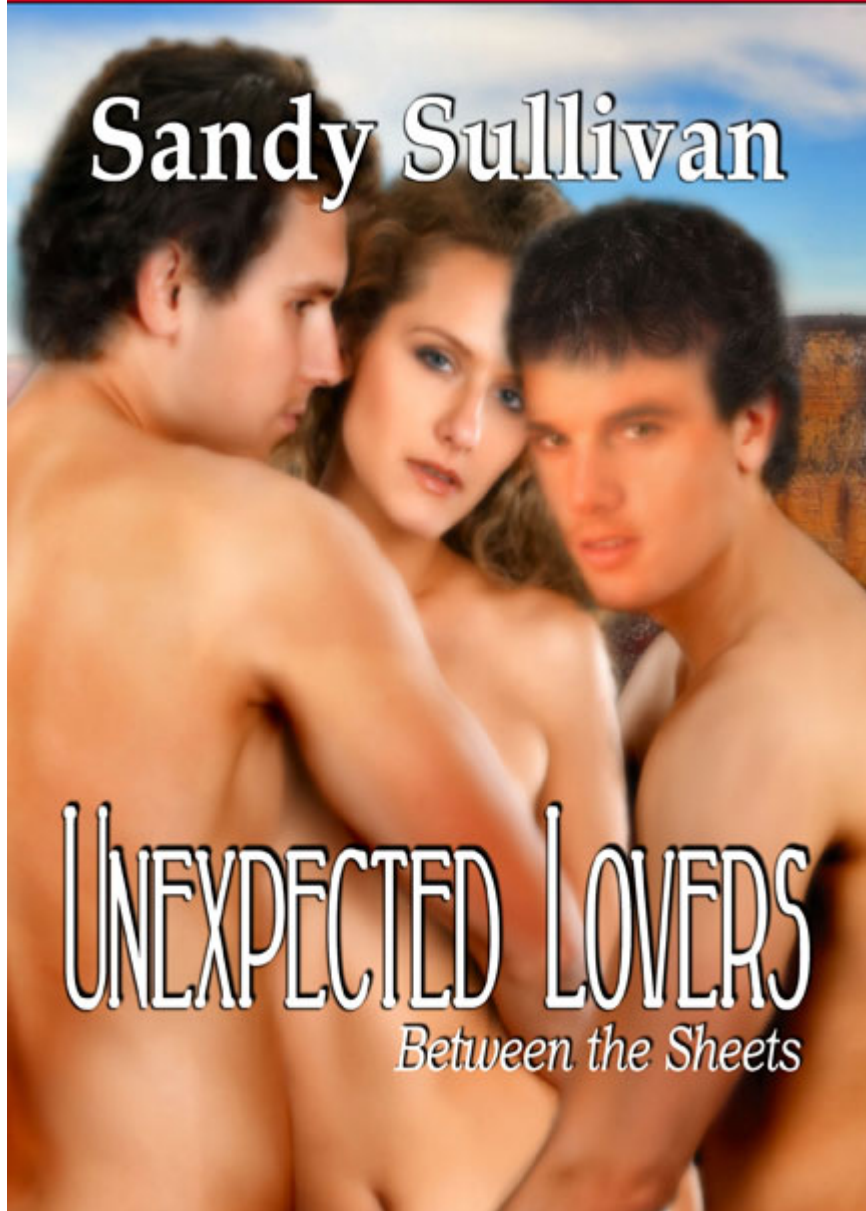


Siren Publishing

Ménage Àmour

Sandy Sullivan

UNEXPECTED LOVERS
Between the Sheets



Between the Sheets 2

Unexpected Lovers

Whitney's husband wants her dead. Ryan and Brett need her with them, but can they protect her from Eric? What happens when Eric finds her and tries again?

Whitney loves the protectiveness of her two new friends. Is there more to what they want? Can she really open her mind and heart to two lovers?

Ryan isn't sure about finding love again, but Whitney pulls at his protective side. Is it only the rescuer/paramedic in him that wants to help her, or is there more to the feelings stirring within?

Brett can't seem to get her off his mind. Can he and Ryan really share her? They've done it before, but the feelings Whitney evokes bring out a possessiveness he's not sure he can overcome.

Genre: Contemporary, Ménage a Trois/Quatre

Length: 44,945 words

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MENAGE AMOUR



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

IMPRINT: Ménage Amour

UNEXPECTED LOVERS

Copyright © 2010 by Sandy Sullivan

E-book ISBN: 1-60601-955-4

First E-book Publication: September 2010

Cover design by Jinger Heaston

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PUBLISHER

Siren Publishing, Inc.

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Letter from Sandy Sullivan

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With deep gratitude,

Sandy Sullivan

DEDICATION

This piece is dedicated to my friend, Mahalia Levey. She's been instrumental in helping me with my first ménage and making sure everything sounded right.

UNEXPECTED LOVERS

Between the Sheets 2

SANDY SULLIVAN

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Chapter One

Whitney slowly opened her eyes. *God my head hurts.* Scorching heat beat down on her, making sweat roll down between her breasts and down her back. When she tried to move, her muscles screamed in pain, and she moaned. She turned her head slightly when the sound of falling rocks met her ear.

“What the hell do I have to do to get rid of you?”

“Eric?” She squinted against the glare of the sun as she tried to bring his face into focus. “Eric, please help me. I can’t move my leg.”

A maniacal laugh registered in her brain. “Help you? I’m the reason you’re where you are. Why would I help you?”

Images came back with a stab of pain. The two of them had come to the Grand Canyon for a sort of second honeymoon for their five year wedding anniversary. They’d planned to rock climb that morning, so they’d headed out to the south rim with their backpacks, water, and food. Eric had suggested hiking to the bottom of the canyon, spending the night and then hiking back. They’d hiked about a quarter of the way down the trail. When they had stopped by a small outcropping of rocks to rest and looked over the ledge to the canyon below, the next thing she knew, she was falling down the steep, rocky incline, head first.

“Eric,” she whimpered, fighting the darkness that threatened to consume her.

“That’s it, baby. Let it take you.”

“I hurt so bad.”

“You won’t in a bit. When your heart stops and you die, you won’t hurt anymore.”

“Die?”

“You bet. How else can I be with Mallory?”

“Mal?”

He laughed again. “You were so blind, Whitney. Mal and I have been together since right after the wedding and then when you put me down as your beneficiary, well, that just sealed things, babe. The only reason I’m still with you was for the money. Once you’re gone, I’ll be a very, very, rich man.”

Terror gripped her insides, and a tear slipped from the corner of her eye. “I loved you. Why are you doing this?”

“Love? You don’t love anyone but your daddy, babe, but Daddy can’t help you now. Spoiled little rich bitch.” He paced several steps away before he turned and spat, “You had everything. Every fucking thing was handed to you with a silver spoon, and I had nothing! My parents scraped by, and most of the time, we never had enough food to even eat dinner each night. I had to practically steal my way through college, barely able to afford tuition and books, but now I’ll have it all.” His last parting remarks sent chills through her. “Your blood won’t be on my hands. After all, you fell to your death here in the canyon.” Rich laughter bounced off the red rocks around her, echoing long after he disappeared from her sight.

Gut-wrenching sobs shook her frame as the sun started to make a slow trek across the sky above her. The perfect baby blue sky did nothing to calm her while she waited. Condors screeched overhead, and she laughed almost hysterically, wondering if she was already becoming delirious.

That's all I need, some carnivorous bird picking at my bones, stealing my flesh as I wither away and die.

