

ELLORA'S CAVE **LAWLESS**



REGINA CARLYSLE



*Trouble*  
in a STETSON  
*Sequins, Saddles and Spurs*

## Trouble in a Stetson

Regina Carlisle

*Book two in the Sequins, Saddles and Spurs series.*

Lola Lamont leaves Vegas with two pals, never imagining they'd break down in small-town Texas. So what's a former showgirl to do when she runs smack dab into the hottest sheriff south of the Mason Dixon line? Why, jump his bones, of course!

Sam Campbell takes one look at the Vegas Bombshell and knows damn good and well she belongs in his bed. She probably has the words *gold digger* tattooed to her ass but he's ready to take what the sexy blonde has to offer. Vowing to protect his heart, Sam rocks her world. Too bad she's rocking his right back. Sam is more than ready to handle some sass, spunk and sex, but is he willing to gamble on love?

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Trouble in a Stetson

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# ***TROUBLE IN A STETSON***

**Regina Carlisle**

### *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to all who have been told they are too pretty, too ugly, too skinny, too fat or are judged on the basis of skin color, political leanings or religious beliefs. This is also dedicated with love and affection to my daughter.

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Barbie: Mattel Corporation

Cadillac: General Motors Corporation

Coke: The Coca Cola Company

Stetson: John B. Stetson Company Corporation

Superman: DC Comics

## Chapter One

Lola Lamont gave her poor old pink Caddy a baleful look through the plate glass windows of Blue Belle's Café and heaved a giant sigh. Her sweet baby had pretty much bitten the dust and her current companions at the table were right, she needed to be put out of her misery. Lola and her friends, Roxie and Emily, had rolled into the tiny town of Mesa Blanco, Texas with the old monstrosity of a car gasping and wheezing like a two-pack-a-day smoker.

Refugees from Vegas, the three friends had, in a moment of madness, said *to hell with it* and loaded up for a grand adventure with only pennies in their pockets and the good sense of a trio of pigeons.

What the hell had they been thinking?

The sad truth of the matter was they hadn't been thinking at all. Roxie had lost her job as a security expert for high stakes gaming at a Vegas casino and Emily had been a victim of downsizing at the hotel where she worked. And herself? Lola sighed, still feeling the pain of it all. She had been fired from her show *Pink Flamingo Girls* for being too old. All those years of dance lessons and keeping her body in primo shape had turned to nothing just days after her thirtieth birthday. Then to make matters worse, her boyfriend Nick had dumped her days after that. Talk about a double whammy. Lola had never been one to have little pity parties for herself but she was about as blue as the décor of Mesa Blanco, Texas' only café.

They'd stumbled into the place, exhausted, stressed and dying of thirst only to be met by three of the hunkiest, rope-'em-up, tie-'em-down cowboys they'd ever seen. The place had been practically empty except for them and, gallant gents that they were, the men had treated them to soft drinks, lord love 'em. Wyatt Cavanaugh, a local rancher, had already offered Emily a job as a cook of all things. Dang woman could barely boil

water. Together they'd driven off in the man's big truck. Roxie was, at the moment, caught up in a low conversation with the handsome owner of the local honky-tonk.

Tension ratcheted up a notch when the other dark, hunkalicious man moved closer to her and leaned in. The scent of him filled her head. "Want another Coke?"

Lola felt that deep, gravelly and oh-so-sexy voice roll over her body to settle in her pussy. Uh-oh. Trouble in a Stetson, for sure. Ever a sucker for a rough, smoky voice, she nodded. "You're sweet but no thanks. Sam, is it?"

He tipped his big, black Stetson, his dark eyes burning with a look she'd come to recognize from just about every man she'd ever met. Hunger. Desire. Lust. Definite interest. Ooh boy. Did she *ever* know that look. "Sam Campbell, county sheriff." His kissable lips turned up at the corners and Lola's heart thumped hard in her chest. Late afternoon sunlight beamed through the window near the table to settle on the lines of his bronzed, weathered face and glinted on dark hair that she was dying to get a better look at.

"Lola."

"Yeah, Lamont, a Vegas damsel in distress."

Arching a brow, she gave him a considering look. "And you've come riding in on your big white horse?"

"Looks like it."

"My hero. Nice to meet you." Smiling, she held out her hand which he immediately engulfed in his. The warmth of his touch was sudden and unexpected and Lola felt the loss when he finally released her.

Damn if he wasn't the sexiest man she'd seen in a long, long time and that included Nick Mantucci whom she'd thought was awfully handsome. Nick was a smooth operator who wore designer suits as if he were born to them. Not this man. Sam Campbell could've stepped out of a scene from one of those old shoot-'em-up movies she used to watch late at night when she couldn't sleep. Tall, at least six-four or five of brawn and yummy goodness, he not only wore the authority of the sheriff's badge

pinned to his black shirt but carried it on his broad shoulders. The chest beneath that shirt was mounded and muscular practically making her fingers twitch with the need to touch. The man oozed testosterone and wasn't this a hell of a time to notice such a thing?

Mentally rolling her eyes at her silly turn of thoughts, she glanced away regretfully thinking, *wrong time and wrong place*. Besides, she was just done with men. Especially those who made promises they'd had no intention of keeping.

"So what are you gonna do, Miz Lola?" Sam quietly sipped his coffee.

Sighing deeply, she jabbed her straw into her now empty beverage glass, making the ice cubes rattle. "Look for a job, I figure." Feeling more tired than she'd felt in years, she leaned back in her chair and sent her gaze around the room as she tried to think. Her eyes lit on the fluorescent orange "help wanted" sign in the window. Straightening suddenly, she started to get up then remembered her manners. "Excuse me a minute, Sam."

Feeling his gaze on her back, Lola grabbed up the sign and walked up to the taciturn, gray haired woman standing behind the counter. The heels of Lola's cute high heeled sandals click clicked out a warning and the matronly lady glanced up with a frown.

"Can I help ya, miss?"

Lola set the sign on the counter. "Looks like you need help and I'd like to apply. Can you tell me who I need to talk with about a job?"

"You'd need to talk to me. I'm Belle Warren." Belle, all of five two and built like an army tank, looked her up and down slowly and Lola got the feeling she didn't like what she saw. Figured. Lola was pretty much used to that reaction. "Where ya from, little missy?"

"Vegas, ma'am."

"Bull dung," she said matter-of-factly. "That ain't no city voice you've got there, girl."



Lola opened her mouth to speak when Sam walked up and set his coffee cup on the counter. "Can I get a refill, Belle?"

That got a smile from Belle as she grinned and reached for the coffee pot. "Sure thing, Sheriff." Seeming to forget Lola's presence for the moment, she finally turned back to Lola and planted her fists on ample hips. "No sirree. You've got the deep south stamped all over you. Where you from?"

Sam propped his gorgeous, denim-covered butt on the nearest stool and listened unabashedly. Though it was damn hard, Lola tried to forget about him and focused on Belle.

"I'm from a little bitty town just outside Jackson, Mississippi."

"You grew up there?"

"Yes'm. And I waited tables too. From the time I turned sixteen. I'm a really hard worker, Belle."

"Hmph. Well, we'll just see about that, I reckon. Now this ain't permanent. Got that? Merrylee Hawkins just had a baby and she'll be back for her job in about six weeks or so. That's all I've got to offer."

"Oh no, that's okay," she rushed. "I just need to make enough money to get out of town."

"Why? You have somewhere you need to go?"

Lola had to think about that.

No, she really didn't but she just couldn't see herself staying here. The sleepy town of Mesa Blanco was far too similar to the town where she grew up and she hadn't been able to leave that place fast enough. Nope. She wouldn't be staying. Finally she shook her head and sighed. "Not really. I guess I just need some time to figure things out."

"Okay then, I'll try you out for awhile, Lola."

Relief swept her and then she thought of something else. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Shoot."

"Someone mentioned something about a rooming house?"

"Staying there requires money," Belle said. She pursed her lips and then seemed to come to some kind of conclusion. "Listen here. There's no need for that. I reckon you're pretty much busted."

"You've got that right. I'm a downright pauper at this point."

"I figured. You ladies rolled in here without two plug nickels between you considering the three of you were gonna share one drink. Hell, I was prepared to contribute to the cause until Sam here, Wyatt, and Cliff jumped in to spring for the drinks. It's clear ya'll are pretty broke."

"Pitiful."

"Ain't it just." Belle shook her head. "Tell ya what. I've got a little apartment out back behind the café. I lived there when I was younger, back before I married and started a family. Over the years I've rented it out but it's empty now. It's not much but it's furnished and clean. You can stay there until you get on your feet. How's that sound?"

Lola was so overwhelmed she wiggled around in celebration and impulsively ran around the edge of the counter to give Belle a hug. Belle Warren was a sweetheart despite her gruff demeanor. Lola knew a little something about being judged on the basis of appearance. She should've known better. "Thank you. Thank you. Lordy! You won't be sorry, ma'am."

Belle stiffly patted her back. "Hell, I'm already sorry."

Sam thought his eyes were gonna flat pop out of his head.

It was Lola Lamont's celebratory jumping around that had done it.

Sweet Holy Jesus!

It had been a close call when he watched her glide across the linoleum floor wearing those spiky high heels on the ends those mile-long legs of hers. That alone had almost done him in. She was six feet tall at least, not counting the heels, and possessed the kind of luscious good looks that made men stammer and stutter and go all hard in the crotch. Sex on a long, gorgeous stick, for sure. Her eyes were big, round, and as blue as the bluebonnets that hung in framed display all over the walls of the café. She wore her thick, pale-blond hair piled on top of her head in a mound of riotous curls that fell here and there around a beautiful oval face. A man who knew what he was doing would yank all the pins out of that mass and bury his face there.

Sipping his coffee, he thought about how that all silky looking hair would feel wrapped around his cock as she sucked him off with that pretty mouth. Damn, if her lips weren't mouth-watering. Full and pouty, they were tinted with some kind of rosy looking gloss. In fact, every bit of her was put together as if she'd been tended by a makeup artist or something. Her skin was flawless and mascara had been applied with precision to her thick lashes. Maybe a bit too much of that stuff for his taste but he couldn't argue with the outcome.

Watching Lola bounce around in utter joy was a sight to behold.

Sam nearly swallowed his tongue at the sight of her perfect boobs bouncing beneath the skin-tight tee shirt she wore. The belly baring creation emphasized the slender dip of her waist and flat tummy. Lola's rounded, apple-shaped ass nicely filled out her khaki shorts but it was her legs that really reached out and grabbed him by the Johnson.

They were long, shapely perfection.

The kind of perfection any sane man would want wrapped around his waist while he rammed his cock deep. She was the kind of woman who made a man think of big, soft beds and messed up sheets. Sam felt his cock go hard behind the fly of his jeans.

She was trouble, very big trouble and might as well have *gold digger* tattooed to her mighty fine ass. He knew a little something about the breed and had suffered the

broken heart to prove it. Best to stay far, far away from Lola Lamont. She might be a fine little playmate for a while but Sam knew she wasn't the kind of woman a mature man counted on for anything more than a quick fuck or two.

Lola was a hot affair kinda gal, not a forever one.

Clearing his throat, he stood causing both women to look his way. "Congratulations on landing a job, Lola. Let's head out to that heap out front and gather your luggage."

She batted her sweet baby blues and smiled. "Nah, I can get it. Don't you have work to do?"

Sam shook his head. "Nope. In case you haven't noticed it's pretty damn boring around here. I figure I have time to help a lady out."

"Ah, that whole damsel and white horse thing, right?"

He laughed. She was a funny little thing. "Yeah. Come on."

Before heading outside, they stopped at the table where Cliff and her friend, Roxy sat. Leaning down, obviously joyous, she gave Roxie a hug. "Can you believe it, Rox? I landed a job. Right here."

Roxie, a beautiful brunette, grinned brightly. "Fast work, sunshine. That's great news."

Lola frowned. "Belle offered me a little apartment behind the café. I think there's only the one bed but you're welcome to share, honey. We could be roomies."

"Hmm. Let me think about it. I might have something cooking soon myself. But if I need a place to sleep, I'll definitely come by, okay?"

Lola grabbed the luggage that passed for a purse and reached for her cell phone. Wiggling it a little, she smiled. "Call me if you have a problem."

"Will do."

Sam stepped out into the Texas summer heat and headed straight for the trunk of the pink caddy. Pink? He struggled not to roll his eyes. Why did this seem such a perfect car for Miss Lola Lamont? "Hand me your keys, Lola."

She dug through her bag and finally handed them over. His eyes widened at the sight of the mountain of suitcases piled inside. "These are mine," she said pointing to two enormous battered cases. He struggled, huffed a little, and wrestled them onto the pavement.

"Damn, woman! What do you have in these? Rocks?"

Lola laughed. "No silly. One bag is for my clothes and the other is for my shoes."

Shoes?

Shaking his head, he reached for a smaller case. His mom had once explained that these were called train cases and ladies used them to tote around makeup and such. It was shiny and black featuring a cartoon ponytailed woman. The name *Barbie* was scrolled beneath the picture in swirly hot pink letters.

Lola grabbed the handle with both hands and grinned. "Isn't it the cutest thing ever? Emily and Roxie gave it to me as a gag gift on my last birthday but I just love it."

Sam didn't know what to say to that. He wasn't the kind of man who smiled a lot but damn if she wasn't as cute as hell standing there grinning from ear to ear. "Come on. Let's get you stowed away."

"Hang on a minute." She lifted out another suitcase and a tote bag and hauled it into Blue Belle's. The trunk was nice and empty now so he shut it up as Lola came back outside. "Okay. I'm all set. Lead the way."

Sam gripped the heavier than hell suitcases and headed down the alley between the café and the feed store. Behind him, he heard the steady *snick snick* of Lola's heels striking the pavement. He stopped in front of the small, wood-frame apartment and, taking the key Belle had handed him earlier, slipped it into the lock. The musty smell hit them both in a blast. Plunging forward, Sam set the bags near the front door and immediately started opening windows in the small space.

"Ew."

Sam glanced over his shoulder in time to see her wrinkle her turned up nose. "Sorry about the smell."

"Oh honey, it's not your fault," she said with that slower than molasses drawl. "And beggars can't be choosers as my mama always said."

"Your mama is a smart lady."

"Was," she said quietly coming farther into the small living space. "She passed away right before I left home for Vegas. Here let me help you." Lola moved to the window on the other side of the front door and started to tug. "Damn, it's stuck. Shoot."

"Here, darlin', let me get it for you. There's no telling how long these windows have been locked up." Lola stepped back and Sam caught a whiff of the wonderfully feminine scent of her. She wore some kind of soft, subtle perfume that was as sexy as hell. He was more than a little relieved when she moved off to examine the place. The window opened with a creak allowing fresh air to blow through the small area.

