taste. “Jesus save me. I think—” A shiver raced through him. He bowed his head, holding on by a thread. When he had a grip on his control, he raised his gaze to meet hers again. “I’m falling in love with you.”

JD should have waited for a response, but heat flooded him as her body clamped down on him, so tight, so hot. Helplessly—he lost it.

The tempo of his thrusts increased. He pounded into her furiously, needing to claim her. Sharp fingernails scraped down his back, over his ass. The bittersweet sensation only enflamed his desire. Deep inside his throat a sandpapery growl vibrated. When she cupped his cheeks and drove their hips together, his balls drew taut. He shuddered and exploded. The burning surge down his shaft was heightened by Stella screaming his name. His cock jerked several times, each twitch felt clear to his toes. He couldn’t remember when he’d felt so sated, so happy.

In the aftermath they lay there unmoving. For how long, he had no idea. Rolling onto his side to relieve her of his weight, he pulled her into his arms. She lay quietly in his embrace. For a moment he feared his avowal had backfired, that she just might bolt.

“Do you really think this will work—you—me?” He heard the skepticism in her voice.

He positioned her on her back so that their gazes met. “I can’t make any promises, Stella. But I feel you here.” He placed her hand over his heart. “I want you. We’re right together.”

She brushed the hair from his forehead. “I want you too.” Rising from the pillow, she slanted her mouth across his. Her kiss was soft, hopeful. As she pulled away, he felt her smile.

“What?”

“I’m just curious what your grandfather has planned for us.”

With an exasperated breath JD fell on his back. “The meddling old fool.”

She crawled atop him, straddling his hips. “That meddling old fool brought us back together.”

His cock slid along her moist slit. “True. And he does have some pretty good ideas.” He reached for her and drew her down so that their lips almost touched. “You. Me. A hotel room for two weeks while we scour the countryside assessing our stores.”

Concern tugged at her brows. “But what about after the trip? The ranch? Montana? If you stay in New York, the city will suck the life out of you.”

Already she knew him all too well. “We’ll work it out in time. For right now I’ll do what is required of me. With you by my side I know it’ll be fine.”

“You do, do you?” She wiggled her hips, angling them just right so that with one thrust he was buried deep inside her again. She pushed into a sitting position, her warm palms resting on his chest. Slowly she began to ride him.

“Hmmm. That feels good.” Smoothing his hands up her arms, he pulled her to him. “Come here, darlin’, and give me some sugar.”

When she melted against him, pressed her lips to his, there was no doubt in his mind their love would be forever.



## About the Author

A taste of the erotic, a measure of daring and a hint of laughter describe Mackenzie McKade's novels. She sizzles the pages with scorching sex, fantasy and deep emotion that will touch you and keep you immersed until the end. Whether her stories are contemporaries, futuristics or fantasies, this Arizona native thrives on giving you the ultimate erotic adventure.

When not traveling through her vivid imagination, she's spending time with three beautiful daughters, three devilishly handsome grandsons, and the man of her dreams. She loves to write, enjoys reading and can't wait 'til summer. Boating and jet skiing are top on her list of activities. Add to that laughter and if mischief is in order—Mackenzie's your gal!

To learn more about Mackenzie, please visit [www.mackenziemckade.com](http://www.mackenziemckade.com). Send an email to Mackenzie at [mackenzie@mackenziemckade.com](mailto:mackenzie@mackenziemckade.com) or sign onto her Yahoo! group to join in the fun with other readers and authors as well as Mackenzie. [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wicked\\_writers/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wicked_writers/).

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*Even the best-laid seductions can go awry.*

## Veiled Seduction

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### *Veiled, Book 2*

Beneath Dr. Maira Khan's reserved exterior, her heart beats triple-time for only one man: Sasha Karimi. For two years she's waited patiently for the handsome police lieutenant to wake up and see her as more than a buddy. When he's injured in the line of duty, though, she realizes time is too precious to waste. Ditching her scrubs—and her shyness—she cooks up her very first seduction.

Sasha's had a hell of a week. Thanks to the national media, amorous women are pouring out of the woodwork, all wanting a piece of America's newest "hero". The biggest disappointment? Maira seems to have contracted the same case of mass hysteria. Betrayed, he pushes her away—but not before he samples a taste of her luscious mouth and body.

It works. Maira retreats, mortified and ashamed. And Sasha realizes he's just driven away the perfect woman. Now all he needs is a foolproof plan to win her back, starting with a proper courtship—and restraining his lust. Except once Maira glimpses the man behind the uniform, she sets out to show him that pure need has its own ideas about what's proper...