Blood trickled from the cut on the back of her head, caking in her brown hair and plastering it to her scalp in a glob of stickiness that almost made her retch. Her fair skin burned from the heat of the sun, pulling it tight across her cheeks. Lips began to crack from lack of water, and her throat felt parched with thirst. The backpack she'd brought had disappeared with her *husband*.

I'll kill that son-of-a-bitch when I get my hands on him.

Guessing an hour or so had passed since Eric disappeared, she concentrated on moving her legs.

I have to get out of here. I'm not going to let him get away with this. Fucking bastard! There is no way in hell I'm dying on some ledge on the side of this canyon.

She bit her lip, closed her eyes and forced her legs to move. Tears sprang to her eyes again when her limbs moved slightly, and she felt the scrape of something in her back pocket.

My cell phone.

A chuckle bubbled in her chest and burst from her lips.

You'll pay for this, Eric. So help me God, you'll pay for this.

Slowly, she slid her hand behind her and wiggled her fingers into her back pocket, trying desperately to grab her phone. After several minutes, she finally dragged it from behind her and prayed it still worked.

With shaking hands, she flipped it open and stared at the screen.

Yes! Thank you, God!

Bloody fingers hit nine-one-one and she prayed there was enough coverage to get the call through.

"911. What's your emergency?" the female voice asked on the other end.

"Help me," Whitney whispered, trying to focus on the phone.

"Ma'am? Ma'am, can you hear me? Where are you?"

"I'm on a ledge on the south rim of the canyon. I fell down an incline and I'm hurt."

"I'm dispatching rescue. Stay with me. It will help them find you. What's your name?"

"Whitney."

"Where are you from, Whitney?"

"Los Angeles. I came up here with my husband."

"Where's he now? Is he hurt, too?"

"I don't know where he is, but no, he's not hurt."

I'm not telling anyone about what Eric did. I'll take him down myself.

"Can you tell me more about where you are exactly so rescue can find you easier?"

Focus, Whit.

"Um, Grandview Trail, I think. We hiked down a ways."

"Okay. I'll tell the rescue guys. You've got some of the best of our crews coming after you. Do you have water?"

"No."

"Keeping talking, Whitney. It will keep you alert."

"Thanks."

"When you see the rescue guys, tell Ryan hi for me, would you?"

"Ryan?"

"Yeah, he'll probably be the one who gets to you first. He's just that way. He's the best rescue climber we have."

"God, I hurt."

"I know, Whitney. Hang in there with me. They'll be there soon. I promise."

"I'm trying."

After what seemed like hours talking to the dispatcher, telling her everything from how old she was to where she grew up, Whitney heard the tinkling of climbing gear above her head.

"Whitney? Whitney, can you hear me?" a deep, male voice yelled over the ledge.

She cleared her throat and licked her parched lips. "Yes."

"I'm coming down. Cover your head if you can, in case the rocks break loose."

Several rocks came down, but nothing got close.

Black boots crunched in the gravel when they hit the ground off to her right.

"I'm down," he yelled up to what she assumed was the rest of the rescue crew. His rope harness tinkled when he unhooked his belt, moved closer and bent down next to her. His hands skimmed over her limbs quickly as he grunted in concentration.

"Ryan?" she asked, frowning when his hazel eyes stopped on her face and she noticed the small laugh lines at the corners. She couldn't tell how tall he was from his crouched position, but he had muscles in all the right places. Short black hair looked soft, curling slightly around his ears, and full lips completed the picture.

A quick flash of white teeth and he answered, "Yeah. How'd you guess?"

"The dispatcher said you'd be the first one here."

"Must have been Rosie."

"I think so."

His lips pressed into a thin line when his gaze swept over her again.

"Is it bad?"

"At least one leg is more than likely broken. Can you move at all?"

"A little."

"Don't try. You may do more damage if you do."

"Are you a paramedic?"

"Yep."

"Hey, Ryan! What'cha got?" another voice called from above.

"Send down the basket and another man. I need some help moving her."

"On the way."

He covered her with his body and crouched low as he leaned close, protecting her from any falling debris. The green material of his jumpsuit almost touched her nose, giving her a clear view of the stitching around the patch on his chest.

“So, Whitney. Where’re you from?” The deep baritone of his voice helped her focus on getting out of here and not on how she got there in the first place.

She exhaled forcibly on a rush. “Los Angeles.”

“Out here for vacation?”

“Yeah. Sort of.”

“What a vacation.”

A soft chuckle left her mouth. With a shift of her hips, she groaned when sharp, stabbing pain zipped along her head and back. Her fingers dug into the dry dirt under her hand.

“Where do you hurt?”

“My head and my leg.”

“Do you need something for pain?”

“Yeah.”

Even through the latex gloves he wore, she could feel warm fingers press along her scalp, but when he reached the spot in the back, she whimpered. Spots formed in front of her eyes, and little stars zipped through her vision.

“Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” she whispered and closed her eyes. “I think there’s a pretty nasty cut back there, and it’s painful. I can feel wetness oozing through my hair.”

The cool swipe of something on her arm brought her gaze back to his.

“Morphine. It’ll help with the pain.”

She nodded slightly, but winced when the needle pricked her skin.

“I hate needles.”

“Me, too.”

“You’re a paramedic. How can you hate needles?”

"I don't stick myself. I stick other people."

Focusing on his face for a second, she frowned when his mouth lifted at the corners in a small smile.

The basket banged against the rock nearby right before another set of boots hit the dirt.

"Backboard?" the other man asked.

"Yes. Her leg is probably fractured, and we need to stabilize her back and neck," Ryan answered, his penetrating look sweeping her face before he asked, "Do you hurt anywhere else?"

"No."

"Good."

The board appeared next to her, and she looked up into the baby face of her other rescuer.

"Cale, meet Whitney. Whitney, this is Cale," Ryan said, introducing her like they were on a Sunday picnic.

"Nice to meet you, Cale."

"You too, Whitney. Got yourself in a bit of a pickle, huh?"

"Yeah. You could say that."

"I'm sure Ryan is taking good care of you, but we need to get you on this backboard, in the basket, and out of here."

"Are you ready, Whitney?" Ryan asked.

"As ready as I'll ever be, I guess."

"How's your pain now?"

"A little better."

"Good. This is going to hurt." Ryan positioned the backboard next to her and then moved around to her other side. "I'm going to roll you toward me, and Cale is going to slide the board under you. Ready? On three."

Firm hands grasped her shoulder and her hip, and she had to fight the urge to moan.

"One—two—three."

When she was rolled on her side, she came face-to-face with his groin and her hand grasped his thigh in an attempt to steady her rocking world. "Sorry," she murmured, pulling her hand away.

He chuckled softly. "No problem."

A few moments later, she'd been rolled back and secured to the board with straps across her chest, abdomen and thighs. He gently brushed the hair from her face as her gaze sought his when he secured her head with two foam cushions. "Just to keep your neck stable," he whispered. "We'll have you out of here in a minute."

His fingers slipped down her arm near the strap to check for circulation and she grasped them between her own, squeezing slightly.

"Thanks, Ryan."

"My pleasure," he answered, his voice dropping an octave.

"Ready?" Cale asked, standing near her feet.

Ryan moved up toward her head and out of her line of vision, but she knew he still stood nearby when the deep rumble of his voice met her ear.

"Let's move on three." He counted out loud, and moments later, the two men lifted her in the air and headed toward the basket. They quickly strapped her down and cushioned around her with foam. When her questioning gaze met his, Ryan answered, "To keep you from bumping around too much when they lift the basket up the rocks. Be prepared, darlin', it's going to hurt some."