"Hey! This isn't bad," she observed, turning in small circles around the room. "I've definitely lived in worse."

Hmm. Now that was interesting because this place was sure no palace. His cop's mind began to wonder about the place she'd come from and how she'd ended up in Vegas. What had eventually driven her away from Sin City and into his town? A crime maybe? Sam immediately dismissed the idea. She didn't look like any criminal mastermind he'd ever seen.

A tiny kitchen sat to the left of the room and a bed and dresser occupied the far right. Smack dab in the middle was a ratty couch and an ancient television. Sam had never been in here before but he figured the open door near the bed was a bathroom. Sure enough, Lola peeked inside, flashed him a big smile and picked up her Barbie case from the bed. "I'll just put this stuff away. Sam, would you mind lugging my suitcases to the bed?"

Sam didn't argue. He picked up one of them and carried it over to the bed and set it down. Then we went for the next one. He'd almost made it when Lola screamed bloody murder.

"Lola!"

Instantly he dropped the suitcase to the floor. A loud pop sounded as the battered old suitcase flew open and silky panties flew everywhere.

"Spider, spider, spider." She staggered backward balanced on those spindly high heels until the edge of one caught on the open suitcase.

It all happened so fast, Sam barely had time to blink and then Lola was falling backward. Her arms flailed up and she somehow turned as she fell. Reacting on instinct he caught her and twisted as the force of her body hitting his propelled them both to the floor where they landed in a tangle of arms and legs. He didn't know how it happened but Lola was lying right on top of him, smashed against him like a remora.

Sam huffed out a breath then ran his hands quickly over every curve of her body. "You okay?"

"Ye-yes. Whew!"

The very next thing Sam noticed was that his hands were splayed over her sexy ass and her mouth hovered within a hairsbreadth of his lips. Her breath whispered softly against his skin. "Well, now."

She squirmed a bit and the action only made things worse when her hot little pussy pressed against his suddenly throbbing cock. Lola's eyes went wide and unable to resist, Sam flexed his fingers over the firm mounds of her butt. Sensation raced over his body, his gut tightened at the feel of all that lush female flesh, and if he'd been a begging kind of man, he'd be pleading with her to put him out of his misery.

Yes, he was in big trouble here.

Her hands went up over his face as she seemed to study every angle before moving up into his hair. Sam's hat lay on the floor beside them, another victim in the fall.

"Black. Thick."

"Hmm?"

"Your hair. I was wondering about that."

"You are one dangerous woman," he whispered against her lips.

"Oh, honey. Didn't you know? Danger is my middle name."



## Chapter Two

By the time a week had rolled by, Lola was getting the hang of things at Blue Belle's café. It was kind of like slipping into a pair of old, worn sneakers and realizing she'd missed the feel of them on her feet. She'd kept in constant contact with both Emily and Roxie and both of them were settled in jobs and had places to live, so she hoped that in a matter of a month or two they'd be back on their feet enough to leave this place.

Not that there was anything wrong with Mesa Blanco.

The people here were so nice, so welcoming that she really hadn't had much to complain about unless you counted the harsh about face from one tough sheriff. After that first day, he'd stopped by the café several times, swallowed down a quick cup of coffee and had politely asked if she needed anything. He'd even gone so far as to punch his private number into her cell phone.

Damn it to heck! She couldn't get him off her mind. After lying on the floor smashed right on top of him, she knew there was something sizzling and hot between them yet he'd made it more than obvious that he wasn't interested. But his hard, thick cock didn't lie. He wanted her all right. For some weird reason he wouldn't act on his desires and make a move.

Lola stepped outside her little apartment and locked up. It was her first real outing in Mesa Blanco and she didn't want to ruin her happy mood by wondering why Sam was so obviously keeping his distance. She headed down the alley until she hit the Main Street sidewalk, already missing her car which was currently residing at the local garage. The sun was just beginning to set as she walked the four blocks to Chaps where she was meeting Emily and Roxie for happy hour. Wearing her best jeans, red stilettos and a white top with little red cherries on it, she took off to the sound of the *snick snick snick* of her heels tapping out a little tune on the concrete. Due to the Texas summer

heat, she'd swept her curls up carelessly. Several dipped down to brush along the back of her neck. She'd nearly made it to the honky-tonk when a big black truck marked with the sheriff's crest on the door pulled up beside her.

"Just what do you think you're doing?" Sam didn't look like a happy camper. His dark eyes, shaded beneath the brim of his Stetson, were narrowed. Yep, downright mean-looking.

Lola turned and looked at him. "You have some nerve asking me a thing like that after practically ignoring me all week. I don't like your bossy tone. Just because you are the law around here gives you no right." Lola cocked her hip and planted her fists on her hips. Damn the man! She could've sworn she heard Sam growl and then he sent his gaze over her body like a hot lick.

"What the hell are you wearing?"

"What?" Lola swept her arms out and looked down at herself. "You don't like cherries?"

"Fuck!"

Lola was sick of his mixed signals. She knew damn good and well he wanted her yet he avoided her. She sighed. "Look Sam, I'm thirty years old and I'm not about to start game-playing with you. Yeah, you're hot and all that but I'm done with men who give off mixed signals. You either want me or you don't. Obviously you don't so hit the road, buddy."

"Now, Lola—"

"I mean it, Sam. Beat it. I've got other fish to fry tonight." With that final salvo, she held her head high and walked the last half-block to the entrance of Chaps. She felt his stare on her back the entire way. Well, she'd only spoken the truth. She was all up for an affair with the handsome sheriff because, let's face it, there was a definite connection but she'd be damned before she'd let him ignore her and then get all affronted just because she happened to be out on the town.

Roxie and Emily were already seated at a table in the darkened club when she arrived. Both were nursing something cold that would offer up a nice buzz. A plate of nachos sat between them.

Scowling, Lola plopped into a chair. "Hey ya'll," she said before grabbing a nacho and biting down.

"Damn, get this woman a margarita," Roxie said flatly.

"Looks like she needs one," Emily added, lifting her hand to the waitress on duty.

Lola looked at her friends, feeling that instant connection she always had with them. "How about ten? I'm sick of men I tell you. Sick, sick, sick."

"Who do you want me to kill for you, honey?" Roxie, a tall, very pretty brunette leaned back in her chair, one dark brow raised.

"The sheriff. He's got to go."

Emily, also brunette but more on the petite side of things, propped her elbows on the table. She looked ready to do battle. "I'll hold him down while Roxie smacks him in the nose. So he's being an ass, huh? What did he do? Heck, that first day in the café he couldn't take his eyes off you."

"Yeah, I know," Lola sighed and thanked the waitress for the frosty margarita she'd set down in front of her. Running her finger around the rim, she gathered up a bit of salt and stuck it in her mouth. "I swear, just looking at the man makes me shiver and then there was that thing where he caught me when I fell."

Emily's eyes went wide. "Huh? Fell?"

"Yeah, spill it," Roxie said, leaning forward in anticipation of a story. "What happened?"

So Lola told them all about the spider and her fall and about how she landed right on top of Sam, owner of that big, hard cock. Emily started laughing first and then Roxie and before she knew it she was laughing too. But then she went serious. Huffing out a breath, she sipped her drink. "But ever since then he's been avoiding me like I have a

disease or something and then tonight, before I walked in the door he pulls up and glares at me, questions what I'm wearing and gets all pissy. I'll never understand men."

"Avoidance," Roxie said with an air of finality. "Cliff told me that Sam's wife left him because she just didn't want to be tied to a poor county sheriff. She took off for Dallas, found herself a wealthy man and married him. I think it broke Sam's heart. He loved her or at least thought he did."

"I didn't know." Lola wondered about a woman who valued money over love. She could never be that way despite the poverty in which she grew up. Finding someone to love was more important than anything, in her estimation. To think Sam had suffered because of this woman made her heart tighten with sympathy. He was a good man despite his ornery ways, and proud. Even now, as ticked off as he made her, Lola wanted to crawl up in his lap and hang on for whatever ride he wanted to give her. Not even her ex-fiancé, Nick, had affected her this way. She wanted to know Sam and see what made him tick. "That's so sad."

Emily lifted her hand to order another round before looking her dead in the eye. "Know what I think? I think he's one scared puppy."

Lola laughed. "Scared? Of me? Hell, I don't think anything frightens that man. He's one tough hombre."

"I think you're on to something, Em," Rox chimed in. "I mean look at you, honey."

"What? What's wrong with the way I look?"

"Not a thing," Emily said, taking up the thread. "But you've gotta admit you come off pretty flashy. Maybe Sam just has the wrong idea about you. He sees that whole tits and ass combo you have going on along with everything else that goes with it. He wants you but he's scared to get involved."

Anger whipped through her. Same old story. Same sad song. "I'm sick of this shit, ladies."

Emily patted her hand. "I know you are, honey. We know how sweet you are and how smart. It just takes people awhile to realize you are a whole lot more than just another pretty face."

Lola sighed.

Several hours later she stepped from the shower, dried her hair and pulled on the cute little nightie she'd bought before leaving Vegas. The silky pink fabric felt like sheer heaven against her skin. Once upon a time she bought these things to please her fiancé but no longer. An unabashed girly-girl, she now wore the frilly, beautiful things just to please herself. After slathering on lotion that matched the perfume she always wore, she settled on the couch and flipped on the television. While a reality show about finding true love and everlasting happiness flickered over the screen, Lola thought about her conversation with her friends. Things were hopping between Emily and Roxie and the men in their lives. They didn't say much but then they hadn't needed to. Both were really distracted by the men they had met in Mesa Blanco on the day they'd rolled into town.

Hoping the boring show would help her get sleepy, she continued to stare at the screen when she heard mumbled voices.

Huh?

Suddenly alert, she straightened and stood to face her front door.

More mumbling and muted male laughter.

She might be a country hick from the Mississippi boonies but she'd lived in Vegas long enough to learn caution. Lola grabbed her cell phone and frantically began searching for Sam's number.

"Loooooola! Loooooola!"

Lola froze and then heard another laugh, louder this time. It was followed by a series of little knocks at her window. A chill raced up her spine as she pressed Sam's number. He answered on the first ring.

"Lola? What's wrong?"

How did he know something was wrong? No matter. "Sam, come quick. There are some men outside my place."

"Be right there. Don't you *move*."

She heard the anger in his voice along with that no-nonsense tone one expected from a seasoned cop. Clutching the phone to her chest, she stood there, frozen in place.

Anger riding him hard, Sam gripped the steering wheel and gunned the vehicle toward Lola's place on Main Street. He was officially off duty now but he was restless and just driving around, hoping for a way to blow off some steam when her call came in. Tracking down prowlers outside Lola's place was just the excuse he needed. The fact that Lola herself was the reason for his black mood and restlessness was pretty damn ironic.

His britches had been twisted in a bunch from the first minute he'd set eyes on the outrageous woman and he didn't know what he was going to do about it. She was not his type but damn if she didn't push all his buttons and then some. Rounding the corner, he stopped the truck and jumped out. Making his way down the alleyway, his anger dissolved somewhat. Three local teenage boys, swigging on bottles of beer were prowling around outside Lola's place. He'd known them since they were babies and knew their parents. They certainly weren't dangerous but had sure as hell crossed the line tonight.

"What the hell are you boys doing?" Sam tromped up and three bottles of beer hit the ground. One of the kids yelped but he wasn't sure who. "Got an explanation about this? It better be a good one."

"Um. Well, uh..." one began.

Well, shit.

"Do you boys want to get locked up in my jail?"

A chorus of nos sounded. Sam pulled out his cell phone and punched in his deputy's number. Within thirty minutes, the boys' scrawny asses were loaded up and being taken home to face the wrath of their parents. He wasn't excusing what they'd done, but since they'd never been in trouble before, he was willing to be lenient despite how raw he felt at this moment. Had they done anything other than scare Lola and make utter fools of themselves, he would have been much harsher.

Sam tromped up to Lola's door prepared to knock when she flung it open and leaped into his arms. Those long, luscious legs went around his waist and her arms squeezed so tightly at his neck he almost lost his breath. His hands swept the silky bit of nothing covering her back and instant lust swept him and carried him under. Stepping into the room as if he owned the place, he kicked the door shut not giving a hot damn at the moment about anything but being there for her, with her.

But if she wanted more from him tonight he wasn't fool enough to say no.

"You okay?" he whispered into the mass of her hair.

"I am now."

"Just a few local kids acting like fools. I sent them home to their parents unless you want to press charges."

"No. No charges. They just scared me." She looked up at him, her big, blue eyes suddenly at half mast and filled with easily recognizable heat. Her breath came out in rapid little pants. "You're quick. You got here so fast," she whispered breathlessly, her voice like honey and molasses.

"About to get a lot faster. I'm sick of dicking around here, darlin'." Turning he pressed her against the door and planted his lips along her neck. The sexy, classy fragrance of her curled through his system. He wanted her. Savage hunger and the need to touch her surged through his blood like aged whiskey. Sam swept his hands down her sides and arrowed straight to her ass. The firm, toned globes fit neatly into his palms and Sam stroked them as though he'd wanted to do from the very beginning.

“Been wanting to do this for days and I’m not a man who’s into self denial. I’m done needing you, watching you, and not letting myself take what I want.”

Lola squeezed him tight and planted soft, sexy little kisses all over his face. “About damn time, cowboy. Fuck me now, Sam. Don’t you know I’m dyin’ for you?”

“Hell.”

Lust riding him hard, he took her lips in a wild kiss that was little gentleness and all need. Sam fell into it, tasting her addictive sweetness, plying her tongue with his until her response flowed heady into his mouth. Lola was one hot bundle of woman and he suddenly knew he’d never get his fill of her. Her nipples tightened into hard little nubs that pressed the soft cotton of his tee shirt. Needing a firmer touch, he moved one hand from her ass and sent it down until the heat of her pussy practically singed him. Groaning low, breaking the savage kiss, he licked and nibbled at the slender column of her neck, feeling her sigh break over him like a song.

Sam slid his fingers past the elastic of her next-to-nothing panties and stroked them over her drenched heat. Dragging his fingers over her slit, dipping into the melting layers of her pussy, he flicked her clit with his thumb until she squirmed, a tiny frantic sound breaking from her lips. “I love the feel of your cream on my fingers, darlin’. God, you’re responsive and sweet.” He sent two fingers deep, hearing Lola whimper as he finger fucked her long and slow and then he ratcheted up things by pressing her clit again and then again. Lola tightened her legs around his waist and shivered against him. “Ready for my cock, honey? God, please say yes. Not a beggin’ man but —”

“Yesyesyes. Sam, hurry.”