*Warning: Contains a brilliant heroine who knows how to take matters into her own hands, a sexy hero who knows how to win his woman, an awesome full-body massage, a tender romance and sizzling bedroom (and kitchen) shenanigans.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Veiled Seduction:*

"No man alive would say something like that."

Maira knew that Sasha had no idea why she so loved to watch chick flicks with him. She didn't particularly care for the actual movie. It was his running commentary of incredulous scoffing and joking throughout.

"Pansy."

Most people probably didn't like talking during their movies, but since she had trouble sitting still for two hours at a time to begin with, it made the whole thing much more interactive and fun.

"Why do women always have to remove their glasses when they get a makeover?"

"I don't know," she said mildly.

"It's stupid." He lifted a bite of the cheesecake dessert to her mouth, adding just the amount of ice cream that she liked. "Glasses aren't an automatic turnoff to men."

"Hmmm." Why had she wanted to go out again? This sitting close together and sharing-the-dessert bit was pure freakin' genius. She accepted the bite he offered and savored the taste. Since the deep-fried

cheesecake—God bless America—was enormous, they'd shared it before. But never on the same plate. With the same spoon. She didn't just taste the luscious dessert, she tasted him on the silverware as well, and it was wonderful.

*Intimate.* Yes, the whole night had been intimate. She cast him a sideways glance as he removed the spoon from her mouth. Maybe tonight...maybe tonight she could take advantage of this intimate setting, show him she was ready for more.

Sasha must have felt her gaze, for he glanced at her and smiled. He dropped the spoon onto the now-empty plate and set it on the table. With a swift click, he paused the movie.

*Now. Do something, say something now.* She sat frozen though, unable to think of anything sufficiently sexy. His arm came around her in a smooth move and he shifted closer so they were sitting hip to hip. "You have some cream on the corner of your mouth."

She started to raise her hand to wipe it off, but he stayed her. "No, let me."

He leaned in close, and Maira closed her eyes, her heart stuttering. Oooh, he was going to do the little licking-off-the-food thing in prelude to a kiss. She'd always found that wildly erotic and romantic. She waited for the touch of the tip of his tongue.

Instead she got the full flat of it. Right on her cheek, as if he were a puppy bathing her face. She reared back in surprise. "What the...?"

His eyes dancing with mischief, he sat back. "It's off."

She shot him a dirty look and wiped off her cheek. "That's not how you're supposed to do it."

"Do what?"

"The food-on-the-corner-of-the-mouth thing. You're supposed to turn it into a kiss."

He looked both innocent and perplexed. "I know not of what you speak." He leaned forward, dipped his finger into the remaining cream on their plate and swiped it over the corner of his own mouth before sitting back. "Show me."

He was daring her, and little-known fact, but Maira loved dares. Did he think just because she was a virgin, she knew nothing of sex? School had been a snap for her because she was an insane speed reader. Dirty books were her friend, and she was a fast learner.

She'd just pretend. Pretend she wasn't boring, staid Maira. It was doable.

Before she could lose her courage, and before he could lower his hand to wipe it on the napkin in his lap, she caught it and brought it to her mouth.

He inhaled sharply as she licked the cream off, boldly keeping eye contact with him. His eyes only briefly dipped down, and she knew the top button of her shirt had probably come conveniently undone.

Once his finger was suitably clean, she drew it in to her mouth oh so slowly, her tongue darting around and rubbing against the underside of it. His shifted when she sucked it once, then again, strong pulls that brought the tip of his forefinger to the back of her throat.

When she released him, it only took a glance down to see how aroused he was. The hard length of his penis distended the material of his slacks. Her nipples ached, her breathing had accelerated, and between her thighs, her panties rubbed up against the swollen tissues of her labia.

She took a deep breath for courage, and then quickly turned and adjusted herself so she straddled his lap. His eyes widened, his hands coming up instinctually to grasp her hips.

Though he looked surprised, he didn't stop her. His dark eyes merely skated over her, from her disheveled shirt to his hands on her hips. Then he looked back up at her, waiting.

She leaned in and made him jump by nuzzling his neck. She inhaled. Once she'd heard another woman say that she knew she had to marry her husband, because he was the only man who smelled good to her no matter what. Maira had discounted it then. What man smelled wonderful all the time?

But after hanging around with Sasha, she understood what that meant. Even when he was sweaty from working out, she didn't mind it, still found his scent appealing. And right now, with that mixture of cinnamon and bay rum, he smelled good enough to eat.