The endearment appeared to slip so easily from his mouth, she frowned.

"You okay?"

"Yeah."

"Up you go then."

The basket swung, and she stifled a scream as it rocked and bumped against the outcroppings. Luckily, within moments, she was lifted over the edge and surrounded by more rescuers. They quickly

loaded her into the back of the waiting ambulance, and within moments, Ryan joined her.

“How are you doing?” he asked as the lights and sirens came on and they pulled out onto the road.

With a forced exhale, she answered, “Okay.”

“You don’t sound okay.” He bent over her arm and stuck her with another needle.

“That hurts.”

“Sorry, darlin’. I have to start an IV so I can get some fluids in you. I’m sure you’re a bit dehydrated.”

She licked her lips, and his gaze narrowed as it fixed on her mouth before it returned to her arm and his task.

Does he realize the endearments that keep slipping out?

“We’ll be at the helicopter shortly, and they’ll take it from there. Do you need something else for pain?”

Reaching over his head, he grabbed a plastic bag and ripped it open with his teeth.

“Helicopter?”

“Yep. Quickest way to get you to Flagstaff.”

“I hate to fly.”

A warm chuckle burst from his lips, and his gaze focused on her face again. “Don’t have much choice in the matter, sweetheart. You need a doctor and soon.”

“Why do you keep calling me that?”

“What?”

“Sweetheart and darlin’.”

Broad shoulders lifted in a shrug, bringing her vision to the muscles of his chest as they rippled and bunched under his shirt.

“Sorry. Habit, I guess. You’re a pretty woman. What can I say?”

“And you’re a major flirt, Ryan.”

He chuckled and said, “Sue me.”

“What’s your last name?”

“Why?”

“Curiosity. You look like you might be Irish with those hazel eyes.”

“Last name’s O’Rourke.” He messed with something off to his left above her head that she couldn’t see. “What’s yours?”

“Scott.”

“Nice.”

“Thanks.”

“So what are you doing hiking one of the roughest trails in the canyon by yourself, Whit?”

“I wasn’t by myself.”

“No? I didn’t see anyone else around.”

“He left.”

“He?”

“Yeah. My husband.” She didn’t know why, but she had the incredible urge to share with Ryan what Eric had done. Tears slipped from the corner of her eyes and into her hair.

“Don’t cry.”

“I’ve been married to Eric for five years.”

“Didn’t mean to pry.” He tenderly wiped the tear from her cheek.

“He tried to hurt me. We’ve been having problems, but I never thought he’d try this.”

His shocked expression met hers, and she had to explain. Ryan would understand. For some reason, she knew he would. “He tried to kill me for insurance money.”

“You’re serious?”

She frowned when irritation at his question zinged down her back. “I didn’t throw myself down the damned canyon, Ryan.”

“Sorry. I didn’t mean it like I didn’t believe you. I think it’s incredible that someone would do that, especially to a nice girl like you.”

“Yeah, well, money talks in certain circles.”

The whirl of the helicopter blades sounded in the distance when the ambulance came to a stop.

“Ryan?”

“Yeah?”

“Will you come with me?”

“I’ll be right beside you the whole time.”

“Thanks.”

* * * *

I can’t believe what I just heard. Someone tried to kill her? Damn!
He frowned when an unexpected protective feeling surged through his chest. *How could anyone want to hurt a woman? That’s insane. Hurting a woman is a coward’s way of handling things.*

“Hey man,” the pilot said, approaching the gurney as they wheeled her toward the still-whirling helicopter. “Priority?”

“Yeah, let’s move.”

The pilot opened the back, and they slid her inside. Ryan climbed in beside her, and the pilot secured the doors. He slipped on his flight helmet and adjusted the microphone.

“Tell me how you feel, Whit.”

She opened her baby blues, and his heart clenched. Her brown hair lay in wet, sticky tendrils on her forehead, but her eyes held him spellbound. Dirt streaked across her face, and he fought the urge to brush the hair back and stroke her cheek. *No getting that close to the patient, Ryan. Bad idea.*

“I hurt,” Whitney said as her face scrunched in pain.

“Where?” he asked.

“My hip and my back mostly.”

“Let me give you something else then.”

“How long before we get to the hospital.”

“Not long.”

Her eyes closed again, and she whispered, “Good.”

I want to help her so bad. How could anyone want to hurt her?

“Chopper One to Flagstaff ER,” he called into the headset with a push of his finger on the side of the helmet.

“This is Flagstaff. Go Chopper One.”

“Chopper One. One female patient, approximately late twenties, priority one.”

“Twenty-eight,” she murmured, without opening her eyes.

He smiled and shook his head.

“Vital signs are stable. Assessment indicates possible head, back, chest and neck trauma although patient alert and oriented times four. Patient on backboard with head and neck stabilized. No active bleeding at this time. Patient able to move lower extremities minimally. Patient indicates pain to left hip and lumbar. Probable fracture left femur with obvious deformity noted. IV established with normal saline bolus infusing. Morphine four milligrams given. Permission to give Dilaudid two milligrams intravenous push.”

“Affirmative. Dilaudid two milligrams intravenous,” replied a familiar voice on the other end of the headset.

Good. Brett’s there today.

Brett Novak was the best emergency room physician Ryan knew, even if they were cousins. Most people confused the two of them as siblings since their mothers were identical twins. With similar facial features, it wasn’t hard to fathom why anyone who didn’t know them figured they were brothers, but the biggest difference was the color of their eyes. While Ryan’s were the distinctive hazel color of his mother, Brett had the brown eyes of his father’s side of the family, the Novak’s out of Tennessee.

“Copy. ETA ten minutes.”

“Copy Chopper One. See you in a few, Ryan.”

“Chopper One out.”

He reached to his right and grabbed the pain medication to give her, pushed the air out of the syringe, and hooked it to the tube in her arm. Glancing quickly at her face, the penetrating blue eyes sucked him in again.

“What are you giving me?”

“Dilaudid. It’s the best pain medication available.”

“How long have you been a paramedic?”

“Five years.”

The helicopter shifted slightly, and he knew they were getting close to the landing pad at the hospital.

“How about you? What do you do?”

A frown wrinkled the skin between her eyebrows. “I’m a little rich bitch according to Eric.”

“Eric’s an asshole.”

The watery chuckle that burst from her lips had him smiling and made his heart squeeze.

“I like you, Ryan.”

Within moments, the helicopter landed with a jarring jolt, and the rear doors whipped open. Two sets of hands grabbed the backboard and slid her onto the gurney as Ryan slipped out from behind it.

The technicians started to push her toward the entrance to the hospital, but stopped when she said, “Wait. Ryan?”

He moved to her side and grasped her fingers, squeezing lightly. “I’m right behind you, Whit.”

“Okay.”

Large glass doors swung open when they approached, and within moments of entering the trauma bay, people surrounded her, almost blocking her from his view.

“Hey, Ryan.”

“Brett,” he answered with a nod, never taking his eyes off Whitney’s feet.

“Busy day?”

“Not until now.”

“Any problem en route?” Brett asked as they moved toward Whitney together.

“No. Gave her the Dilaudid and she did well.”

“Okay, people. We’ve got work to do.” Brett started directing people like a drill sergeant, and Ryan shook his head and smiled. His cousin fired off orders to the nurses, lab people, and radiology technicians in short order. He knew Brett would take good care of Whitney.

A moment later, a small terrified voice met his ear. “Ryan?”

He moved to her side and grasped her fingers. “I’m right here. You’ll be fine. You’ve got one of the best emergency room doctors working on you.”

“Oh yeah? Know him well, do you?”

“You could say that.”