A little cry left her lips when he withdrew his fingers from her juicy pussy. Reaching into the front pocket of his jeans, he found a condom and put it between his teeth. “Hang on, darlin’.”

“O-okay.”

Using his upper body strength, he pressed her tightly against the door for balance. The rasp of his zipper sounded loud in a silence filled with anticipation. Ripping the



package open, Sam covered his heavy erection then pressed up until he'd barely crowned her vaginal opening. Holding just the head of his cock there was pure agony.

Then finally he'd had enough. Plunging upward, high and hard, he filled her pussy to maximum capacity. Lola cried out, the sound low, nearly frantic. The idea that she was as hot as he was goaded him on as he gripped her ass and began to fuck her against the door. In and out he plunged, holding on tight as sensation tore through his body at the speed of light.

So good. So good.

Tight and perfect.

Lola milked his cock, fucking him back, writhing against him as if she couldn't fuck him fast enough, hard enough. Her little cry swept the air coupling with the sounds of their bodies slamming together in the fervent need for blind orgasm. Then her cry became a wail as she pressed her head against the door, tightening her legs as if she'd never let him go. Lola went still then flew apart in his arms. Gasping his name, she flexed and squeezed. The orgasm slammed into him with the force of an eighteen wheeler hitting a brick wall. Lust swept him, completion too, powerful and sweet until with a low sound of his own, he jetted his cum into the end of the condom.

## **Chapter Three**

Breathing hard, Sam held Lola in place against the door and wondered how she'd managed to turn him into an animal. He'd never been a man to disrespect women but he'd jumped her beautiful bones like a maniac. Drawing back, he looked straight into her eyes.

"I ought to apologize but I'll be damned if I can do it, honey. I'm not sorry. Not a goddamned bit."

Lola sent her fingers through his hair, eyes focused on his lips and damn if he didn't feel his cock twitch. It was still buried inside her.

"No apologies necessary," she whispered. "I swear, Sam, if you hadn't jumped me soon, I planned to make my own assault. Getting up close and personal has been on my mind since I first clapped eyes on you."

Sincerity rang in her voice and Sam grinned. Kissing her hard, once, twice, he finally pulled back and withdrew from her body. Not bothering to tuck anything away just yet, he took her hand and led her across the small space, straight to the side of her bed. Sam tapped the end of her nose. "Don't move."

Feeling her eyes on him, he stepped into her tiny bathroom, noting the little personal touches she'd added to the barren space. Pink fluffy towels hung along one wall and colorful bottles and tubes, makeup he figured, were in a basket near the sink. Taking care of condom disposal, he grabbed up a wash cloth and cleaned up a bit. Feeling like a voyeur in this feminine domain, he picked up a swirly cut-glass bottle and gave it a sniff. Yep. That was the scent that drove him crazy but he'd rather smell it on her skin.

When he stepped back into the room, Lola was sitting on the bed primly, her legs together, smiling at him. "I'm glad you rode in that on big white steed tonight, Sam."

He grinned. "More like a big, black truck." Stepping closer, he took in her skimpy bit of fluff she wore and damn if he didn't want to strip it right off her over-the-top luscious body.

She stood and closed the gap between them. "No matter how you got here, honey. You are mine right now and I aim to enjoy it. Take it off, Sam. I want to look at you."

"They sure grow their ladies bossy down in Mississippi, don't they?"

Lola reached for the hem of his tee shirt and he helped her by grabbing the cotton and yanking it over his head. She practically purred as she sent her palms over his belly and then up over his chest. "I learned a long time ago that a lady needs to be pushy if she wants to get anywhere in this world. Dang, Sam, you feel so fine. You're one hard man, aren't you?"

He didn't plan to answer that but then he couldn't if he'd wanted to. Lola planted her lips on his flesh and suddenly talking was the dead last thing on his mind. Her tongue tasted him slowly, lingering over his pecs as her hands trailed down his sides as if she aimed to study every inch of him. Her warm breath rushed over him and his cock did more than twitch this time, growing hard again and then her busy hands found his erection. Slowly, as if she weren't torturing him with her touch, she gripped his cock and dragged her fingers over every thick inch until finally holding his balls in the palm of her hand.

She flicked her eyes up to him, her eyes at half mast. "Mm. Sam, you are a helluva man, aren't you? Delicious." Lola teased his balls gently as sensation rocked him and then finally she released him to push his jeans from his hips. These tiny, teasing touches were killing him so he stepped back out of reach. Sam reached for the heel of one boot and yanked it off to toss aside. When he took care of the other, he shucked out of his jeans and briefs to stand naked before her.

"Ah, man," she whispered as if to herself. Her tongue swept her bottom lip as she studied him. Sam went hard as a damn stone. Lola's hot, sweet look took him in from the top of his head to his feet, stopping to linger at his chest, belly, cock and thighs as if

she were memorizing each detail. Sam couldn't remember when a woman had looked at him this way. So hungry. So eager.

"Your turn," he managed. "Damn if you don't look like a present I need to unwrap."

"Who needs a bow, right?"

He wanted to smile but couldn't. His mouth went dry when he traced his thumbs under the miniscule straps holding that pink confection to her shoulders. Sliding them down, watching the silk slip perilously down to drape seductively at the ends of her breasts, Sam stepped in to claim her. Again. One careless push and the material fell downward, gathering over hips.

Lola stood there bare from the waist up.

Damn!

Her breasts were the most perfect things he'd ever seen. Reaching out he traced the pale pink nipples, loving the way they hardened instantly. Responsive.

Hell yeah.

His mouth went dry. He'd seen plenty of naked females in his thirty-four years but never one whose body seemed expressly made for sinning.

Needing to taste her, he bent and sucked one into his mouth. Sam settled his hands at her sides just below her breasts and dragged his thumbs over the sensitive flesh beneath those pale mounds. Sucking, pulling, scraping with his teeth, he hungrily ate at her nipple. Lola made a soft yet urgent sound and he switched to the other. Sam wrapped her up in his arms, insinuating his thigh between hers until he pressed against her pussy. It was drenched and hot. Manipulating, pressing his thigh against her wet flesh, he worked her over. He wanted Lola as insane with lust as himself. He'd be damned before he accepted less. Lola took the bait and writhed against his thigh, drenching the spot with her cream.

Finally Sam released her nipple and settled his lips over her heart. It was pounding hard and fast so he kissed her there as he brought his hands around to tease her belly with his fingers. Snagging the elastic of her panties, he stepped back and tugged until they fell in a tiny puddle around her bare feet.

Lust flashed through his body like lightning.

Lola's cleanly waxed cunt allowed him a tiny glimpse of her pink pussy. Juices glistened on her labia, tormenting him with the desire to ram home again, deep and hard.

"You're beautiful."

"You don't mind it?" she whispered, sudden uncertainty in her wide eyes. "I had to keep it like this because of my costumes."

He tore his gaze from the sight of her bare pussy and moved in on her. Settling his hand low to cover the moist flesh, Sam swallowed hard as raw desire burned him. He slid his fingers over her, flicked her clit tenderly, and then pressed it. "No explanation needed. Like I said, you're beautiful. Everywhere."

Lola whimpered, closing her eyes.

Sam noticed she wore no makeup tonight. Well, hell, of course she didn't. She was getting ready for bed when those little assholes started messing with her. He wondered vaguely why she bothered with all the goop. Her lashes were pale but thick, lying against her cheeks and her skin was flawless. Manipulating her pussy, he settled his lips along her long, slender throat to draw her fragrant skin between his teeth as he began to slowly finger fuck her.

Lola moved to meet each stroke until finally she whispered his name.

Not needing an engraved invitation to fuck her, he grabbed her around the waist and backed her up until the mattress settled against her thighs. "Here now, honey. Let me spread you out like I want you," he said.

Once she was centered in the middle of the bed, he arranged her as if she were his own personal doll. It was a caveman kind of thing he knew and out of character for him but Sam couldn't help it. Lola made him feel savage. His cock, protesting the slowness of his actions, throbbed and ached and reached high, almost to his belly but damn, he wanted it to be good for her. He'd never been a guy to suffer performance anxiety but he wanted to measure up to the men she'd surely fucked before.

Sam knew it was lame to think such a thing. Maybe his ex had done a big number on him after all. No, he'd never be a rich man but never let it be said he couldn't make a woman scream with pleasure. Sam planned to prove his point with pretty, sexy Lola.

"Hurry, Sam," she whispered. Her legs were slightly spread and her arms were flung away from her body as if just waiting for him so that she could wrap those long limbs around him.

He shook his head. "No more condoms, darlin'. I'm sorry. This is just for you."

Her sudden smile surprised him. "You don't strike me as a one condom guy, Sam. What's up with that?" She laughed a little then sent a sexy gaze down his body to focus on his cock. That happy camper twitched in response. "See that little table over there with the godawful ugly lamp on it? Open that top drawer, honey, and we'll get you all fixed up."

Curious and not about to tell her *no* to anything she might suggest, Sam reached over and opened the drawer to find a black velvet bag with a drawstring top. He picked it up and jiggled it before lifting a brow at her. "What's this?"

"Just open it," she whispered in that soft southern voice. "I think you'll be glad you did."

Opening the bag, he dumped its contents on the bed and his eyes went wide. His libido did a little two step as electric heat pulsed wild through his veins. Sex toys, all in delicate, girly colors fell from the bag to land on the mattress. "Hell, woman, you've thought of everything," he said, grinning as he plucked a box of condoms, size large, from the pile. "You brought these with you from Vegas?"

"A smart girl doesn't leave home without them." The teasing lilt of her voice coupled with the naughty twinkle in her eyes turned him on more than anything in his entire sexual experience with women.

"I think I'm in love."

Sam was teasing but he wanted to bite his tongue for saying such a careless thing. She wasn't staying in Mesa Blanco and had made that very clear. Lola Lamont was the kind of woman who only needed a man like him for sex. That was the plain, unvarnished truth. She was rich man arm candy and not for him on any kind of permanent level. But damn it, she was here now and he aimed to enjoy her.

"Then come on over here and show me how much." Her laughter caused Sam an inward sigh of relief. Grinning at her, he pulled a condom from the box and shoved the erotic toys out of the way. "Oh, you got a purple one."

"Shit, woman! Purple?"

"But Sam, it's my favorite color."

He didn't particularly care if the rubber came in rainbow shades and had pictures of unicorns on them. Sam only knew he could safely fuck her again. Crawling between her legs on the bed, he sat back on his haunches and grinned at her. For a man who was, he knew, more dour than most, it was a surprise to meet a woman who could make him smile. He could handle some of that in his life.

"I could eat you up with a spoon, woman."

All hint of playfulness disappeared from Lola's expression as her tongue swept along her bottom lip. She brought her hands up to cup her own breasts. Diamond-hard nipples peeked from between her fingers so Sam went for them. Bending over her, he sucked first one and then the other into his mouth before dragging his lips over every inch of her body. His teeth tested the flesh of her belly as his hands gripped her thighs. Sending his thumbs on a little quest, he drew them over the sensitive inner flesh of her thighs, groaning to find her damp. Her cunt was delectable. He'd never fucked a woman who was waxed so perfectly. Sam kissed her there, finding the skin baby soft.

Beneath him, Lola went still.

Sitting back on his haunches again, he parted her legs more, further exposing her. Damn if he didn't love what he saw. Her glistening flesh was pink and dewy, soft. Drawing his fingers over her as if memorizing every sexy little layer, he opened her labia. Her little clit was swollen and so tempting. Sucking it into his mouth and making her scream suddenly became the most important thing in his world. Sam bent to her and licked her there before sending a breath over that wickedly sexy bit of flesh. Above him, Lola sighed.

Concentrating on the delicious task before him, he buried two fingers deep into her pussy. Lola's back bowed on the mattress and her long, long legs spread out a bit wider.

"Oh, Sam."

Bending low to her pussy, Sam sucked the morsel into his mouth, alternating the pressure until she was squirming and panting. Her fingers sank into his hair and gripped hard but he didn't give a shit about that. He wanted to eat her flesh, drink her cream until she flew apart.

In short, Sam wanted to be master of her universe.

Nipping and sucking, all the while fucking her with his fingers, Sam felt the frantic press of her bare pussy thrusting against his face and knew with each whimpering sound that Lola was quickly approaching orgasm. Digging into the task and loving every minute of it, Sam felt her go suddenly still. Moving in for the kill, he flattened his tongue and swept through those drenched layers of flesh once more before sucking gently at her clit. Lola's quick little scream swept the air as he kept it up, sending her over that erotic edge and then gently bringing her down with a slow lap of his tongue. Her pussy pulsed against his mouth and vaginal walls clamped down on his buried fingers.

When the only sound left was Lola's panting breaths, Sam reared up and covered his cock with neon purple latex. He was beyond caring what kind of candy-ass man would wear such a thing as he buried his hard penis deep. Lola moaned and so did Sam



but when she wrapped those super long legs around his ass, Sam thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

Savage lust raced through his veins heading straight to his hungry cock. Each hard vaginal squeeze threatened to take off the top of his head and pulsing fingers of pleasure raced down his spine settling in his tightly drawn balls. Frantic to have her, to fuck her hard, Sam grabbed Lola's hands and settled her fingers around the rungs of the old fashioned headboard.

"Hang on, darlin'."

Lola gripped the metal and then Sam's hands did too. For what he had in mind, he needed something solid. Pressing his knees hard into the mattress, he pounded into her giving flesh. Over and over he plunged as Lola's heels dug heavily into his ass.

It was so good.

Powerful.

The woman rocked his world.

The sound of their flesh meeting filled the room along with Lola's soft little cries.

"Please, Sam. Ohgodohgodohgod. Now."

Not about to let the lady down, he picked up speed and force, slamming into her like a hurricane on the Gulf Coast. He battered her until she flew apart beneath him. Sam couldn't hold on. He couldn't. Lashing her with three hard strokes, Sam felt the powerful rush wash over him as he jetted his cum into the condom, pulsing inside her with a force he'd never experienced before.

In the aftermath, Sam came down over her. He kissed her nipples, licked them gently then unwound her fingers from the rungs of the headboard. Swamped with tenderness, he kissed each one then moved his weight from her satiated body. Holding her close, drawing her against him, he kissed her temple.

"Mm," Lola whispered against his heaving chest. "Wow, Sam. I'm speechless. Do you work tomorrow?"

"Nope. I'm off. What about you?"

"Don't go in until early afternoon. That's good."

Sam looked at her, touching the long length of her back in a gentle stroke. He smiled. "Yeah, it is. Means I'm staying tonight, darlin'."