This close to him, all of her thoughts and plans deserted her and she was reduced to her instincts. Following them, she flicked her tongue out to capture the cream at the corner of his mouth. His head turned and his lips opened as she delicately lapped at them.

Their lips melded together. This...this was different from that first time a few weeks ago. Then, it had been all angry, storming passion. Now his lips were softer, gentler. Instead of pushing her where he wanted her to go, he only took as much as she was willing to give.

*Everything. I'll give him everything.*

*A guy. A girl. A silver pole...*

## **To the Max**

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As owner of Jensen Securities, Max Jensen lives by one simple rule: Never take your eyes off the target. Once he spies lithe little Jordan Landon wrapped around a pole, though, his eyes aren't the problem. It's keeping his mind on his job.

Her job as a pole-dancing instructor might cause a few raised eyebrows, but it's what she does on a speeding motorcycle that kicks Max's protective instincts into overdrive. And puts the hurt on his determination to keep his hands to himself.

Years ago, Jordan left her wealthy, disapproving family behind to pursue her dream of opening her own dance studio. Approaching a hottie in a bar was easy in her college days, but now? If she wants him, she'll have to put her big-girl panties on and go for it.

Once alone, their inhibitions disappear faster than their clothes. But when someone breaks into Jordan's home, Max finds himself in an uncomfortable position—as the target of Jordan's suspicions about his real motives.

Warning: What better sexual partner than one who pole dances? Just think of the possibilities... Add in a stubbed toe, priceless Tiffany and meddling mothers and you're all Maxed out!

*Enjoy the following excerpt for To the Max:*

What on earth was she doing trying to pick up a stranger at a bar?

*Sex, Jordan. Remember the sex you wanted to have to rehydrate your parched woman's parts? The ones currently shriveling up from lack of action?*

With ultimate resolve, she lifted her face and stared at herself in the mirror.

"Jordan, you will go out there and seduce that walking sex God."

A snicker behind her made her jump.

"You go, girl. Hey, while you're handing out the confidence, mind sharing some with me? There's this really hot guy out there I'd do just about anything to go to bed with."

Jordan smiled and told herself not to punch the woman. Surely she wasn't referring to the same guy. There were lots of other men in the bar.

But only one who'd been built specifically for causing a woman to orgasm with a simple touch. Jordan was sure that would be the outcome if she ever got the nerves to get close enough to him.

Enough. She was here for sex, she was going to get some. Self-doubt was not going to dissuade her.

“Sure,” she said to the woman washing her hands. “As long as we’re not after the same one. I’m not into threesomes.” *And I really don’t want to go to jail for breaking your neck. Tall, dark and drool-worthy is mine, mine and all mine.*

The woman’s laugh grated on Jordan’s nerves, tempting her to strangle the bleached blonde’s neck just to get her to tell her who she was lusting after.

“Oh, my God, he’s like, so cute. Red hair...”

Jordan didn’t hear another word over the breath she let out. Time to buck up and become a woman all over again. If luck was on her side tonight, the stud at the bar was going home with her.

Or she was going home with him.

She’d lived the last few years in anonymity, surely she could pick up one man and not be found out. He hadn’t seemed to recognize her at least.

Jesus, she was doing it again. The urge to slap herself grew. Where was the set of *cojones* she’d used to move out of her parents’ and live her own life away from all the crap money entailed? She straightened, flipped her hair over her shoulder and checked to make sure she didn’t have anything green between her teeth. That’d be a mood killer for sure.

She was here to get her sex on.

“Good luck.” Jordan shoved through the door and headed straight for the bar. If he wasn’t still sitting there, she would cry.

“Go get him, Jordan,” she heard from the friends she’d come with. It gave her courage. Hell yes she’d get him. She’d use his body as her pole and show him all kinds of new moves.

His closely shaved dark brown head hung over his beer and his shoulders were slumped. Damn. She’d thought he’d been interested. She hadn’t mistaken the way his nostrils had flared when she’d started toward him earlier or the way his eyes had widened. There’d been a flash of lust, damn it. On both their parts.

Jordan was suddenly close enough to reach out and touch him. Mmm...he smelled so good. Like man and cologne and yum all rolled into one, and she smelled it even over all the combined alcohol and smoke odors of the bar.

It was do-or-die time. Jordan tapped him on the back. “Hello.”

His head whipped back so fast she was amazed he didn’t give himself whiplash or fly off the stool. Catching himself before that happened, he darted a glance between her and her friends before settling on her face.

His eyes were green. Pale green. Beautiful. Her panties went wet just looking into his gaze.