She glanced to her other side.

“Hi. What’s your name?” Brett asked and Ryan knew he was trying to assess her mental status.

“Whitney Scott.”

“Do you know what today is?”

A frown wrinkled the skin between her eyebrows. “Mmm...June tenth.”

“What year?”

“Two-thousand-ten.”

“Well, Whitney, my name is Doctor Novak.”

Her gaze moved from Ryan to Brett and back, and the frown returned. Confusion was bright in her gaze.

“It’s okay to be confused, Whit. Everyone is. This is Brett Novak. He’s my cousin.”

“Damn! You two look so much alike. Same dark hair. Different eyes, though.”

Both men chuckled, and Brett said, “Yeah. We get that a lot.” Brett’s hands moved over her arms and then her abdomen, pushing softly as he asked if she hurt. “Whitney, we are going to be doing a bunch of tests on you. Blood work, x-rays, and a CAT scan at least. How’s your pain?”

“Not bad right now. Ryan made sure of that.”

Brett glanced in his direction when he said, "Yeah, he's a pretty good guy."

"No bias there, huh?"

A warm chuckle left his full lips when he looked down at her. "Not a bit. Do you hurt anywhere else?"

"My chest hurts a little."

"Where?"

"My left?"

"Does it hurt worse with a deep breath?"

After a quick inhale, she said, "Not really."

"We're going to step out, and the nurses are going to get you undressed, put a catheter in, and get the tests ordered. I'll be back to check on you shortly."

"Ryan?" she asked, giving him a pitiful look.

"I won't be far." He squeezed her hand, and she nodded. Releasing her fingers, he stepped away from the gurney and followed Brett out to the desk.

"Grandview Trail, huh?"

"Yeah."

"What was she doing out there alone?"

"She wasn't. Her husband made the trek with her. They weren't too far down the trail, but enough that it made it interesting getting to her."

Brett's eyebrows furrowed in confusion. "So where's he now?"

Ryan raked his fingers through his hair. "Damned if I know, but if I get my hands on him, I'll kill him."

"Really? Why?" Brett asked, surprise evident on his face.

"From what she told me, he left her out there to die."

"You're kidding me."

"No."

"Be careful, cousin. You don't want to get involved. Sounds like one hell of a mess."

“Why the hell not, Brett? Obviously someone needs to help her. What if the asshole comes back to finish things once he finds out he didn’t succeed?”

“Doc? You better get in here!” the nurse yelled from behind the curtain where Whitney lay. “She doesn’t look good.”

“Shit!” Both he and Brett rushed behind the curtain just as the monitor over Whitney’s head starting making an erratic beeping sound.

Chapter Two

“Get the code cart, now!” Brett yelled.

“What’s going on?” Ryan asked, rushing to Whitney’s side.

“Damn it!” Brett quickly assessed her again. “How the hell did I miss that?” he grumbled quietly, noticing the neck vein distention. “I need a sixteen gauge needle and a large syringe.”

“Brett?”

“She’s probably in cardiac tamponade. I need to try to aspirate fluid from around her heart.” His gaze shot over to the nurses rushing around him as sweat tickled down his back. She could die from this if he didn’t intervene now. One nurse handed him the needle, and they all prayed.

Working quickly, he inserted it close to her chest wall, inward and upward, applying constant suction until blood rushed back into the syringe. A collective heavy sigh surrounded the group when the beeping of the heart monitor slowed and became more regular.

“Get a cardiologist down here immediately.”

“Damn, that was close,” Ryan said when their gaze met.

“Yeah, too close.” He wiped the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve. “I need those x-rays and scan.”

“We’re taking her now, doc,” the technician said from the head of the bed.

“Good. Jackie, go with her. If anything should change, call me immediately.”

“No problem, Doctor Novak,” she answered, moving with the gurney as they headed out of the department.

He moved out to the desk and took a seat in the chair in front of his computer. A sigh rushed from between his lips as he tipped the chair back.

“Brett?” Ryan asked.

“Yeah.”

“I’ve got to get back. Keep me updated on how she is, okay? If she regains consciousness, make sure she knows I’ll be back.”

The look in Ryan’s eyes concerned Brett. He’d never seen his cousin this worried about anyone outside of the immediate family. “All right. I’ll call you later.”

“Thanks.” Ryan nodded and turned toward the ambulance bay.

The automatic glass moved when he got close to it and headed outside to meet the ambulance while Brett watched with a heavy heart. With a quick shake of his head, Brett went back to work, hoping the woman who had already seemed to have snagged his reluctant-to-get-involved cousin by the balls wouldn’t hurt him in the process.

* * * *

Whitney’s chest burned with each breath as she struggled to figure out where she was and what had happened. The steady beeping near her head annoyed her with its droning, constant tone. Her eyelids felt like they weighed ten pounds each when she tried to open them, almost like dirt and grit scratched under both lids.

A soft moan rumbled in her chest and bubbled out from her lips when she struggled with consciousness.

“Whitney?”

Not recognizing the voice near her ear, she frowned and tried to focus.

“Whitney, open your eyes.”

Struggling against the grit behind her eyelids, she slowly lifted them.

“Doctor Novak?”

“Yeah. How do you feel?”

“Like shit.”

He chuckled warmly, and her heart constricted at the sound. *Why would that be? I hardly know the man.*

“Call me Brett. You’ve had a rough couple of days.”

“Days?”

“Yes. You’ve been here at the hospital two days now.”

“Damn,” she whispered, not liking the weak sound of her voice. “What happened? The last thing I remember, I was in the emergency room.”

“You went into what we call cardiac tamponade. Basically, it means you had fluid around your heart from the trauma of the fall. We had to aspirate it.”

“No wonder my chest burns.”

Searching the room for a moment with her gaze, she hoped Ryan would be nearby, but disappointment clouded her mind when she didn’t spot him.

Why should he? He was just the rescuer. It’s not like he cares.

“Ryan’s not here at the moment, but he’ll be back in a few minutes. He went to get coffee.”

Am I that predictable?

A frown pulled down the corners of his mouth when he said, “He’s been here off and on since you were brought upstairs.”

“You don’t like that idea for some reason,” she whispered, wanting to know why Brett seemed upset at the idea of Ryan visiting her.

He cocked a questioning eyebrow. “It’s not that.”

She shifted in the bed and moaned softly at the pain that shot through her like a lightning bolt. “Then what? Your eyes give you away, Brett.”

“I don’t want to see Ryan hurt, and I’m afraid getting involved with you is going to do that to him.”

“Why?”

“He told me about how your husband left you in the canyon.”

“Oh.” Focusing on the wall on the other side of the room, she asked, “Do you two share everything?”

“Almost. We’re very close.”

The door swung open, and when she turned her head, her heart slammed against her ribs as Ryan strolled through the door, two large cups of coffee in his hands.

“You’re awake.”

“Yeah,” she murmured, hating how she’d come to depend on his presence and how safe he made her feel in such a short time. “Is one of those for me? I’m dying here.”

The two men chuckled, and Ryan said, “Sorry, darlin’. I imagine now that you’re awake, it’s going to be clear liquids for a day or two.”

Her toes curled at the endearment. “How about caffeine intravenously?”

“No can do,” Brett replied.

“Damn,” she whispered.

Ryan handed the second cup to Brett and took a seat by the bed. “How are you feeling?”

She looked at Brett and then back to Ryan.

“What?”

“I think I just had this conversation with your cousin.”

“So share.”

“I feel like I’ve been hit by a truck. My chest burns and my leg is killing me.”

“Did Brett fill you in on what happened?” Ryan asked, taking her hand in his.