Her arms went around him as she snuggled in. "Not about to argue with that, Sam."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning Sam awoke to the smell of bacon frying.

Now wasn't *that* new?

He reached out for Lola but already knew she wasn't there. Her side of the bed was cold so undoubtedly she'd been up for awhile. Cracking open one eye, he rolled over and looked across the room toward the kitchen. He couldn't see her but he definitely heard her. She was humming an off-key tune as bacon sizzled on the stove. Dragging his ass out of bed, he grabbed his discarded jeans and headed to Lola's bathroom, his morning wood leading the way. Quickly using her shower, he noted a damp towel tossed in a laundry hamper and figured she'd already cleaned up for the day. Stretching and groaning beneath the warm spray of water, he turned the past night over in his brain, realizing he hadn't enjoyed a sexual experience more, nor could he remember sleeping so damn good afterward.

Shower finished, he dried and shrugged into his jeans and headed toward Lola's tiny kitchen. She turned, flashing an uncertain smile, a broken half of an egg shell in each hand. "Hey, you."

Sam's tongue froze to the roof of his mouth.

Standing there without a drop of makeup and her hair drawn back into a ponytail, Lola wore a tiny, white, form-fitting tee featuring the words *Pink Flamingo Girls* in flashy hot pink letters. No bra. Sam hadn't seen anything remotely resembling this woman since he was a young guy with a collection of raunchy comics. Every line and

curve of her body screamed *naughty*. Coupled with the sexy tee was a pair of skimpy pink shorts that were so miniscule as to be non-existent. A strip of bare skin showed across her soft belly between the tee and the shorts.

Sam's cock responded to the sexy domesticity of Lola Lamont, and he hardened stiff as a poker behind the fly of his jeans. "Mornin'."

Lola's smile faded as she looked down and picked up the spatula to poke at the sizzling bacon and he felt her sudden insecurity reach out and grab him. His heart tightened. He'd never imagined a woman like her would suffer an ounce of doubt about anything but it was there and real and for the first time he wondered what it might feel like to live a single day in her very beautiful skin.

It couldn't be all that easy.

Eager to see her happy, he went up to her and took the spatula from her hand and set it aside. Sam cupped her cheek and had the pleasure of watching her eyes widen. "Now don't you just look as sweet as all get-out, honey." He kissed her tenderly, forcing back the savage urge to just lay her down on the floor and fuck her like a crazy man. She needed tender. She needed sweet. Lola Lamont needed a man to appreciate something other than the wicked curves of her body. "And breakfast is just what I want. I'm starved. Let's eat."

## **Chapter Four**

Lola spooned up a bite of her low-fat yogurt, watching Sam dig into his breakfast of eggs, bacon and toast. When he'd stepped close to her little kitchen, she'd almost rushed up and grabbed him to drag his sexy ass straight back to bed but a quick blast of insecurity caught her off guard. She didn't like morning afters because a girl didn't always know what to expect. So many men in her life had given her a quick kiss and headed out the door never to be seen again and Lola knew she didn't want that with Sam.

It would hurt too much.

Boy was she ever in big trouble here.

For a woman who wanted nothing more than to get the hell out of Dodge as quickly as possible, she was suddenly thinking about Sam and how great he was in bed and how tender and gentle he could be. But savage too. Yeah, Lola liked a little bit of rough. Liked it a lot.

Hot!

The man was total eye candy and the only guy in her experience who'd practically rendered her speechless with the raw, edgy brand of sex that made her toes curl.

Sam bit into a piece of toast looking over-the-top yummy wearing nothing but his jeans and a slow sexy smile. His black hair, still damp from the shower, was brushed back from his forehead emphasizing the chiseled planes of his face. "So Lamont isn't your real name, is it?"

Lola laughed and shook her head. "You figured that out, huh? No, it's Smith but the Lola is real enough. All me. My mama named me after my great grandmother and I didn't have to change it. Belle knows the truth about that, too, considering I had a little bit of paperwork to do when she hired me."

Taking a sip of his coffee, Sam looked at her over the rolling steam from the mug. "So what took you to Vegas?"

"Umm, what didn't?" Lola sighed. "Mama and I lived in a creepy old trailer park at the edge of town. Poor white trash. I know it sounds bad but that was us. I knew from the time I was old enough to think for myself that I had to get out of there."

"Sounds tough."

Compassion burned in his dark eyes and Lola felt a lump rise in her throat as sad memories tore through her. She didn't talk about her past much. Emily and Roxie knew about her life of poverty but Lola had never been one to seek pity. She was too proud for that and knew it well. "We did okay, Sam. I mean, Mama was in really bad health while I was growing up but we were a good team."

Sam took another drink of his coffee as he regarded her steadily. "What about your dad?"

Lola laughed. "All I ever got from my daddy were good looks and long legs. Mama got the ratty old mobile home and a mountain of debt. That about sums it up. Mama said that after I was born, he got on his motorcycle, took off, and that was it."

"Looks like you managed okay."

Rolling her eyes, Lola shook her head. "Yeah right. Fired from my show and stranded without a penny to my name. Doing good all right. Despite everything that happened there it was still better than where I grew up." Appetite gone, she shoved away the half eaten container of yogurt. "I hated that place, Sam. It was awful."

"Don't like small towns?"

"Nah, it's not all small towns, just that one. The girls hated me and the boys wanted to screw me." She practically snorted. "Like *that* was gonna happen. The last thing I needed was to wind up pregnant and poor and stuck in that sorry place. Anyway, I worked my hiney off in a little café kind of like Belle's place, took care of Mama and dreamed of getting out one day."

"Why Vegas?"

She shrugged. "Why not Vegas? Hey, look at me, Sam. College was out of the question and let's face it, I'm no rocket scientist."

Sam frowned. "You're not stupid, darlin'."

"Ah, Sam. You're so sweet but don't bullshit a bullshitter. I'm common sense smart but an education was just out of the question for a girl like me."

"Now, who's talkin' bullshit."

She waved his words away. "I knew from an early age that about the only thing I had going for me were my looks and doing something in Vegas just seemed realistic, ya know? After Mama died, I sold that heap of metal and everything we had and just took off."

"How old were you?"

"Um, almost nineteen." She laughed a little. "I was scared spitless. Honest to God, I'd never been away from home before and I was alone. Pretty scary."

"I'll bet."

"Ended up waiting tables and taking dancing lessons when I could afford it. Then, I was asked to work some convention showrooms. You know, cars, electronics, and what have you." Lola gauged the responses on Sam's face but with him it was hard to tell what he was thinking. Absently she picked up her spoon and poked it into the yogurt cup. "Eventually my dancing was up to speed and I auditioned for the Pink Flamingo Girls and the rest was history."

Sam's eyes zeroed in on her chest and the letters written there. Ha. He was checking out her boobs too. Such a man! Still, flashes of what they'd done last night whipped through her mind and before you could say *fuck me quick*, her nipples were hard and pressing against the soft cotton.

Sam cleared his throat and looked at her, his eyes burning dark with hunger. "So you danced?"

"Pranced and strutted is more like it. There were women in the show who'd taken dance lessons all their lives. I never fooled myself for a minute. They liked the way I looked mainly but I was firmly in the *prancing* part of the show." Lola locked gazes with Sam. "Anyway, I got too old and they fired me," she whispered, sensing Sam was no longer thinking about her past but more about the here and now.

"You look just right to me," he said.

Quiet fell between them. Tension crackled in the air.

Sam pushed back from the table and stood. "Wait right here."

Lola went still as he walked across the room and stopped to fool around near the side of the unmade bed. Frowning she watched him come back but then all became clear when she noted the small packet he held in his hand. Sam set the condom on the kitchen table and unzipped his jeans. His dark eyes burning with sexual hunger and a dark, sexy intensity, he pushed them down and kicked them aside.

Heat ripped through her, damping her panties, as her pussy responded to his flagrant need for her. Sam's cock rose up, high and hard, nearly to his belly. The thick stalk captured her gaze and her mouth went instantly dry as she imagined taking him deep into her mouth. He exuded strength, passion and control and wouldn't it be nice to strip some of that from him until he fell apart under the lash of her tongue?

Sam plucked the condom from the table, keeping his eyes focused firmly on her, as he tore the package open with his teeth. He gripped his cock at the base, fisting his hand around it, moving it up and then down again in a seductive move that had her pussy creaming. Memories of the best pleasure she'd ever known ripped through her system and Lola's heartbeat speeded up in response. Anticipation had her bare toes curling against the floor.

Finally Sam sprawled in the kitchen chair, his legs spread invitingly as he continued to work his cock steadily.

"Come here, darlin'."

Drawing a breath, she stood slowly and stepped tentatively between Sam's spread legs. His eyes, dark with intensity roamed up then down her body, lingering on her beaded, puckered nipples. Sam snagged the hem of her tee shirt then drew it up over her belly. Lola's breath caught and held and before she could blink Sam's lips were on her, settling hotly on the flesh he'd exposed.

"There's not a thing wrong with you, Lola. You're beautiful. Those people in Vegas are dumbasses for firing you."

The comment came from left field, catching her off balance. Warmth curled through her as she pushed her fingers into his thick hair to hold him close. His kisses fell softly on her belly as he nipped her flesh and teased with his tongue. How would she ever leave this man? Shoving the pitiful, bittersweet thought aside, she absorbed the way he touched her, the way he made her feel.

"Oh, Sam."

"Not enough," he said. Sam drew back and lifted her tee higher until it settled over her bare breasts, framing them in soft white cotton. His eyes focused on the tightly drawn nipples. "Give 'em to me."

Lola caught her breath then lifted her right breast.

"Closer. Yeah, like that." Sam's mouth latched onto her nipple and a low whimper tore through her lips. Sucking hard, then softly, he licked the spot then used the edges of his teeth on her. It was a tender bit of rough against her breast. Lola's breath stilled then gasped out again when he moved to the other breast. "You're delicious," he murmured around her throbbing nipple.

His hands went to the waist of her shorts and he pushed them down along with her panties until they settled around her ankles. Impatiently, needing his fingers on her pussy, she kicked the bits of fabric away. When Sam sent one fingertip over the crease of her cunt, she dropped her head back, sighing at the sensation but then he ratcheted things up a notch. Parting her labia, he circled, then pressed her clit with his thumb.



Lola trembled and shook, forcing herself to look at Sam. His eyes were focused on her weeping pussy as he manipulated her flesh.

"Sam," she whispered. "Please."

"Yeah. Ride me, Lola. I can't wait."

Lola didn't need a second invitation. Plucking the condom from his hand, she slowly rolled it over the fat head of his cock and kept going until he was covered. He was so thick, so long. Unable to resist, she fisted her hand around his erection. Oh yeah, he was more than ready for her. Sam's jaw clenched and unclenched rhythmically as he watched her hand glide over him and she knew he was as ready as she was.

Stepping back a bit, she straddled his thighs. When she was as close as she could possibly be, Sam's body heat reached out to her and her body tingled in anticipation. Grabbing his shoulders for balance, she looked down between their bodies. Sam took his cock in his hand and Lola lowered herself until that thick head was settled at the entrance to her pussy. Swiveling her body, feeling herself open fully to him, she finally took what she wanted and slid down over him.

Sam filled her to capacity, sending pleasure rolling through her body in giant waves. Instinctively she tightened, holding him deep even as he encouraged her to move.

"Aw, sweetheart." He gripped her ass, guiding her slow movements, before finally latching onto a thrusting nipple.

Heat curled tighter than a spring in her belly as she rode him. Up. Down. She swiveled her hips again gratified when Sam groaned low and flexed his fingers on her ass. Soon the slow, seductive pace wasn't nearly enough and Lola sped up, whipping up and down over his cock. When Sam's forearm settled behind her back, she bowed her body over it and felt the rush and flow of her cream as he brushed her g-spot.

"Saaaaam."

"That's it, honey, come for me." His voice was low and rough as he plunged upward, igniting that pleasure spot until she burned.

An orgasm rolled through her, hot and wild.

Lola's pussy clutched him, milked and squeezed as every nerve ending coiled tight then flew apart. Crying out, riding him through the storm, she knew she would never get enough of his man. As the last burst of pulsing pleasure seared her, Sam came too, biting gently on her nipple, groaning against it.

Lola sank against him, her breath heavy against his shoulder as Sam slowly stroked her back. "Wow. Nice way to start the day," she managed on a gasping breath.

"Yeah. You don't have plans tonight, do you?" His hand moved down to stroke her ass.

"Uh-uh. You offering?"

"You bet I am, darlin'. I'm up for a red hot affair if you are. I'll come by tonight. That okay with you?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Several days later, Lola looked up from filling a batch of salt shakers and smiled when Emily and Roxie came breezing through the front door of Blue Belle's. "Hey, ya'll. Slumming today?"

Both women walked up to the counter. Roxie grinned. "I was hungry for pie."

"We have some of that. Fresh made today. How about you, Em? You're probably ready for some good stuff right about now since you actually have to eat your own cooking these days."

Emily rolled her eyes and grinned. "Rub it in, why don't you?"

When they were settled into a booth with a platter of homemade French fries and slices of lemon meringue pie, they started catching up. It was mid-afternoon and quiet as a tomb in the café. Belle had worked the morning shift and was off so the friends had the place to themselves.

Roxie forked up a bite of lemon pie and hummed a little. "Damn. This is good stuff. Don't tell me you made this."

Lola shook her head. "Hey, I'm southern, honey, I can deep fry just about anything but Belle does the pies. Aren't they yummy?"

Emily bit into a crispy French fry and moaned. "Mmm. I swear, I'm starving. Did I tell you I'm taking cooking lessons? Wyatt figured out pretty quick that I can't boil water much less cook for all those ranch hands and he took pity on me. What a guy."

"Oh, that reminds me." Lola dug into one of the pockets on the slim apron tied low on her hips. "Here ya go, Em. I copied some of Belle's easy recipes."

"Note the emphasis on *easy*?" Roxie snickered around a mouthful of pie. "I swear, Em, you're hopeless. Been worried about how long you could continue fooling him."

Lola leaned her elbows on the table and watched her best friends spar. They were so good-natured and fun. It was little wonder they were such pals.

Emily sighed. "God, I admit it. I *am* hopeless but Wyatt doesn't seem to mind."

Lola exchanged a telling look with Roxie. "Do I sense more to this story?"

Em's grin answered the question handily and then she noticed a little color rise to Roxie's cheeks as she glanced nonchalantly out the plate glass window. "Um, Rox? Why do I get the feeling Em's not the only one to have something hot and heavy in the works?"