At least she knew she hadn’t dried up quite yet.

“Hello.” Oh man, the sound of his voice made her shiver. Deep and sensual. It curled around her to the point she swore she could feel his mouth moving on her throat.

“I’m Jordan.” Did she stick out a hand to shake? Where the hell was her inner college chick?

“Max.”

Max. Perfect. She wanted Max. Right here, right now. If only clicking her heels together and pronouncing, “There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home,” would get her anywhere.

He seemed to contemplate something. It made her nervous. Picking up men used to be so easy. Of course those were the days of trying to attract the media attention just to piss her mother off. Right now, Max was going to give her a complex.

“You wanna dance, Jordan?” He said her name like he was trying it out on his tongue.

She wanted to shout, “Try my clit out with your tongue too, please.”

She refrained. No use scaring the man off before she’d gotten out of tonight what she wanted.

He hopped off the barstool—or stood at any rate—and towered over her five-foot-six frame. Maximillian. Maximillian? Is that how she saw him? Appropriate because right this second she felt like she’d just won a million bucks. He had to be a good few inches beyond six feet, muscular too, as evidenced by the fit of his shirt beneath his leather jacket. She wanted to rip the shirt off and lick his abs, see if he tasted as good as he smelled.

Please God let him be this big across the board. She needed big. Needed to be filled to capacity plus some. Her clit actually ached at the thought of him between her legs.

She’d turned into a hooker. A pole-dancing, stranger-picking-up, begging-for-big hooker.



*One fateful detour. A raging storm. She didn't see this love coming...*

## Merry Christmas, Paige

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Holding a knife against a child's throat isn't exactly how Dr. Paige Weston had planned to spend her Christmas holiday. But a jolt from an air pocket and here she is, performing an emergency tracheotomy as her flight to Fiji diverts to Kauai. The one place she swore never to return.

Beside the fact her patient comes first, what's the chance she'll run into her ex-fiancé—the man who jilted her when another woman turned up pregnant? Then she realizes the island hospital is woefully understaffed, forcing her to lend a hand. And upping the odds that her heart will hit more turbulence before she makes her escape.

Nathan Cross can't believe his eyes. The emergency room doctor tending to his daughter's cut foot is the woman he's dreamed about every night since he was forced to walk out of her life. He should have been prepared for her indifference, but he's blindsided by the need to hold her in his arms. Just one more time.

Yet Fate is a trickster, leaving him wondering if he should grasp for a second chance...or take his punishment for one, long-ago choice.

*Warning: This book contains two lovers destined to make up for lost time, which means moments of deep emotional and hot lusty sex, including in such places as against the wall, up against a railing (my personal favorite), on the hood of a truck, in the rain, and every other imaginable place.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Merry Christmas, Paige:*

"I need you naked." Nathan's words rang in Paige's head. Strong hands buried beneath her shirt. Fingertips skimmed lightly across her abdomen, making her heart beat faster. "Please, baby."

How could she deny the longing in his voice or her own need that built with alarming speed?

They stood dripping wet just inside the door of the cottage. Scattered packages lay at their feet. Rain pelted the roof and windows. A flash of lightning illuminated the dim room followed by a loud clap of thunder that rattled the glass. While the weather kicked up its heels and raged, the world inside this small bungalow stood still.

Achingly slow, he pushed her T-shirt up to send goose bumps across her arms. It didn't help that the air currents from the overhead fan caressed her damp flesh.

She raised her arms and he slid the shirt over her head, stealing her sight. When she could see again she peered into eyes so dark with desire her heart skipped a beat.

There had always been an electrifying chemistry between them, a mutual sexual attraction that turned explosive each time they touched, but was it enough? Could they overcome the past and the present to carve out a future?

The catch of her bra popped free. Sensitive nipples drew taut. She closed her eyes and savored the rays of sensation that played havoc with her peaks and quaked through her breasts. His fingertips smoothed ever-so-lightly across the very tips, and she wondered if the caresses might be her imagination. Her eyes remained closed, heightening the feel of his hands moving across her flesh like a feather to tease and tantalize.

“I love you so much.” His deep, sensual voice slid over her skin to push her desire higher and higher. A flood of moisture released between her thighs. The spasm that came next felt sinfully delicious. “Soft.” He made little circles around her nipples, igniting sparks of electricity that made her shiver with excitement.

When he wrapped his warm, wet tongue around the engorged bud, she sucked in a ragged breath. Fiery need shot south. Her pussy clenched and a moan pushed between her lips. She speared her fingers through his damp hair and held him to her breast, before she opened her eyes and glanced down. Her heartbeat went wild. She’d never seen anything as sensual as his heated expression as he suckled.