With a quick glance at where he’d entwined their fingers, she pulled her hand back and said, “Yeah.” With a quick rush of air from between her lips, she shifted her gaze to the ceiling above, trying desperately to calm the rushing in her ears. “So, when can I go home?”

“Home?”

“Yeah, back to L.A.”

Focusing on Ryan’s face again, she almost missed the look between the two men.

“What?”

“Do you really think that’s a good idea, Whit?”

“I don’t understand.”

“Your husband left you for dead in the middle of the Grand Canyon. What if he realizes he wasn’t successful and tries again?”

“What do you expect me to do, Ryan, stay here with you? I don’t know anyone in Flagstaff. My father can protect me from Eric.”

“Why not?” Ryan asked, and she noticed the frown Brett gave him.

“What? Stay with you? You can’t be serious.”

“He wouldn’t know to look there since you’ve never met me before now. You’d be safe, Whitney, and that’s the important thing. At least stay with me until you can get in touch with your family and they can make arrangements to have him arrested.”

“Arrested for what? There’s no proof. My word against his.”

“How can he explain returning to L.A. without you when you came together?”

“He can just say we had a huge fight and he left me at the hotel or something.” She threw up her hands in exasperation. “We aren’t having this conversation.” With a serious glance at Brett, she said, “Tell him. Tell him this is crazy.”

“It’s crazy, Ryan.”

“Whatever. Mind your own business. You just don’t want her in your house.”

“Your house?” she asked, the question aimed at Brett.

“Yeah. Ryan and I share my house, or should I say, he rents the apartment over my garage.”

Her focus returned to Ryan. “See. You would have to have his okay, anyway.”

“You need somewhere to recuperate, Whitney, and Eric won’t find you there. You can call your parents from my place.”

She rolled her eyes. High-handed behavior usually pissed her off, but Ryan’s only made her want to let him pull her close and take care of her and she didn’t understand why.

“I’m not going anywhere for several days, right?”

“True,” Brett answered.

“Then we can discuss this later. I need to call my father and tell him what happened. He’ll be worried since I haven’t been in contact with him in several days.” She looked around the room until her gaze landed on Ryan again. “By the way, where is my cell?”

“In the drawer.”

“Can I have it please?” she asked, glancing at Brett, who sat closest to the nightstand.

He reached into the drawer and handed it to her. Flipping it open, she scrolled through the contacts and hit talk.

It rang twice before a female voice picked it up saying, “Morris, Armstrong and Collins, Attorneys-At-Law. Can I help you?”

“Can I speak with Aaron Morris, please?”

“May I ask who is calling?”

“His daughter.”

“One moment, please.”

Elevator music came on the line as a few moments ticked by. “Whitney?”

“Daddy?”

“Where are you, sweetheart? I haven’t heard from you.”

“I’m at the hospital in Flagstaff, Dad.”

“In the hospital? What the hell is going on there?”

“I had an accident.” She fought the sob in her throat, and the tears threatened to blur her vision.

“Let me talk to Eric.”

“Eric isn’t here.”

“Where is he? He should be by your side.”

“Daddy...”

Brett took the phone from her hand.

“Hello?”

“Hello? Who’s this?”

“My name is Doctor Brett Novak. I treated Whitney in the emergency room when she was brought in.”

“Tell me what’s going on, son.”

“She took a pretty good tumble in the canyon. Her left femur is broken, and she’ll need to be monitored for a few more days here.”

Whitney wiggled her fingers, trying to tell Brett to give her the phone back now that her tears were under control, but he only frowned and handed it back.

“Daddy?”

“I’ll have the jet fueled, and your mother and I will be there within a few hours.”

“No. Dad, you and Mom don’t need to come here. There isn’t anything you can do.”

“What aren’t you telling me, Whitney?”

Biting her lip, she held her silence for a moment as her gaze met Ryan’s and then Brett’s.

“If Eric calls you or comes by, please don’t tell him where I am or that I’m okay.”

“Whitney...”

“Daddy, please listen. I can’t explain right now, just don’t tell him anything. Act like you haven’t talked to me at all, and I’ll call you when they get ready to release me from the hospital. I’m fine. Ryan and Brett are taking good care of me.”

“Ryan? Who the hell is Ryan?”

She sighed and closed her eyes. “Ryan is the guy who helped me out of the canyon. He’s a rescue paramedic. Brett is the doctor who treated me in the emergency room, but they are cousins and they’re both sitting here with me. Don’t worry, I’ll be fine.”

“All right, but I don’t like this at all. I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“I do. I’ll talk to you soon.”

“I love you, Whitney.”

“I know, Dad. I love you, too. Talk to you soon.”

The phone shut with a click.

“How soon can you get me out of here, Brett?”

“I can talk to the physician who is seeing you here on the floor, but I don’t understand. Why?”

“I could hear someone listening on the phone, and I’m afraid there might be another party working with Eric. If so, they know I’m here at the hospital.”

Ryan took her hand in his again. “Whit, I’ll do whatever I have to do to protect you. I hope you know that.”

“I can’t ask that of you, Ryan. It’s not fair to you. You don’t even know me.”

“It doesn’t matter. What Eric did was wrong on so many levels.”

A tear slipped down her cheek as a sob escaped her lips. “I thought he loved me, but he only wanted the insurance money. He’s been sleeping with one of my best friends!”

Ryan stood and slid onto the mattress next to her, pulling her close. She buried her face in his chest and cried.

“Shh. It’ll be okay. I won’t let anyone hurt you.”

Brett moved closer and took her hand, rubbing the top of it with his fingers. When she lifted her head from Ryan’s chest, the look in Brett’s brown eyes said everything would be okay.

“Neither of us will.”

* * * *

“You live here?” Whitney asked with awe, looking up at the expansive front of his house.

Brett chuckled softly as they pulled into his garage. “Yeah. I bought it a few years ago.” He checked the rearview mirror for Ryan, watching as he pulled his Harley in behind them.

“Is it just you and Ryan here?”

“Yep. No wife or girlfriend.”

A pretty pink flush splashed across her cheeks. “I didn’t mean...”

“It’s fine, Whitney. You’re the first woman to stay here for any length of time.” He pushed open the driver’s side and moved around to open her door, holding out his hand to help her.

“I don’t believe you’ve never had a woman here before.”

He cocked an eyebrow, and a smile lifted the corners of his mouth. “I didn’t say that.”

She sighed. “Good.”

“Good?”

“Yeah. I was beginning to wonder about you, Doctor Novak.”

Roaring laughter rolled from his mouth. “I’m not gay, Whit. I appreciate a beautiful woman just like Ryan does.” He skimmed over her face with his gaze and then settled it on her mouth. Kissing her would be a really bad idea. *Then why do I want to so badly? I know Ryan wants her. Sharing her wouldn’t be right, would it?*

Moving to the back of the car, he grabbed the wheelchair and positioned it next to the side of the car. “Wrap your arms around my shoulders and I’ll lift you into the chair.”

When their eyes met, she inhaled sharply, and he knew she was attracted to him, too. With a shift of her hips, she swung her legs out of the door. Straddling her knees with his legs, he held out his arms and waited for her to make the next move.

Capturing her bottom lip between her teeth, she hesitated momentarily before she lifted her hands and laid them gingerly on his shoulders. He wondered if she felt the shiver roll down his back at her touch.

Wanting nothing more than to take her lips in a soul-searing kiss, he cleared his throat to dislodge the lump forming there and said, "Hold on tight so I don't drop you."

"You wouldn't do that," she whispered, her warm breath caressing his neck when he pulled her up and held on for a moment before swinging her around to the chair.