"I chased. I caught and he's happy about it. 'Nuff said."

"You are such a badass, Roxie," Emily teased. "Impressive."

Lola clutched her hands beneath her chin and sighed. "My hero. Oops. Make that heroine."

Roxie laughed. "Ah, he wasn't all that hard to catch."

No surprise there.

Cliff Beckett, owner of Chaps, Mesa Blanco's honky-tonk, was a red-blooded man who had eyes in his head. Roxie was a beautiful, sexy woman. Naturally, he fell into her hands like a big, good-looking wad of putty and before all was said and done, Lola suspected Roxie would mold the hunky man to her liking.

"So what about you?" Emily said, spearing her with a look. "Are you burning up the sheets with the sheriff?"

Roxie sniffed the air. "Hmm. I think I smell smoke."

Lola sighed. "Call the fire department. Does Mesa Blanco have one? Hmm. Well, if they do, call 'em quick."

Roxie and Emily both laughed.

When she told them about the kids who'd harassed her that night after they'd met for drinks, she watched Roxie bristle. "What the hell? Are you kidding me?"

"Damn little twerps," Emily chimed in with a scowl.

"No, no, settle down. I called Sam and he came a runnin'. Took them home to their folks and I'm sure that was punishment enough for the little pervs."

"What a guy." Emily sighed.

"Isn't he just?" Lola gathered up a bit of meringue on her fork. "I swear. The man turns me inside out. Makes me wonder about leaving here. Am I crazy?"

"Probably certifiable, honey," Roxie said. "None of us plans to stay but damn if I wouldn't like a little more time here."

"Me too," Emily said, her eyes taking on a faraway look. "Me too."

Lola thought about her hot nights between the sheets with Sam Campbell and had to agree.

## Chapter Five

It had been a hell of a day already and Sam couldn't wait to finish it up, close it down and get back to his important business with one beautiful waitress. Lola had become a permanent fixture in his life for the past two weeks and he wasn't a man who lied to himself.

He couldn't get enough of her.

Dangerous.

Sam knew he was playing with fire and like a dumbass, he was bound to get burned. The woman would be deadly to his heart and he constantly had to remind himself of what she was.

Rich man arm candy.

A blast of shockingly cold air hit Sam the minute he and his deputy Eldon, stepped through the door of Blue Belle's. Time for a quick jolt of caffeine.

*Yeah, keep lyin' to yourself, buddy.*

*You're here for her.*

Sam saw Lola immediately as she came through the swinging doors that led to the kitchen. Balancing a big tray of blue plastic glasses, she turned and started stacking them next to a giant silver urn that was marked with a popular tea label. Smiling at the sight she presented with her hair pulled up in a big, messy pile of curls, he and Eldon planted their butts on bar stools at the counter.

When Lola turned and saw him, her smile widened. "Well, hey there. If it isn't the handsome sheriff and his super cute deputy. Hey, Eldon."

Eldon, a gangly young fellow in his late twenties, turned several shades of red and shyly tipped the brim of the cowboy hat that was part of his uniform. "Ma'am."

"That's Lola to you. I'm way too young to be a ma'am. Ya, hear?"

Sam laughed. "Quit tormenting Eldon, Lola. Pretty soon you'll be messing with his head like you mess with mine."

"Is that so?" Lola cocked her hip and winked at him. *Brazen little thing.* "Imagine that. Little old me messing with your head. Can I get you guys some coffee? Just made some fresh."

"Sounds good," Sam said.

When Lola turned to fill their order, he studied her covertly from top to bottom. There was something different about her these days. Back when he'd first set eyes on her she'd been harried and pretty upset about the turn of events. She fairly oozed panic. Look at her now. Her smile was bright and easy as she worked behind the counter and her teasing manner made him happy.

What the hell was up with that?

He couldn't remember the last time he'd been truly content. Sam was no fool. He knew damn good and well that Lola was responsible for the way he was feeling these days.

"So what have you gentlemen been up to today?" Lola set two steaming mugs in front of them along with a small pitcher of cream. "Lots of crime fighting?"

"Actually, yeah," Sam said as he doctored his coffee with a splash of cream and gave it a stir. "Tough morning."

Lola's eyes went wide. She stilled. "What happened?"

"Shut down a meth lab about ten miles from here. Had some help from the state police but we got it done."

"What the hell, Sam? I thought a place like this would be pretty much crime free. Are you okay? Was there shooting involved? Oh my God!"

Sam sat up straight, noting the fear on her face and hurried to reassure her. Hell, was she worried about him? "No, honey. Settle down now. We got them while they

were still sleeping off the booze from the night before. And don't forget, I had plenty of help." When Lola visibly relaxed, he picked up his coffee, took a sip and continued. "Rural areas have lots of drug problems and it keeps us on our toes. It's just part of the job."

Eldon's phone rang then and after a brief conversation and quick goodbye, he left the café to head back to the sheriff's office. Sam was alone with Lola except for one other customer.

"Hey, Lola, can I get a refill?" This from Harry, an old timer who sat at the other end of the counter. He was pretty much a permanent fixture in the place since his retirement after years of working in the oil fields. The elderly man held out his cup. Lola seemed to collect herself and gave Harry a big smile. "Sure thing."

As she poured more coffee into his cup, Harry grinned. "I heard some gossip around town that you were one of them strippers when you worked in Vegas."

"Now, Harry, that's just not very politically correct of you. They are called exotic dancers these days but no, I danced in a show. Didn't do any exotic dancing. And where on earth did you hear such a thing?"

Harry laughed, the sound rusty and rough. "Aw, I'm just pulling your leg, Lola. Trying to get your goat."

"Consider it got, you old stinker." Lola set the coffee pot aside. "Just because I came here from Vegas doesn't mean I lived some kind of wild and crazy life. I mean, yeah, I danced in a show for close to ten years, but I'm still a country girl at heart."

Smiling, Sam shook his head. She was unflappable and so damn likable.

"What kind of get-up did they have you in, little gal?"

"Well, pretty much close to nothing and lots of little sparkly things on my costume. Had to wear this big feathery thing on my head." Using her hands, she emphasized how high it might have been. "Heavy. Oh Lordy! Heavy. Hard to do prancing, dancing and high kicks when wearing that thing."

Harry shook his head. "Now that I would've liked to see."

"Me, too," Sam said. "Some kind of balancing act but I bet you looked great."

Grinning from ear to ear, Lola walked up and leaned her elbows on the counter and stared him straight in the eye. "Not too shabby." With a flirty, highly seductive glint in her eyes, she drew the tip of one finger down his collar and then gave it a tug so she could whisper in his ear. "Wanna see, Sheriff? I think I can still muster up a high kick or two for you. I'm very flexible."

Sam's belly tightened as her warm breath sifted across the curve of his ear and his cock twitched in response. "You offering?"

Lola pulled back then surprised him by kissing him right on the mouth. It was a short, sweet peck considering other kisses they'd shared but the touch zipped straight through his body like an electrical charge.

Yeah, he was in a hell of a lot of trouble here.

"Oh yes, I think I am. You off tonight?"

Sam nodded. "Tomorrow too."

"Hmm. As it happens, I'm not working tomorrow either."

Sam's mind conjured downright dirty images of all the things he wanted to do to that wicked body of hers. His heart rate picked up. "Sounds like a date."

A chime rang over the doorbell and Lola released him. He looked over his shoulder to see a woman hovering in the doorway. Two small kids stood behind her. Sam frowned. She wore a look of desperation that he'd learned to recognize in his years of law enforcement. Lola excused herself and walked up to the woman.

Lola spoke with her quietly and he saw her shake her head. "No, we don't really need any help right now. I'm sorry."

Though Sam strained to hear more of what was being said, Lola pitched her voice low, disguising their conversation. Within a few minutes, the woman herded her children inside and they sat together in a booth near the windows. Every bit of teasing



and humor left Lola's face as she headed to the kitchen. While he nursed his coffee, he watched her come back out with platters of burgers, fries and soft drinks.

As the small family ate their meal, Lola came back behind the counter, reached into her apron and took out some money. She put it in the cash register.

"What are you doing, honey?" Sam asked, though he already knew.

Lola just shook her head. "It's my tip money. They were hungry, Sam."

That was all she said. Sam got the feeling that Lola knew exactly how it felt to be without the bare necessities. There was a hell of a lot more to her than met the eye and Sam fell just a little bit in love.

Damn it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lola was nervous. She didn't know why exactly but expectation, a feeling of premonition, practically hovered in the air. Despite her tendency to be a little soft and gooshy about things she had her practical moments. Woo woo stuff wasn't something she seriously considered. Still she wondered at the feeling of something impending. Sensing her overnight excursion might lead to something monumental, she packed her Barbie makeup case. Already she'd soaked in the bathtub until her skin was pink and glowing. She should have been relaxed but no. Something was different in Sam's voice when he'd called her earlier.

"How would you feel about staying at my place?" he asked in that slow Texas drawl. "Nothing against your apartment."

She laughed. "No offense taken. It's not much. I have to admit, I've been curious to see where you live."

Silence fell on the other end of the line. "It's not fancy. I'm not a rich man, Lola."

Well now.

Where had that comment come from? Sam already knew about her past and where she'd grown up and her tiny temporary dwelling here in Mesa Blanco was certainly no

mansion. She realized there was much to learn about what made Sam tick and tonight she aimed to dig deep, assuming he would let her.

Lola snapped the lid on her shiny black case and took in her appearance in the bathroom mirror. Tonight she wore her hair down and she'd straightened it instead of letting it curl as she normally did. For what she had planned for later, she would need to pull it back and that was easier accomplished this way. Smiling a little, she carried the full case into her bedroom area and set it on the bed. Lola wore a pair of khaki shorts and a turquoise halter top made of linen along with matching sandals. A medium-sized overnight bag lay unzipped on the bed and per Sam's request, she opened a drawer and grabbed her velvet bag of sex toys. She smiled. Just thinking about what they'd do to each other with all this cool stuff made her shiver. Finding a spot for her sexy stuff, she was just closing the case when there was a knock on her door.

"Oh boy," she whispered to herself. "Here we go, Lola."

When she opened the door, she caught her breath at the sight of Sam standing there in a well-fitting pair of jeans, a form-fitting black tee and his Stetson.

He was sex on a stick.

"Hey there," she said, stepping back so he could come inside. "I swear I've never seen a man who looks better in a cowboy hat than you. Come here and give me a kiss, Sheriff."

He'd looked so solemn, so serious when she first opened the door that it was nice to coax a sexy grin from him. Sam swept the Stetson from his head, exposing his black, tousled curls and moved in on her. "Howdy, darlin'. Been thinking about this for hours," he said gruffly, as he wrapped his arm around her to draw her flush against his body. Bending to her, Sam kissed her hard, sweeping his tongue deep for a slow tasting that had her toes curling in her cute turquoise sandals.

Lola dived headfirst into the kiss, meeting him more than halfway. Tangling her tongue with his, she moved her body against the hard-as-steel muscles of his chest and

didn't stop until her nipples were stiff and aching for a firmer touch. Sam pulled away slightly to focus on her face. "You ready to come to my place?"

"Yes," she managed. "Figure I'm ready for just about anything."

"Did you pack that black velvet bag?"

The rough edge of his voice streaked through her system like lightning. "Yeah."

"Good enough. Let's head out to my place."

Lola took in the dry, dusty landscape just outside the town of Mesa Blanco, remaining quiet as they drove farther away from the city limit sign. Sam was quiet too. It was hard to gauge his mood. She knew he was more serious than most people but she figured and that was understandable considering his profession. There was more though. From gossip she'd heard she knew he was divorced. Maybe he was still loved his ex-wife. Could that be it?

The thought he still might pine after his former wife bothered her.

That could only mean one thing.

She was falling hard and fast for Sam Campbell.

Sam reached out and adjusted the dial on his radio until a slow country song filled the cab of his truck. "I ran onto Mike, from the garage and asked him about that heap of junk you call a car." A small smile tilted his lips.

"Really? What did he say?"

"He wondered if I could just go ahead and shoot it and put it out of its misery." Lola laughed and then Sam continued. "No, he had to special order some parts, honey. The car is pretty old. I told him I'd let you know." He slid his eyes in her direction. "You might be here a little longer than you thought. Is that a problem?"

Lola shook her head and like a coward, looked out the window at the pastureland that flew by in shades of green, gold and brown. "It should be, but it's not." The sad truth was she wasn't sure if she ever wanted to leave. But if she did, how would Sam

feel about that? Maybe she didn't want to know. She'd had her heart broken enough times in this life. Lola wasn't sure she could bear it again.

Trying desperately to shake away her uncertainty, she glanced at Sam as he made a right turn and pointed to a house in the distance. "That's my place. It's not much."

Lola saw the long, tree-lined drive and a modest brick house that nestled in the midst of a thicket of cottonwoods. A neat mailbox featuring the name Campbell sat near the road at the beginning of the driveway. She smiled. "Why would you say that? I love it, Sam. It looks so homey."

He pulled up in the circle drive in front of the house and within minutes they were walking inside. "I built this after Claudia and I got married," he said. Holding her train case and bag, he smiled. "Let me put these away and then I'll give you the grand tour."

When Sam came back from his chore, he showed her around the place. She took in the design of his simple ranch-style house, the large living room filled with overstuffed but practical furniture and the adjoining dining area. Near the back part of the house, the kitchen was functional and nice, featuring tiled countertops and an island with a built in grill and cooktop. Copper pots hung above the space. A small four-person kitchen table set nearby. "Nice kitchen."

Sam looked around the room as if seeing it for the first time. "My ex liked to cook."

"Oh."

He walked up to a sliding glass door that led to the spacious backyard. "I built the patio last summer."

Making herself at home, she slid the door open and stepped out. A Mexican-tile topped table that could easily seat six people sat there along with scrolled iron chairs. A large citron candle took up space in the center. "Love what you've done here, Sam. It's great."

"We'll eat out here tonight, if that's okay with you."

Nodding, Lola followed Sam back inside to complete the tour.

On one side of the house were two medium sized bedrooms connected by a nice bathroom. "I figured we might have kids one day and these would be their rooms," he said simply before taking her hand and leading her into a large den that featured a big screen television, electronics galore, and lots of comfy looking furniture.

"Ah, so this is where you spend you Sundays during the fall of the year," Lola said, grinning. "I can see it now, you and your buddies Wyatt and Cliff hanging out in here with beer and pizza during football season."

"Perceptive woman. I think I like that about you."

Instantly the dark mood she'd sensed from him seemed to evaporate. Sam took her hand and she followed him through a door on the other side of the relatively male domain and stepped with him into his bedroom. Lola immediately spotted her bags on the floor near Sam's king-sized, four-poster bed. A big plush chair was angled tidily into one corner near the bedroom's plantation-shuttered windows.