Taking the other nipple between his fingers, he pinched. Sweet, sweet pain exploded. “Nathan.”

With mesmerizing blue eyes he looked up at her, and she melted inside. He released the hold on her breast. “What, baby?”

“Please.” His touch had reduced her to begging, but she couldn’t help it. Need clawed at her unmercifully. She had no willpower when it came to him.

“Do you want me to fuck you?” His naughty words matched his sexy grin.

The image of him buried deep inside her, thrusting in and out, their bodies locked together, made her groan. “Yes. I need you inside me.” Another wave of moisture released between her thighs. She pulled at his T-shirt. “Off. Now.”

But instead of pushing forward, he took a step backward and slipped his shirt off. “Are you hot for me?” Burying his fingertips into the waistband of her jeans, he tugged, dragging her so close his warm breath caressed her face when he spoke again. “How wet are you?” He didn’t wait for her to answer. Instead he shoved his hand deeper and discovered for himself.

When his fingers caressed her slit, a shiver raced through her. Her legs parted on their own with a need for him to continue the glide of his hand across her slick folds.

“My God, baby. You do want me.”

As he circled her clit she grabbed his biceps and held on. “Please, Nathan. I need you now.”

Rain continued to ping off the roof. Another flash of lightning and burst of thunder followed on its heels. The overhead lighting in the kitchen flickered once, twice, before casting them in a veil of darkness, but that didn’t deter them. If anything, the lack of sight heightened the moment with the mysterious lure it induced.

Paige's pulse stuttered and then sped when Nathan exerted pressure against her clit. Her inner muscles pulled tight. She shuddered. The delicious sensation lingered before dying slowly when he moved away. She inhaled and relaxed, waiting for his return. When he touched the bundle of nerves again, she rocked her hips back and forth, riding his hand. Seductive fingers worked her into a sexual frenzy.

She was ready, so ready. Her hand fell to the button of her jeans and she unfastened them. The zipper went next, falling with a whisper. She was about to push down her pants when he started to scoot his feet. They took little steps in the dark until the couch pressed against her knees. She sat, while Nathan moved the coffee table out of the way. Then he knelt before her. Hands on her hips, he eased her jeans down. When she was naked, he tugged her legs to guide her hips off the couch. He supported her legs by draping them over his shoulders.

His soft growl sent chills up her spine.

Oh God. Yes.

Paige loved his cock deep inside her, but nothing compared to the raw intimacy of him going down on her. She craved the feeling of his mouth on her clit, licking and sucking, like he had done so many years ago. Just the thought of his tongue and lips teasing her pussy sent liquid heat surging through her veins.

The stream of warm air against her wet folds made her skin prickle. But he didn't touch her, almost as if he wanted to prolong her anticipation, and it was working. Add the ache low in her belly which was increasing with every second, and the thought of his touch was like a drug.

He sighed, the gentle timbre one of longing. "Damn, baby, I've missed you. I can't wait to wrap my tongue around those beautiful lips of yours." His tongue slid across her clit and she flinched, hips coming off the couch. "Sensitive?" He chuckled.

"Don't tease me, Nathan." She shuddered with the sensual pleasure streaking through her body. "Do me now."

That sexy rumble in his throat sent her senses reeling. Her fingers curled into the sofa. She couldn't wait much longer. The moment he flattened his tongue and smoothed it over the length of her slit, her mouth parted on a soft cry. A burst of tingles erupted in her core, shooting in all directions.

"Sweet," he hummed against her flesh. "Tastes so good."

With his wicked tongue he licked slowly around the engorged organ and fluttered over it once again. Every nerve ending jumped, raw and sensitive. Her heartbeat increased, her breaths short and quick pants. He parted her folds and a throaty groan pushed from her lips.

As he fucked her with his mouth, she squirmed, loving the feel of his face buried against her core. He paused briefly to inhale her scent. "Mmm."

She trembled. "Nathan, please."

He lowered his head and once again began to ravish her. The sensual sounds he made lapping at her flesh drove her desire higher. Low and husky, his moans made her body vibrate with excitement. In and out

he thrust, sipping at her juices. When he captured her nub in his mouth and sucked, her head fell back on a cry.

Blood rushed her tender folds, setting them to burn hotter. “Yes.” Every caress was heightened. Even the whisper of his breath on her wet skin stoked the flame. Her breasts were full and swollen, her clit throbbed.

Nathan’s loving was even better than Paige remembered.



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