"Are we good, Brett?" Ryan asked, coming up behind them.

Once she was settled, he stepped back. "Yeah."

"Well, move your ass so we can get her inside and settled, then."

Ryan shot him a confused look and pushed Whitney into the house.

Brett stayed in the garage a moment, trying to bring his raging desire under control. He thought for sure she had felt his cock spring to life when her breath swept across his neck. Dropping his head back, he stared at the wooden beams above him as he exhaled.

How could she not? I practically jabbed her with it when I swung her around. Then again, her nipples were doing some poking of their own when I held her. That little tank top she has on does nothing to hide the pink nipples beneath it.

He smiled for the first time since he agreed to keep her safe by bringing her here. *Maybe this won't be so bad after all, once she's healed.*

A saucy whistle left his lips as he followed the other two inside.

The kitchen sat off to his right, and he could see Ryan getting Whitney settled on the couch when he headed for the refrigerator.

"You two want something to drink?"

"How about a beer?" Whitney called.

"You shouldn't be drinking alcohol with those pain killers."

She rolled her eyes, and he had to smile.

"Quit being the doctor. It's not going to hurt to drink just one. I'll probably fall asleep right here on the couch after one. I'm a lightweight when it comes to alcohol anyway."

Ryan grinned from his spot next to her.

Brett ground his teeth together when Ryan dropped his arm across her shoulder and pulled her close. He wanted to rip his cousin's arm from around Whitney, pick her up in his arms, and rush down the hall to his bedroom.

Shaking his head, he retrieved three beers from the refrigerator and headed in their direction, handing each of them one before he dropped into the chair on the other side of the couch.

"So what's the plan?" Ryan asked.

"I don't imagine her husband would have any idea where she is, so she should be safe here."

"I know a couple of guys on the police force. I'll make some calls after awhile." Ryan grasped a tendril of hair from her shoulder and let it slide through his fingers.

Brett wanted to break his hand.

"Just so you know, I don't want anything more to do with Eric. I'm not one of those women who would stay with a guy who would abuse her, or in my case, who would attempt murder," she said, her gaze flipping back and forth between the two of them.

Ryan growled, "Good. He's a dead man if I get my hands on him."

"I appreciate the sentiment, but I'll take care of Eric."

"We'll take care of him, Whit. You aren't in this alone," Brett answered.

The look on her face told Brett she was confused. Her eyes held the look of awe, like she couldn't believe two strangers would do this for her.

"How about something to eat? I can order pizza," he asked, grabbing the phone next to his elbow.

"Pizza sounds good."

"What kind do you like?" Ryan asked.

"Everything but anchovies."

"A woman after my own heart," Brett said, giving her an appreciative glance. "Supreme it is."

Wiggling her butt on the couch, she said, “Mmm...guys? Can someone point me in the direction of the bathroom?”

Ryan stood and swept her up in his arms. A startled squeak left her mouth, and Brett smiled.

“Never let it be said I’m not a gentleman,” Ryan said, heading down the hall with her in his arms.

Voices sounded far off as Brett listened to the other two conversing for a moment. Ryan returned and took his seat on the couch with a frown.

Brett had finished ordering the food while Ryan had taken Whitney to the bathroom, so now he needed to say something while she wasn’t in the room.

“We need to talk.”

“I know.”

“You know?”

“I can see the attraction, Brett. I’m not blind.” Ryan raked his fingers through his hair. “I want her bad, too.”

“Then you know she wants us both, or at least that’s the impression I’m getting.”

“Yep, but she’s confused. She doesn’t understand.”

“Then we need to make her understand. She needs to know we don’t have a problem sharing.”

Emotions rippled across Ryan’s face before he asked, “What do you want from her?”

The sun had begun to set behind the hills with streaks of orange and purple, bathing the backyard in gold. Pine and alder trees dotted the front yard beyond the glass, and a small waterfall tinkled in the distance. “I wish I knew. I want to fuck her so bad, my balls are like rocks. Beyond that?” His shoulders lifted in a shrug. “I don’t necessarily believe in love.”

Standing behind him, Ryan chuckled. “Especially not after Corrine.”

“Corrine was the bitch from hell.”

“And she took your heart and snapped it in two before she left.”

He didn’t want to talk about Corrine. That part of his life was over a while ago, and he really didn’t want to hash it out again. The love he’d felt for Corrine made him leery of getting involved with anyone on a permanent basis, but then again...

“Whitney brings out a protective side of me I haven’t felt in a long time. We need to figure out how to protect her from this guy until she can get her insurance policy changed and file for divorce. I don’t think he’ll try to hurt her if he’s not the beneficiary anymore,” Brett added.

“True. I’m sure her dad will take care of that, but if there is someone in her father’s office that’s in with Eric, she’s not safe there either.”

“The only place she is safe is here with us.”

“Ryan?” she called from the bathroom.

“I’ll be right there.”

Brett didn’t think he’d ever seen his cousin jump to the bidding of a female so fast in his life, and it worried him.

Within a moment, Ryan carried her back to the couch and gently set her down.

“Have we figured out where I’m sleeping?”

Ryan looked at him, and Brett knew they were both thinking the same thing.

How about between the two of us?

“There’s a spare bedroom connected to the bathroom you were just in. I put fresh sheets on the bed and dusted this morning before we came to the hospital to pick you up.”

“You cleaned?”

He laughed and nodded. “You’d be surprised. I do most of my own cleaning and cooking, even if I am a bachelor. Now Ryan, not so much.”

A tinkling laugh came from her mouth. It brought a smile to his lips.

“How long before pizza is here?”

“About fifteen minutes,” Brett answered.

“Good. I’m starving. Hospital food sucks.”

The two men chuckled, and Brett said, “Yeah, we know. We both eat there more than we care to.”

They made small talk until the doorbell rang, letting them know the food had arrived.

“I’ll get it.” Ryan moved from her side and headed toward the front entrance as Brett settled his gaze on Whitney. She shifted on the couch and pressed her lips together. He wondered if she was imagining his kiss. The pretty pink flush on her cheeks told him whatever the thoughts on her mind might be, they probably would be intriguing, to say the least.

When Ryan returned, he dished up a couple of pieces for her and brought them to the couch with his own pizza before taking his spot again.

“So, Whitney, tell us about growing up in L.A.”

She shrugged and settled her gaze on the plate in her hands. “Nothing to tell really. I have three sisters. I’m one of the middle girls. My father is an attorney and Mom stayed home to raise us.”

“What about this guy who left you in the canyon?”

Frown lines settled between her eyebrows and pulled down the corners of her mouth. “I met Eric seven years ago at a charity function my parents do every year. We dated for a couple of years before we got married. He’s an attorney too and works with my father.”

“You had no idea he wanted to kill you?” Ryan asked.

“No. Why would I?”

Ryan held up his hands in surrender. “Just askin’.”

“I thought he loved me,” she whispered. “We were having some problems, you know. Just like married couples do. We came to Arizona as a second honeymoon, and I hoped we could work things out.”

Ryan wrapped an arm around her shoulder and pulled her to his side. "It doesn't matter. We won't let anything happen to you."

After several moments, she wiggled out of Ryan's embrace, placed the half-eaten plate of pizza on the table and said, "I love both of your company, but I'm beat."

"By all means, it's bedtime then for you, young lady." He stood and Ryan scooped her up in his arms again before they headed down the hall together.

Brett pushed open the door to the bedroom and flipped on the light.

"Wow. This is really nice, Brett."

"Glad you like it. It's yours for as long as you like."