"Bathroom is over here," Sam said, and Lola walked over and took a peek inside. The man certainly liked his creature comforts and she had to agree with what he'd done. She was a sucker for a beautiful, big bathroom. Double sinks on the marbled vanity were a soft beige and a huge tub was nestled along one wall. Nearby was a glass walk-in shower. Fluffy white towels were neatly folded in a rack that sat on the ledge of the tub. With a lift of her brows, she noted at least six fat pillar candles arranged on a tray. They were unburned and she wondered if Sam had picked them up just for tonight.

Silly.

As hard as she tried, it was difficult to imagine Sam going candle shopping. He was such a guy. Still, the thought he might have gone to those lengths sent a little thrill burning through her.

"What a downright sexy room."

Sam leaned against the wall, watching her closely. "You think so?"

"Oh yes. And candles."

"I wanted to make it nice, Lola." Sam looked down at his booted feet then focused in on her again. "You're the first woman I've had here for two years."

Since the divorce.

Her heart thumped hard in her chest. Well, guess he answered a few questions there. Tears burned behind her eyes. "You did this for me?" she whispered.

"Yeah. Why don't you get settled in and I'll fire up the grill."

## Chapter Six

Sam sat across from Lola after a meal of grilled chicken and vegetables. Nursing his beer, he watched her randomly stack up plates and silverware, fiddle with her napkin and basically look nervous. When he began this affair with her, he'd figured they were adults and having some hot, blow-your-socks-off sex was enough. She was leaving and he wasn't dumb enough to fall in love again.

Now look where he was.

His insides melted like butter every time he looked at her.

"I know all about your job, Lola," he began as he lounged back in his chair, holding the longneck bottle of beer against his belly. "But surely you left a man behind in Vegas. I mean, a woman like you wouldn't be without a man."

Lola blinked at him. Cursing his unruly tongue, he realized he'd hurt her feelings.

"Whoa! Honey, I didn't mean it like that but hell, you're beautiful. I'm sure you had to beat the men off with a stick."

She drew a deep breath and smiled brightly. "Actually I left a fiancé."

Instant rage sent him bolt upright in his chair. "What the fuck?"

Lola held up her hands and shook her head. "No, no. Dumb. I should've said former fiancé. We broke up right before I left. Actually the whole thing went down about forty-eight hours after I was fired from the show."

Sam went still. "Did you love him?"

"I thought I did," she said quietly. She drew the tip of one finger around the edge of her wine glass. "Maybe I just wanted something permanent and he was offering. I've been a rambler for so long. Logically, I knew I couldn't continue in the show forever."

Young women are meant to be showgirls and my days were fading fast. I'm not stupid."

"No you're not."

"Nick and I were together for about a year. I thought he loved me. We had great plans for the future but it turned out to be a lie. He'd been seeing another woman for a while and I didn't even know. Hmm. Come to think of it, I'm probably not that smart after all."

Sam watched her for lingering signs that she might still be in love with the bastard but saw only grim, in-your-face, realization that she'd been cheated on. Still he was curious about the kind of man who'd throw away a woman like Lola.

"What did this guy do in Vegas?"

"He owed a casino."

*Figures.*

The guy was filthy rich, no doubt.

Emotions clouded his thoughts, not the least of them being jealousy. If he had a woman like Lola, he'd treat her like a princess. This guy was obviously too dumb for words. Yeah, he might be rich but a real man made up his mind and lived up to his promises.

As dark blanketed the land, he stood and held out his hand. "Come on. Let's get these dishes done." He grinned, hoping to chase away the clouds from her eyes. Playfully he wagged his brows at her. "You promised to show me some high-steppin'."

Lola gripped his hand, stood, and then her arms went around his neck. Leaning in, she gave him a short, sexy peck on the lips before glancing up through her thick lashes. "I promise, Sam, I can be very entertaining."

"I've already been entertained tonight more than a decent man can stand. Can't wait to see what you have coming at me."



Grinning, she stepped back and gave him a flirty, little wink. "Just you wait, Sam. You won't be disappointed."

\* \* \* \* \*

Later, he held Lola in his arms as they did some dancing around the coffee table in the living room. It was a weird thing to dance with a woman who was so close to his own height. He towered over most women. Sam buried his face in her hair, breathing in the scent of her shampoo and the faint perfume she wore. "Told ya I couldn't dance worth shit, darlin'," he said, tightening his arms around her.

Lola nuzzled this throat. Her breath was warm on his flesh and his muscles tightened as his body reacted to the feel of her in his arms. "You're doin' fine, Sam. Trust me. Aw, this is so nice."

Sam had the lights dimmed as a Keith Urban song played. He let his hand drift over the long length of Lola's back and thought about how comfortable he was with her. Yeah, she would leave one day but he wasn't dumb enough to let even one minute get away from him. He aimed to enjoy her for as long as he could.

"Hey, Sam."

"Mm?"

"Speaking of dancing, are you ready for your surprise?" She looked up, humor dancing in her eyes.

"Ready for just about anything you're offering."

Lola stepped out of his arms and grabbed a fistful of his tee shirt. "Then come on. Let me show you how the big girls do it."

Now if that didn't sound as promising as hell.

Sam let himself be led into his bedroom and finally Lola pushed him into the big overstuffed chair in the corner. "Let's get you all comfy," she said as she reached down and tugged off first one boot then the other. "Ah, there. That's better. The shirt has to go, Sam."

He grinned. "Yes, ma'am." Grabbing the hem, he pulled it off and tossed it to the floor. "Anything else, Your Highness?"

"Such a smarty pants." Lola pointed a finger at him. "Don't you move. Okay?"

"Whatever you say."

Anticipation was killing him. Sam watched her reach into her small suitcase and cover his bedside lamp with a rose hued scarf. Instantly the room was drenched in color. She looked up at him and smiled. Sitting on the bed for a minute, she turned on his clock radio and moved through the channels until soft, smoky blues drifted through the room. Finally she stood.

"I'll be back in a bit, Sam. Try not to miss me too much."

"Now who's a smarty pants?"

Lola's laughter followed her into the bathroom and as the door closed with a resounding click, he got up and went to fetch his condoms. Yes, they were the right color. No neon shades for him tonight. He dropped a pile of them on the night table and carried a few over to the chair.

What the hell? Was he Superman?

Shaking his head, Sam realized that Lola made him feel like some kind of superhero and it was about time he admitted to the truth. He was falling in love with her. He might be in for a world of hurt when all was said and done but he wasn't the kind of man who could lie to himself.

By the time more than thirty minutes had passed, Sam was getting downright fidgety when he heard Lola call to him through the closed bathroom door.

"You ready for me, Sam?"

"Yeah."

Ready for whatever she had in mind, he sprawled back in the chair but then his body got a hard jolt when Lola walked into the room.

*Fuck.*

All six feet of Lola Lamont had been transformed into at least six feet five inches of sexy, sensual, showgirl. Sam was bedazzled the second she lifted her head high and with the grace of a queen walked slowly into the center of the room. Her blonde hair was slicked back dramatically from her face further emphasizing her perfect bone structure. Pink, fuzzy looking feathers had been placed into her hair in the back, looming large and outrageous.

Sam couldn't speak. The spit completely dried in his mouth.

How many pairs of fake eyelashes was she wearing? Two? Her lids were painted with heavy sparkling color and a cluster of hot pink gemstones had been applied near the corners of her eyes and near the edges of her high cheekbones. Lola's face was as pale as white china, her lips were glossy with pink color. Something glittery had been sprinkled over every inch of her mainly bare body.

Sam went instantly hard, his cock throbbing with a violent ache behind the fly of his jeans.

She had applied some kind of large patch over each of her nipples. Gemstones matching those near her eyes sparkled there and Sam adjusted his position in the chair.

Her head high, Lola moved toward him to the rhythm of the music, her body sinuous and sultry. Lifting one arm gracefully over her head, she gave him an unsmiling, unblinking stare and struck a pose that screamed *come fuck me*. He also suddenly understood why she waxed the hair from her pussy. The miniscule thong which also glittered with tiny pink stones twinkled as if taunting him. It was beyond skimpy.

Did she wear this in her show?

Lola lowered the arm she held high above her head then sinuously raised the other. Cocking her hip, she straightened one leg until the toe of one shiny pink stiletto was pointed in his direction.

"So, Sam," she practically purred. "What do you think of your Pink Flamingo Girl?"

Silence fell.

When he managed to speak, he sent his gaze over the long length of her body, his blood pumping hot and heavy through his veins. "I'm speechless. I've never seen anyone like you before, Lola."

A tiny smile curled her lips as she lowered her arm, did a graceful turn and looked at him over her shoulder. Her back was completely bare with only a tiny pink string breaking the plane of her hips. Striking a provocative pose she broadened her smile.

"Part of my costume is missing though," she whispered. "I don't have my headdress. Heavy sucker. Lots of pink gems and big, billowy feathers going everywhere." Her eyes drifted over him lingering for a moment on his lips. She smiled slightly. "Stuff is missing back here, too. Normally there are several layers of pink tulle covering my butt. It would fall all the way to the floor and float behind me when I walked across the stage with the other girls."

Imagining it, Sam feasted his eyes.

Taking in the smooth curve of her ass, the length of her legs, he reached for the snap and zipper of his jeans. If he didn't get relief soon, he was in big trouble. The rasp sounded loud in the room. To hell with it. With no finesse or explanation, he pulled his cock from his jeans and fisted his hand around the base of it. "Dance for me."

From that moment on, it didn't matter what song was playing on the radio or that he was sitting here jacking off. All he cared about was watching her as she moved slowly around the room, her movements at once graceful and seductive. She shimmied. She swayed. Inching ever closer, Lola undulated, swiveling her hips and then finally she straddled him, her body only inches from his face.

Sam released his cock and reached for her. He wanted to lick every bit of that shiny, glittery stuff from her body and remove that naughty looking g-string from her with his teeth. He wanted to eat her pussy until she screamed his name. He needed to devour her and not stop until they were both too limp to breathe, much less move. Wild lust whipped through his body until he ached with it.

Filling his hands with her ass, Sam frowned as Lola laughed softly and teasingly backed away. "Uh-uh-uh, Sam. Not yet," she whispered, taunting him.

"Don't do this."

"Why not? Do you think you can get me that easily?"

Falling into the game, Sam scowled. "You're gonna pay for this, sweetheart."

"Jeez, ya think?" Lola spun away giving him another hot glance at her gorgeous, flawless butt. Sliding her hands down her sides, she looked at him over her shoulder and gave him a naughty wink. "What man wants an easy woman, Sam?"

"You're not easy," he growled. "Not a damn thing easy about you."

In response, Lola smiled before she spun again then did a low back bend that further emphasized her flexibility. Her body formed a perfect sensual curve and he wondered how she managed it while wearing those high, high stilettos. When she lifted to spin again, he'd had it. Just had it!

Standing abruptly, he jerked off his jeans and tossed them aside. Within two strides he had her. Sam wrapped her up in his arms, ignoring her startled squeak, and carried her back to the chair. "Think you're boss, Miz Lola? Think you can tease me like this and get away with it?"

"Sam!"

He fell back into the chair and yanked her over his lap. Her body settled warm against his thighs and belly and his cock rose up high and hard between them. No time to think about his aching cock now. He had to touch her. Sam sent his hand over her back, touching the soft flesh and gathering bits of shiny stuff on his fingers. It glittered diamond-bright on his palms. Her ass was canted provocatively over his lap and helplessly, he stroked the firm, pale globes.

"You are a bad woman for teasing me like this."

Lola went still.

Sam felt her ribs expand against his leg when she breathed.

Teasing her the way she'd tormented him, he skimmed one finger over the slender string that bisected her hip then trailed in further, sending it between the shadowy crease of her ass.

Lola sucked in a breath.

"Spread your legs. Just a little bit. Good girl." Sam moved his fingers lower, dipping them beneath the tiny scrap of shiny fabric that comprised her thong. "You're wet. But not wet enough." Sending two fingers deep into her pussy, he felt Lola stiffen. Vaginal walls squeezed tight against his probing fingers. Hell, she was tight. Wet and tight.

"Thought you could play games with me, honey?" Sam didn't expect an answer but he damn sure wanted her squirming and ready for him. He withdrew his fingers abruptly and smacked one pale ass cheek with the palm of his hand.

"Sam!"

He spanked her again, harder this time and finally, Lola started to writhe. Over and over he smacked her gorgeous ass until it was warm and pink, the color mingling with the sparkles she'd powdered all over her body. Lola was breathing hard and wanting to test her, he dipped his fingers back into her cunt. "You're drenched, darlin'. God, I love the feel of your cream on my fingers." Pumping into her repeatedly, he felt her giving flesh go hotter than a flame, and he didn't stop until his hands were wet and glistening.

"Stand up now, darlin'."

Lola got to her feet and looked at him, none too steady on her feet. Sam reached for her, filling his hands with her warm ass and drew her close until she stood between the spread of his thighs. With an economy of motion, he snagged her thong and drew it down her legs. "Step out."

Lola complied and Sam looked his fill at her pussy. It was shiny and plump from his attentions and her clit peeking out at him was rosy red. Angling his head, he dragged his tongue over the morsel, flicked it, sucked it. Lola responded instantly by sinking her fingers into his hair and widening her stance.

"Sam!"

"You're one delicious woman," he whispered in a voice gone rough. "Gonna eat you out, Lola."

"Yes."

Sam slid his tongue over her slit gathering her cream on it. The scent of her perfume and the silky powder she'd applied to her body curled through his head, instilling a powerful hunger deep in his belly. Growling against the tender flesh, he stiffened his tongue to prod her opening then drew up again to suck her clit. Lola quivered beneath his hands, her kittenish whimpers burning him like fire. Finally, she cried out as orgasm carried her over the edge. Sam gentled his grip on her ass changing the touch to a soft stroking. Lola slumped over him and he held her like that for a moment.

When she finally managed to stand, he joined her. Sick of dicking around, he picked her up and carried her to his bed.

## Chapter Seven

Lola was still gasping for breath when Sam managed to draw down the covers and place her in the center of his big bed. She probably looked goofy as hell lying there wearing her stage makeup, glitter and feathers but at this point, she didn't really care. She just wanted more of what Sam had to offer. He loomed near the side of the bed, dark and gloriously hard. Lust marked the planes and angles of his face as his hungry gaze swept her body. Maybe for the first time in her life, she was totally speechless with desire.

"Don't move an inch," he said.