Ryan set her down on the edge of the bed. "Need some help with your clothes?"

"I think I can get it, Ryan. These sweatpants are loose enough. I should be able to slip them off without too much trouble." She captured her bottom lip between her teeth and chewed it for a moment. "I need to say something to both of you."

He took one side, and Ryan sat on her other.

"Go ahead, honey."

Her startled gaze stopped on his face, and he almost kicked himself for letting the endearment slip from between his lips. It wouldn't do any good to rush her into anything. She would have to accept the attraction between the three of them on her own.

"I want to thank both of you for everything you've done for me." One hand grasped his and the other took Ryan's. "You two are like my knights in shining armor. I don't know what I ever did to deserve this."

"We're here for you, Whit. Both of us, in whatever capacity you want or are ready for," Ryan said, putting his fingers under her chin and turning her face toward him.

Damn it, Ryan, she's not ready.

Ryan captured her lips, slipping his mouth over hers and sliding his tongue along until she moaned softly, and Brett felt her fingers tighten around his. Brett didn't think he'd ever seen anything so hot as Ryan kissing Whitney.

Unable to fight the surge of desire zipping through his veins, Brett placed a kiss to her bare shoulder, and he had to smile when her skin quivered under his mouth.

Both Ryan and Whitney were breathing hard when their mouths finally separated.

"I..."

"It's okay, Whit." Ryan ran his fingers down her cheek softly and then stood. "We'll leave you alone. Won't we, Brett?"

He came to his feet as well. "Yeah. Sleep well, sweetheart."

When he stopped near the door, Brett turned and looked at her flushed face, wide eyes, and how she touched her fingertips to her lips. *Oh Whitney. You're ripe for lovin', darlin'. Lovin' by two men.*

Chapter Three

She's alive! Damn it! How could he screw this up?

Maria quickly hung up the phone when she heard the click on the other end and schooled her features when Aaron Morris opened his office door.

"I'm headed to court, Maria. I'll be back after lunch."

"Of course, sir."

When the office door shut behind her boss, she quickly grabbed the receiver and dialed.

"Hello?"

"She's alive."

"What are you talking about?"

"Whitney's alive."

"There is no possible way, Maria. I left her for dead at the bottom of the canyon," Eric replied.

"She just called her father from the hospital in Flagstaff."

"You heard her?"

"Yes. I answered the phone, Eric. She said she's there and told her father not to let on that she'd talked to him. You have to do something."

"She'll go to the authorities. Son-of-a-bitch! I knew I should have just killed her myself, but I let you talk me into trying it this way."

"It doesn't matter. She's alive, and you need to fix this. Her father will have you in jail before you can turn around if he finds out you tried to hurt her."

"Hurt her? Hell, Maria! This is attempted murder and carries twenty-five to life if I'm caught. It doesn't make a damned bit of

difference if I'm an attorney or not. Believe me, they still put lawyers in jail, too."

"What can I do?"

"Keep tabs on the phone and let me know if she calls again. I'm headed back to Flagstaff."

"I love you, Eric."

"I know. I'll see you in a few days, once I get this all straightened out. We'll be fine."

He hung up, and Maria chewed her lip as she dropped the phone back on the cradle. She'd been having an affair with Eric for several years. He'd always told her they would be together once he got rid of Whitney and had her money to sustain them. What he didn't know was that she also knew he'd been with Whitney's best friend, Mallory. Maria didn't trust him, but love him she did.

* * * *

"What the hell do you mean, she's not here?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't tell you anything other than she isn't a patient here."

"I'm her husband, God damn it!" Eric shouted, leaning toward the woman behind the desk.

"Without her permission, I can't tell you anything, even if you are her husband."

"I want to see your supervisor, now!"

"Certainly," the woman said as she stood and moved toward another lady sitting several feet away.

Shit! If they won't tell me, how the hell am I going to find her?

"Can I help you, sir?" a lanky blonde asked, when she stopped in front of him.

Mmm...nice. Big breasts, trim waist. I bet she's hot in bed, too.

"I certainly hope so." He purposely laid on the charm. "My name is Eric Scott. I'm an attorney from Los Angeles. My wife should have

been brought in here several days ago after a fall in the canyon and I'm trying to locate her."

The woman frowned. "I don't understand."

"My father had a heart attack about the same time, and I had to fly home. I left her here to recuperate, and I think she must have been discharged, but I can't seem to locate her. I'm trying to find out where she went after she left here."

"She didn't call you and tell you she was being discharged?"

He dropped his gaze in what he hoped looked like embarrassment. "We had a bit of a fight before I left, over my leaving her here. I'm assuming she's still pissed at me, so no, she hasn't called me. I need to find out what day she left and if you know where she went, that would be helpful, too."

"Let me see what I can do."

"I would appreciate it more than you know."

The woman tapped on the computer keyboard for several moments while he stood, shifting from foot to foot.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I can't tell you where she went because we don't have that information. She left here yesterday morning."

"Thank you for your help," Eric said, grumbling under his breath.

"Excuse me," a young woman dressed in scrubs said off to his left. "Are you looking for Whitney Scott?"

"Why, yes I am." He smiled, hoping he looked sincere.

"I saw her leave with Ryan O'Rourke."

"Ryan O'Rourke?"

"Yeah. He's a paramedic with the local fire department and Doctor Novak's cousin."

"Really."

"Tiffany, I think you need to go back to work," the blonde said with a tip of her head.

"Yes, ma'am."

Tiffany disappeared quickly through the doors, but it didn't matter. He had a couple of names, and that's all he needed.

“Thank you for your help, Miss...?”

“Barbara Snow.”

“Ms. Snow. I appreciate the information, and I’m sure my wife will be pleased to know the hospital here has excellent customer service.”

The woman gave him a frown, but he turned on his heels, heading for the entrance as a plan hatched in his mind. *First I’ll find Ryan O’Rourke, and then I’ll take care of Whitney.*

* * * *

Sunlight splashed across Whitney’s face, dragging her from one of the best night’s sleep she’d had in at least a month. The constant fighting with Eric and then trying to make up had taken its toll.

A soft groan escaped her lips when she rolled over on the comfortable mattress and opened her eyes. At first, she didn’t recognize the room. The soft pastel blue on the walls soothed the soul and the pretty curtains on the window spoke of expensive taste.

The light tap on the door had her struggling to sit upright in the bed before she called, “Come in.”

The door opened, and Brett poked his head in. “Good morning.”

“Morning.”

He stepped inside carrying a tray in his hands, and the smell of bacon and coffee met her nose, making her mouth water.

“How did you sleep?”

“Better than I have in a long time, even with a broken leg.”

“Do you need something for pain?”

“Not right now. I’ll sleep the day away if I take it.”

“I don’t want you to hurt, Whitney. Broken femurs can be very painful.”

“Enough with the doctor thing, okay?”

“This isn’t Doctor Novak talking, it’s Brett.”

"I'm fine." She winced when she moved and quickly glanced in his direction, only to find a frown on his face.

"Stubborn woman," he grumbled.

"That's me. Didn't I warn you?" Propping herself up against the headboard, she said, "Is that *my* breakfast? I'm starved."

"Yeah. I hope you like bacon and eggs."

"I love bacon and eggs."

He nodded and set the tray across her lap.

"Where's Ryan this morning?"

"He had to work today. He'll be home later this evening."

"You didn't have to go to the emergency room?"

"No. I had a couple of days off. It worked out well with your discharge. This way, one of us is here with you."

"Thanks for getting me out of there so quickly. I know it wasn't easy."