Lola watched him walk into his closet and return with several pairs of handcuffs and some ties. Her eyes went wide. Sam gave her a slightly evil grin that had frantic fingers of expectation zipping over her body. "Um, Sam..."

"Hush. You've played with me enough tonight. It's my turn." The handcuffs were real, not the pink fuzzy kind that she had in her black velvet "bag o' tricks". Sam dropped them with a clatter onto the end table. He wasted no time in binding her hands together over her head, snapping on a cuff and attaching the other end to the headboard. "Too tight?"

"No," she whispered, amazed at how the semi-helpless feeling ratcheted up her desire. Fresh cream drenched her pussy. Sensitive nerve endings pounded out a beat in her body. She wanted Sam and damn it, she wanted him now but he was the guy currently calling all the shots. He gave her a single hot, hungry look and grabbed up a handful of steel cuffs before heading to the foot of the bed.

"Better take these off but I hate to," he said. "These are *some* sexy shoes, honey."

Lola looked at Sam, watching as he unhooked her shoes and tossed them to the floor. He grabbed one ankle, snapped on the cuff with a quiet snick then attached it to a



post on the footboard. Realizing she would be spread-eagle on the bed inched her tension level up a notch. When he'd finished with the other ankle, Sam climbed onto the mattress with her clutching the black bag full of sex toys in one big fist. Sitting on his haunches between her spread thighs, he sent his gaze over every inch of her body. "Now I have you just where I want you. You comfortable?"

"Um. Yeah, I'm okay. Whew."

A slow smile stretched his beautiful lips as he set the bag on her belly and prowled through the contents. Lola closed her eyes and listened to the sounds of Sam rummaging through the bag.

"Ah, here we go." Lola opened her eyes in time to see Sam hold up a satiny blindfold. "You okay with this?"

"Whatever you want, Sam."

"I like hearing that. Okay, hold still." He leaned forward and before she could blink, he tied the black cloth over her eyes, plunging her world into darkness. Lying there, anticipation singing through her veins, she heard a whirl of sound and then it shut off. She knew he was looking at her. She felt it like an invisible caress and then his hands were on her thighs, stroking over the tops of them, his thumbs moving lightly on the insides. Lola stilled at the aching pleasure of his touch. "You're so beautiful. Your skin is as soft as the velvet of that sexy little bag of yours."

Sam transferred his touch completely to her inner thighs. She knew she was wet there but couldn't care as his fingers plied her flesh then began to stroke her pussy. Sensitized from the oral sex, she caught her breath, as he spread her labia and began to circle her clit slowly.

"Sam, please. More."

His laughter was dark and infinitely sexy. With the darkness enveloping her, every stroke, every touch was intensified. Lola jerked a little when his lips found her clit again and briefly he sucked her. The low whirl sounded again.

Did he have her vibrator or the clit stimulator?

Ah yes.

Lola felt the cool press of rounded metal on her clit and cried out softly. "God!"

"Hang on, honey. Tell me if I press too hard." He kept the buzz going on her clit then she heard a little snick and the buzzing intensified. As if she weren't already dying here, Sam had increased the speed. Pleasure ripped through her pussy causing her back to arch on the bed. She yanked at the cuffs anchored to the bed and a blast of cool air swept across her belly as the air conditioner kicked on. Her nipples, beneath the tight-fitting, glittery body ornaments, pulsed in tandem with her pounding heartbeat.

The stimulator did its work as she writhed on the bed. And then suddenly the sound stopped. Another whirring noise, this one louder, buzzed through the air. She gasped when Sam sent the vibrator deep. She wanted to bend her legs so she could move more freely but then it didn't matter. Sam sucked her clit as he pushed and rotated the vibrator in her pussy and Lola screamed as another orgasm grabbed her and pulled her under.

"Samsamsam." She jerked against the restraints needing desperately to touch this man who'd given her so much pleasure. When she finally stopped gasping his name, she lay still against the warm sheets and wondered what he would do next. The question was answered as she felt the velvety stroke of the head of his cock brush her lips.

"Suck it, Lola." Sam's voice was raw, edgy with unspent lust. Lola swept her tongue along the crest, drawing a single drop of moisture onto it. Exploring the contours, the shape, the feel of him was so erotic she felt her body seize up again as sensual pleasure curled deep in her belly. She opened her mouth over him and with a groan Sam slid deeper. She wanted to hold his cock and feel every ridge and bump with her hands but it was impossible. Her mouth would have to do.

Pulling hard, she closed her eyes behind the satin cloth, loving the hoarse, rough sound that burst from Sam's lips. Alternating the action between hard and harder, light

and lighter, she sensed Sam's struggle when he finally jerked free from her sucking mouth. "Fuck!"

Sam lay between her thighs and probed her with his hard cock. "Condom," he gasped and she felt his weight move slightly, heard a tearing sound. "Damn it to hell, I can't wait."

"Do it, Sam! Fuck me hard."

Without further delay, Sam thrust deep into her waiting pussy. The feel of finally having him inside was almost too much. She wanted to wrap her legs around his ass to hold him close but no. That wasn't happening. All she could do was lie there helplessly as Sam pounded hard in and out of her body. Impossibly turned on, she writhed beneath him, meeting his thrusts as much as the handcuffs would allow. She felt ravished. Taken. Fucked. Her mind whirled with sensation as he hit every erotic point of her pussy and love mingled and stayed, merging with physical pleasure until Lola didn't know where one thing stopped and the other started. His mouth went to her nipple and she heard him cuss.

"How are these attached?"

"Suction cups."

"What the fuck?"

"Get them wet, Sam. Then they'll come off and you can suck my nipples. I need it so bad! So bad. Come on. Do it."

Lola was desperate but she went still as his lips swept around the pink pasties. Stabbing around the edges with his tongue, he nipped the spot and Lola clamped down hard on his cock. The edges of his teeth nipped harder and she wanted it. Yes, she wanted it. His tongue dampened around her nipple then moved beneath until with a soft pop, the pasty came loose and fell away. Instantly his mouth engulfed the throbbing, stiff flesh and he sucked her hard. Fucking her with slow intensity as he lavished attention on her nipple was almost more than she could bear. "Other nipple," she whispered, shocked at the frantic sound of her voice.

Sam released her nipple with a slight popping sound and moved to the other breast. Dear God! How much could one woman stand? Beside herself with pleasure, tears leaked from her eyes but Sam would never see. Every touch was electrifying, hot, lush. She wanted to weep hard and long as pleasure carried her up and away and then she felt the other pasty fall away.

Sam took her breasts in his hands and pushed them together, sucking one, then the other nipple as he thrust his cock deep into her pussy.

“Can’t hold on much longer. Come for me, sweet thing.” Sam rotated his pelvis against her clit and that was it for her. Sensation raced over her flesh, curled tightly deep in her belly before expanding into a force of pleasure she’d never experienced before. Crying out she fell over the edge and into an ocean of orgasmic release and as Sam followed her there, he caught her in his arms.

Peace flowed over her like butter and she knew she’d just done the unthinkable.

She had fallen in love.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lola wasn’t given to depression and lord knows she’d had plenty of reasons to be depressed in the past. Heck, she was known for her sunny disposition but it was nowhere to be found today. She sat curled up on her couch staring at the television and wondered how she’d gotten herself into this mess. She’d thought with every inch of her heart and mind that she’d loved Nick Mantucci but it was a pale, ghostly thing compared to what she felt for Sam.

Could she stay here? Could she reshape her life by staying in this small town and if she did, would Sam even want that? She knew he’d been hurt. He was a man who felt things deeply. He might not want the love that she was now so willing to give him. If she confessed her feelings, was she prepared to have that love thrown back in her face? There were just so many questions to which she had no answers.

Suddenly a series of playfully timed knocks sounded at her door. "Coming," she hollered, getting to her feet. Barefoot she jogged to the door and flung it open to see Emily and Roxie filling up the space. Roxie carried two paper bags that bore the logo of the local grocery store and Emily balanced in her arms, not only a blender, but yet another paper sack. "We're invading," Em said, pushing past her through the door.

Roxie followed close behind. "Yeah, time for some girl stuff."

Both women headed to the kitchen and started unloading the booty. "What's all this?"

Bags of chips, dips, chocolate, marshmallows and other gastronomic delights were pulled from the bags and placed willy-nilly on the counter. Roxie pushed back her dark hair and grinned. "We were just talking about needing a break from men and figure we'd pop over and plan us a nice little slumber party."

"Ooh. Fun!" Lola smiled broadly. "Just what I need."

"Me, too," Em chimed in. She plugged the blender in and pulled a bottle of tequila and margarita mix from the bag. "Hmm. Margaritas might be the one thing I won't screw up."

Roxie snickered. "Yeah, don't have to actually cook those, ya know?"

Lola needed this. She really did. But suddenly her smile faded. "Shoot! I have a date with Sam at Chaps tonight."

"Then make it a no sex date, hon." Emily shook her head. "The man has you whipped. It'll do him good to be without you for one night. Wyatt pitched a fit when I told him he wasn't getting a thing tonight."

"No sex? Oh no."

Roxie grinned wickedly. "Yeah, he'll just appreciate you more later. I told Cliff it was ladies night. You should've seen the look on his face. Plumb pitiful."

The three of them laughed and together unpacked the goodies. "Okay, here's what we'll do," Lola said as she piled the junk food into a corner for later. "We'll all go hang

out at Chaps, do some dancing, kiss the fellas goodnight and hole up here for some feminine bonding. We'll pig out and watch our asses expand."

In the meantime, they grabbed soft drinks from the fridge and lounged around in Lola's shabby little living room. "I'm glad you guys showed up," she admitted. "I've been feeling downright blue today."

Emily narrowed her eyes. "Why honey? Over Sam? What did he do?"

Lola shook her head, as love for her overprotective friends poured through her. "Nothing. The night I spent at his place was like I said. Wonderful. Hot. Wow."

"Then what's with the sad stuff?" Roxie leaned forward a little, focused on her. "Spill it."

Sighing she closed her eyes. "I've fallen for him, ladies. Why did I let myself do that?"

"We don't have any choice who we fall in love with, honey." Emily reached for one hand and Roxie grabbed the other.

"That's right, Lola. At least Sam isn't like that dickhead, Nick," Roxie added. "From what I know of Sam, he's a man of character."

"I know he is. I'm just—" Her cell phone rang mid sentence and Lola reached for it. "Hello?"

"It's Nick, Lola. How are you?"

Speak of the devil.

Lola's eyes went big and she mouthed Nick's name to Emily and Roxie. They both scowled. "I'm okay, Nick. What do you need?"

"Why so gruff?"

Lola rolled her eyes. "Why do you think? You have to admit our last meeting didn't go all that well. Let's see if I have it right. 'It's over, Lola. I've met someone else so get lost. And by the way, give me back that engagement ring.'"

"It wasn't quite as bad as that. You're such a drama queen."

“Don’t call me names, shithead.”

Roxie tried to grab her phone. Her face was red and Lola knew the signs that Roxie was moving in to pitch a big hissy fit. Emily practically snarled. She waved a hand at them both hoping they’d calm down. Everyone might think she needed someone to fight her battles for her but they were dead wrong about that. Temper rose up. She could handle her former fiancé. “You made your feelings known and now I’ll tell you mine. There are men out here in the world who know a little bit about honesty and integrity. You could learn some lessons from them, Nick. I’m glad we’re done. Now don’t call me anymore.”

“No. No wait. Don’t hang up.” She heard Nick draw a deep breath and release it. Good she had him pissed. She felt better now. “Listen, I was in the safe the other day and found a bunch of your personal papers. I need to send them to you. Can you at least tell me where you are?”

“I don’t want to tell you where I am, Nick!”

“Listen, this is important stuff, honey.”

“Don’t call me honey. I’m not your anything, mister.”

“I know. I know. Shit! Come on, Lola. You need your birth certificate and all this stuff. Just tell me where you are and I’ll get it in the mail to you. I promise I won’t bother you again.”

Lola blew out a breath. Emily was shaking her head and Roxie said, “Don’t do it, Lola!”

Knowing she really didn’t have much choice she rattled off the address of Blue Belle’s Café. That was innocuous enough. Right?

Roxie stood up and leaned over her the second she hung up. “What the hell were you thinking?”

“Yeah, honey. The man is dirt, scum. I still remember how much you cried when he dumped you.”

"Me, too," she said. "But he has some of my stuff and there's no telling when the car will be fixed and we'll be out of here."

The very idea of leaving brought a wave of tears to her eyes. This was all too much. For such a laid back, cheerful woman, she was a mess.

"Aw, Lola, I'm sorry," Roxie said as she sat beside her and put an arm around her. "I shouldn't have yelled at you."

Emily scooted closer and did the same. "Me, too. You've been through too much. Hell, we all have."

"You didn't yell," Lola sniffed. "Not too much. Oh guys, it's not Nick. It's Sam. I'm so in love with him and I'm so scared."

Em patted her shoulder. "Let's not think about it now. If nothing else, we've learned that life can certainly throw out some curve balls."

"Yeah," Rox whispered. "Got that right. Best thing to do is slow down, sit back and wait to see what happens."



## Chapter Eight

Hours later, Lola twirled on Chaps' dance floor with Sam. His arms were around her and every now and then he would rest his face against her head in a tender way that threatened to undo her. Could it be that he was feeling as she did? There was definitely something between them. Sex with Sam was off the charts, but that wasn't the thing. There was comfort there. Caring. Affection. But did Sam's wounds run too deep for him to see past it and realize that Lola loved him?

Shortly after Nick's call, the girls had headed off with promises to meet up here at Chaps around eight. Afterward, they would all come to her little place to paint some toenails or something. True to their words, they'd all arrived with their guys and the three couples were currently sharing a table in the honky-tonk.

"Quiet here tonight," Sam said, as he moved with her to an old Patsy Cline song. His hand swept her back as he nuzzled her temple. It was true. Rather than wall-to-wall people there was only a crowd of around one hundred tonight. "Maybe they are waiting for Saturday night when there will be a live band."

When Lola looked up, he brazenly kissed her. Damn, how was a woman supposed to resist this? "I'm glad. I find I'm not in the mood for a huge crowd."

His arms tightened around her. "You sure you don't want to come to my place tonight?"

Lola laughed. "Nice try. You guys look totally done in at the idea there will be no sex for ya'll tonight. No, I'm spending time with Em and Rox and that's the end of it. Why don't you go and do something manly? You know, you, Wyatt and Cliff could go shoot at tin cans or something. Pee in the woods. Drink beer and talk sports. Jeez. You guys are *whupped*."

Sam laughed and spun her into a low dip. At the end of the song, he kissed her again, lifted her in the air and spun her around. Lola felt so wonderful, so happy and free, she squealed a bit. When he lowered her, a grin on his handsome face, she wrapped her arms around him, uncaring of the curious glances sent their way. By the time they made it back to the table, Cliff had asked the waitress for another round of drinks. One of the nice things about hanging out with a bar owner was the promptness of the service. Couldn't beat it with a stick.

Sam waited for Lola to take her seat but instead she looked up at him with a smile. "Think I'll hit the ladies room. I'll be back in a bit."

"Okay. See you in a few minutes."

When Lola glanced at Roxie and Emily to see if they wanted to come too, she noticed they were knee-deep in the middle of a story so she headed off without them. There was a short line when she got to the ladies room so she opened the small purse she carried and reapplied a little lipstick. It was a given that when a girl got kissed, lipstick disappeared in a hurry. Finally she took care of her business and walked into the darkened hallway to rejoin everyone when a man stepped from the shadows.

"Hey, sweetheart."

"Nick!" Lola couldn't believe it. Why in the hell was he here? "I should never have given you my address. Roxie and Emily were right about that. How did you get here so fast? Better yet, *why* are you here?"

Nick Mantucci looked as handsome as ever with his black hair and dark, swarthy skin. His expensive shirt was impeccably tailored as were the pleated trousers he wore. He was the kind of guy who would sneer at a place like Chaps. He went for elegance and class all the way. It was a wonder he ever hooked up with a poor little nobody from the sticks like herself.

He moved closer, hemming her along the wall, bringing the scent of his expensive cologne with him. "I'll admit I played a trick on you, honey. I flew to Dallas and rented a car as soon as I got a bead on you."

Lola didn't understand. Not a bit. Shaking her head, she looked at him. "Why? I don't get it. We're over."

"No, we're not. Not as far as I'm concerned. Breaking things off was a huge mistake."

"No, it wasn't. You were right. Things between us would've never worked. Heck, Nick, there are a million girls in Vegas just like me. We're a dime a dozen."

"You're wrong. There's nobody like you, Lola. I figured it out soon enough and I want you back."

This couldn't be happening. Things were over between them. It had only taken one night with Sam Campbell to make her realize how misguided she'd been about everything. She wasn't the woman Nick needed. She belonged to Sam.

"Nick, go back to Vegas and find another showgirl."

"We still have it, Lola. Let me prove it to you."

Before she could blink, much less move Nick was on her, kissing her as if he'd drink her very breath. Futilely she pushed at his shoulders but the man wasn't budging. Why had she ever thought his kisses totally swoonworthy? They were nothing compared to what she felt with Sam.

"Well now. I hate to break this up."

Sam!

Lola jerked her face away and saw Sam standing there like a damn statue in the middle of the hallway. "Sam. Sam this isn't—"

"Who the fuck are you?" Sam glared at Nick, shook his head and then smiled bitterly. "No, don't answer that. Even a dumb rube like me can see you are the fiancé."

"Ex-fiancé," Lola whispered. But Sam wasn't listening.

He speared her with an icy glance. "Didn't figure you to be the kind of woman to play a man for a fool, Lola. Thought you were as honest as the day is long. Guess I was

wrong about that. Go on with your rich man, honey. I'm sure the two of you deserve each other."

And just like that he was gone.

Lola blinked as her eyes burned from tears. She turned her anger, hurt and frustration on Nick who simply looked at her as if he'd never seen her before. "Maybe this is for the best," he said.

"Fuck you, Nick. Why did you have to turn up now and ruin my life? Again. Or was once not enough for you? How could you hate me so much as to ruin the happiness I've found here in Mesa Blanco?"

"Are you involved with this man?"

Lola thought back to all the times Nick had laughed at her, poked fun at her accent and teased her about being "blonde and dumb". She rolled her eyes and shook her head at him as if he were a six-year-old. "Duh. How long did it take you to figure it out, Nick? Look who's dumb now."

She left him standing slack-mouthed in the hallway but then the tears began to fall. There was no way Sam would believe her considering he, no doubt, believed all the trash talk about women in her profession. She shouldn't love him after this blatant distrust but damn it, she did. Gasping for breath, she rounded the corner and came face to face with Roxie and Emily.

"What the hell?" Roxie grabbed one arm and Emily took the other.

"Is Nick here? Sam said—" Emily stopped and stared as Nick brushed past them making a hasty exit through the front door of Chaps. "Shit! He *is* here!"

Choked, her throat clogged with tears, Lola looked at them. "Get me outta here," she whispered. "Please."

There was no more talk, no questions as they herded her through the door. Honestly, she didn't remember much of the four block walk to her place. She only knew that Roxie was cussing a blue streak and Emily kept stopping to mop her face with

some tissues she had in her purse. Mascara ran into Lola's eyes practically blinding her. But finally, finally they made it to her place.

Roughly thirty minutes later, Lola had stripped out of her jeans and shirt and donned a pair of plaid cotton boy shorts and a tank top. Face washed clean of all make-up she sat on the floor of her living room and was working on her second margarita. The girls had gathered up big plastic bowls and filled them with assorted goodies and a box of expensive chocolates lay open on the floor. Lola munched a crème filled candy as she sipped on her drink. "Ew. Chocolate and margaritas. It's gross together but I just can't give a rip right now."

Emily popped a marshmallow that squished with gooey goodness between her teeth. "Don't think about it. Margarita and chocolate does a body goood."

Roxie snickered as she lifted a half empty pitcher of the drink in question and topped off all three glasses. "Ah, nectar of the gods." She sat back, crossed her legs and sighed. "I can't believe that dick Nick showed up all the way from Vegas." She dug into a bag of cheesy doodles and crunched on two or three of them. "Hey, that rhymes. That dick Nick. What d'ya know?"

Lola rolled her eyes. She was tired of bawling like a baby. Her eyes stung, her throat was raw. It wasn't the first time she'd been hurt by a damn man and it wouldn't be the last.

Emily focused on her. "I'm so mad at Sam. I can't believe he wouldn't even listen."

"It was like I was invisible. He just couldn't see me. He only saw Nick."

Roxie shook her head. "Typical. Show me a man who'll actually do what I say and believe me at all times and I'll show you the guy worth marrying."

"Here here," Emily said lifting her glass. "And since we can't figure them out and most likely won't even get close to that tonight, I suggest we drink up."

\* \* \* \* \*

Sam sat with Cliff and Wyatt in Cliff's office at Chaps. Slumped into a chair, his Stetson pulled low over his eyes, he thought briefly of getting the hell out of there but then Cliff opened a drawer to set a bottle of well-aged whiskey on the desk.

What the hell.

Mentally shrugging, he figured now was as good a time as any to get blistering drunk. Cliff reached behind him to his credenza and snagged three squat glasses which he promptly filled with bourbon. "Looks like we could all use one of these."

"Got that right," Wyatt said, as he lounged back in another of Cliff's office chairs. "Been a long night already. You okay, buddy?"

Sam grunted. "I've been better." He downed half his whiskey in one swallow and removed his hat. The ankle of his left leg was propped on the knee of his right so he settled the hat on the toe of his boot. Sam thought about that casino-owning, rich asshole with his hands all over his Lola and wanted to spit. He downed the rest of the whiskey and held out his glass for a refill.

Cliff complied. "Better take it easy with that, Sheriff. It's like a rattlesnake. The stuff will bite you in the ass if you aren't careful."

"Don't lecture me," he snapped. Sam drew a deep breath and shook his head. "Sorry. I'm an ass."

"No argument there," Wyatt drawled. "Did you even talk to Lola?"

"What was there to talk about? I saw her in a liplock with her ex fiancé. Hell, he might never have been an ex at all. Maybe her whole damn story was a lie."

"Not a lie, Sam," Cliff said quietly. "Roxie told me the whole story."

"I heard the same from Emily," Wyatt added. "Listen, you've always been the most rational man we know. Why don't you talk to her? Get her side of the story."

"Hell no—"

A sharp rap sounded at the door before Nick Mantucci walked inside. Sam bristled and got to his feet. Wyatt and Cliff stood too but it was Wyatt who spoke. "Whoa, Sam. Settle down now."

"What can we do for you, mister?" Cliff said.

"I need to talk with this guy. Sam, is it? I asked around and someone told me where to find you."

Sam wasn't about to give the man the benefit of standing for whatever he had to say. He sat back in his chair and picked up the refilled glass of whiskey. "What do you need?" When the man didn't answer immediately, Sam shot him a look. "Spill it, asshole. What do you want?"

Rage was killing him. Hurt and disappointment shook him. How could he have been so wrong about Lola?

Nick Mantucci shoved his hands in the pockets of his expensive britches. "Um, look, I owe you an apology. I think you got the wrong idea."

"Oh yeah. About what?"

"About me and Lola. I treated her really badly in Vegas before she left but it didn't take me long to realize that I loved her and wanted her back."

"So?"

Nick walked toward him and took the chair that Wyatt had abandoned. "I tricked her. I told her I had some of her important papers and managed to get her address. I showed up here thinking that she'd be so glad to see me she'd tell me she loved me and fall back in my arms. Didn't happen that way. You didn't see her pulling me to her. You saw her pushing me away."

Silence fell between the men. Sam cleared his throat. "Why are you telling me this?"

Nick's face was solemn when he finally spoke. "You didn't see the look on her face when you walked away without giving her a chance to explain. I did. You might as well have jabbed a knife in her heart. In all the years I've known Lola I've never seen that

look on her face. She never loved me. At least not like that.” Nick stood and looked down at him. “This is the way I see it. I treated her like shit the entire time we were together. I cheated on her. I treated her like she was a stupid doll who couldn’t think for herself. It wasn’t until I lost her that I realized that she’s one in a million. She’s sweet and funny. She’s beautiful and kind. I threw her away like garbage. Lola didn’t deserve that. That’s all I’m going to say on the matter. I knew the minute she looked at you that I’d lost her forever.”

With that, Nick Mantucci turned and left the room.

Rocked by emotion, Sam sat there like he’d been sucker punched. “What the hell have I done? I’ve lost her.”

Cliff bent down and picked up the Stetson that had fallen to the floor and handed it over. “Not yet you haven’t.”

Wyatt gave him a calm and steady look. “Go get her, Sam. Maybe it’s not too late.”

Sam raced from the club and fired up his truck, hoping against hope that he hadn’t ruined things with Lola.

Damn it! He loved her. Everything Nick had said about her was true. She was sweet, funny, beautiful and kind. Shit! He was such a fucking ass! Gunning the truck he pulled up near the entrance to the alley leading to Lola’s place. She seemed perfectly happy in that awful dump. Why had he insisted on believing her some kind of gold-digger? He was a fool. That was why.

Tromping through the alley, eager to apologize and even grovel if need be, he lifted his hand to knock when he heard the sounds of female voices. He knew Roxie and Emily were with her for their infernal “girls night”. Sam went still, caught his breath and turned the knob.

Unlocked.

Figured.

Opening the door, he stepped inside. “Lola I need to talk to you.”



Three pairs of startled eyes looked up at him from their position on the floor. Emily and Roxie jumped to their feet but he only had eyes for Lola. Devoid of makeup, her eyes were swollen and her face was blotchy from tears. He'd never seen her look more beautiful. She slowly stood to glare at him.

But then out of left field, Sam felt himself under attack.

A wad of marshmallows hit him in the face and he stared, open mouthed at sweet little Emily, who yelled like a banshee. "You rat! You scum! Asshole!" She tossed another handful of marshmallows and then Roxie was yelling at him too.

"You frickin' creep! I ought to kick your butt." Roxie dug into a bag and flung cheesy doodles at his head. The yellow mess rained down on him but it didn't satisfy Roxie's need for vengeance. "You made Lola *cry*! Shame on you!" Roxie went for a bigger impact and waved the cheesy doodle bag until they fell everywhere. They hit him in the mouth, his eyes. Crap.

"Yeah, shame, shame," Emily flung more marshmallows until she was pitching them at him with both hands. "Bastard!"

"Stop it! Stop it! Okay, I am. I'm an asshole. The biggest creep alive." Sam fisted his hands at his sides and looked at both of them. It dawned on him how lucky Lola was to have them in her life. Their pretty faces were fiery red with anger. Flags of bright color burned on Lola's cheeks too. "Damn it, Lola. I love you."

Emily and Roxie halted mid-attack and gazed at each other. "We're getting out of here, honey. Right now," Em stated with finality.

Roxie slipped into her boots and gave her a lopsided grin. "Yeah, we'll come back tomorrow and clean this mess up."

"Forget the mess," Lola whispered.

"Yeah. Just leave and don't come back until we call you," Sam added. Roxie sauntered out the door and as Emily turned to close it, he looked at her. "Thank you for being her friends."

Emily grinned. "Don't mention it."

Silence fell when the door snicked shut. Lola looked at him over the battleground littered with junk food and her bottom lip quivered. Damn, he'd hurt her so badly. He could see it on her face and in her beautiful blue eyes. Uncaring about the crap on the floor, he went to her and filled his fist with her messy blonde ponytail. "I love you."

"Sam." She shook her head. "I thought —"

"I was wrong about everything and damn me for jumping to conclusions. It's been so long since I trusted a woman, any woman. But hell honey, you came into my life and you were so good. Honest. I just had to believe, finally, there was someone in this world who would love me for me. Just the way I am."

Tears poured down Lola's face. "Hey, I kind of know how you feel about that, Sam. It's been that way for me my whole life, ya know? Nothing happened with Nick. He just kissed me. I tried to push him —"

"Shh. I know." Sam wrapped her up in his arms. She was trembling and he hated himself all over again. "I got the wrong idea about things. I know better now. Here's the deal, I saw that man with his hands and his mouth all over you and I just went a little crazy. I've felt like you were mine for quite a while now."

Her nose had been buried in his chest but now she looked up at him. "You have?"

"Yeah, I have. I'm in love with you, Lola. I love everything about you. I respect you. And I want you forever. Stay. Stay here with me. Okay?"

"Okay, Sam. Okay. I love you too. I'll do anything for you, honey. Heck, you can even shoot my car if you wanna."

Sam kissed her as the cracks in his heart filled with the kind of love that would last him the rest of his life. He had his sweet little showgirl and that was enough.

## About the Author

Regina Carlisle is an award-winning, multi-published author. She likes writing that is hot, edgy and often humorous, and puts this trademark stamp on all her stories. Regina lives in west Texas with her husband of 25 years and counting, and is a doting, fawning, over-indulgent mother to her two kids. When she's not penning steamy erotic tales or hot contemporary stories, she's indulging in long chats with friends who help her stay sane and keep her laughing.

Regina welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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