"It helps knowing people, and because you were coming home with me and Ryan, Doctor Clark didn't have a problem discharging you."

"How long do I have to wear this thing?" she asked, tapping on the hard cast on her leg.

"Six weeks at least, sometimes longer."

"You're kidding."

"Nope. Broken bones take a long time to heal, especially femurs. You won't be able to put any weight on the leg for a bit."

She frowned and picked up the cup from the tray, attempting to hide the concern slicing through her.

"What's wrong?" he asked, sitting down in a chair he pulled to the side of the bed.

"Nothing."

"I may not know you very well, but you can't keep the emotions running through you out of your eyes. They are very expressive."

"Thanks. I think."

A warm chuckle left his lips. “You’re welcome. Now quit stalling.”

“I can’t stay here forever, Brett. I have to go back home and face my husband.”

“You don’t have to go anywhere for now, Whitney. Our hospitality is open to you for however long you need it. No strings attached.”

No strings. What I wouldn’t give to have a no-expectations type of relationship with a man. I should have listened to my head with Eric and not my heart. I wouldn’t be in this predicament if I had.

“Do you want to tell me about Eric?”

Sticking a forkful of egg in her mouth, she contemplated how much to tell the disturbing to her mind and heart, man sitting next to her. Having Brett and Ryan wanting to take care of her made her feel all warm and fuzzy, but she also had to deal with this unmistakable attraction she felt for both of them.

Do I want him to know the whole sordid tale? It might be good to talk about it.

“Eric and I had been having problems over the last year. I’ve wasn’t sure until recently, but I suspected he’d been having an affair. He’s an attorney in my father’s law firm, and I thought it was one of the women in the office, but I’m not sure now. Eric told me he had to kill me so he could be with Mallory. She’s my best friend.”

“Damn.”

“Yeah. Anyway, I found some text messages on his cell. When I confronted him, he denied it, of course. He suggested we come up here for a few days to try to work things out. We’d always enjoyed rock climbing and hiking, so we went out into the canyon. We’d hiked a little ways down the trail, and I stopped to look over a ledge. The next thing I knew, I was falling headfirst down the embankment.”

Brett picked up her hand and laid it between his warm palms. “Ryan and I won’t let anything happen to you. You’re safe here.”

She smiled. "I know. You two have been my saviors. Too bad I couldn't have met one of you before I married, Eric."

His gaze dropped to their hands. "What are you going to do about him?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are you going to file for divorce?"

Capturing her lip between her teeth, she contemplated his question. *Divorce? When I married Eric, I never thought we'd get to this point.*

"Whit?"

Their gaze met, and she sucked in a ragged breath. Both Brett and Ryan made her feel safe, protected and cared about. If she had been honest with herself over the last year, she would have realized she hadn't been in love with Eric for a long time.

"Yeah."

"Good."

"Why?"

A smile spread across his face, and a shiver rolled down her back.

"You're an amazing, beautiful woman, and I wouldn't mind getting to know you better."

What about Ryan? I could never choose between them.

Tugging her hand out of his grasp, she said, "That wouldn't be fair to Ryan."

"Let me tell you something about me and Ryan." He sat back against the chair. "We are first cousins and very close, which is why he lives here with me. I would never allow any of my other family to do that. He's more like a brother than a cousin. We grew up together since our mothers are twins."

"I understand."

"No, you don't. Let me finish."

"All right."

"There have been times over the years that we have shared a woman or two."

“You mean you went out with the same girl?”

“No, I mean shared.”

Rolling around the information in her mind, she gasped when it finally dawned on her what he meant. “You slept with the same woman?”

“Yes. Together, Whitney. At the same time.”

Her mouth opened and closed like a guppy.

He smiled and put his finger under her chin.

“But...”

“We both want you, if that isn’t obvious.”

Oh my God! Two men at once?

“I’m not saying that’s what we expect from you. When it happened before, it wasn’t necessarily planned. The women were open to a ménage.”

“Ménage?”

“Two men and one woman or two women and one guy. Either can be considered by that term. If you aren’t open to the thought, it’s okay. If you don’t want either of us, that’s okay, too. We won’t push you into anything, especially since you are still a married woman, although we’ve been with one or two of those, too.”

“Good God, Brett! How many women have you and Ryan shared?”

“Five total.”

Her heart hammered at the suggestion. Could she? The whole thing intrigued her. “How does that work? I mean with body parts and all?”

Scooting his chair closer, he trailed a finger down her arm.

“Usually one guy in your pussy.”

Holy shit! Wetness coated her underwear, and she bit down on her lip to keep from moaning out loud.

“And one in your mouth.” He slipped his finger over her lip. “Or in your ass.”

Goose bumps puckered her skin.

“Intrigued?”

Her breath hitched. “I won’t sleep with you or anyone while I’m still married, Brett, no matter how exciting your suggestion sounds.”

The fingers disappeared. “You wouldn’t be the woman I thought you were if you did.”

* * * *

Eric sat in his rental car outside the imposing house overlooking the hillside. He parked a half block away from the front gate and watched. No one had come or gone all day, and he’d begun to question whether Whitney was even there until he spotted her on the patio with the binoculars he kept on the seat next to him.

Bitch. Why couldn’t she have just died like I’d planned? She always did have a way of ruining everything.

A black pick-up truck pulled up to the gate, and the wrought iron swung in, allowing it to proceed inside before closing again.

From what he’d been able to find out, the house belonged to one Doctor Brett Novak, who was Ryan O’Rourke’s cousin. Eric didn’t know exactly how he was going to get to Whitney, but at least he knew she was there. A dark-haired man carried her outside and put her in the chair, before sitting down next to her. He’d spotted her sitting with her leg propped up on the chair across from her. Eric ground his teeth together when she smiled at the guy.

Picking up the binoculars again, he brought them to his eyes and looked at the concrete area where Whitney still sat, until the man in the truck stepped out there as well.

The second guy bent down and kissed her on the cheek.

“Cheating bitch. She’s probably sleeping with one or both of them.”

His groin tightened, thinking about her tight little mouth going down on his cock while the other one watched. She always did have a talented mouth. Too bad her cunt left something to be desired. A nice

tight ass always had been his preference, and he didn't care if it belonged to another man or a woman. Whitney never let him even get close to her ass, much less let him fuck her until he split her in half. On the other hand, Maria and Mallory didn't have the same aversion to being fucked there.

I need to find me some bitch and get laid. I'm horny as hell now. I'll take care of Whitney later. At least I know where she is, and I doubt she'll be going anywhere for a while with a broken leg.

Dropping the binoculars on the seat, he started the car and pulled out, heading back toward town. The hotel he and Whitney stayed would be off-limits now. He had to be careful. The hospital thought he'd come back to retrieve his wife. The hotel knew he'd checked out without her and taken her belongings with him. It had been imperative to keep the police from going through her things when they found her body.

A maniacal smile lifted the corners of his mouth when he thought about her falling down that canyon trail. She'd cried to him about her pain and for him to help her. He'd chuckled at first, but a moment later, it had turned into a full-blown evil laugh. She'd pay for not dying out there like he'd planned.

I know. I'll tie her up out in the middle of the desert and let her die slowly from thirst. But first I'm going to fuck her ass until I can't move anymore, then I'll leave her. She'll die knowing I took what I wanted and left her there alone. No one will ever find her until she's nothing more than a dried up corpse.

* * * *

"Whitney?"

"Out here," she called when she heard Ryan's voice. She'd been in their home for two weeks, and they had already established somewhat of a routine. Brett and Ryan kept their days opposite so one of them was home with her all the time. Today was the first day both

of them had been gone, and she loved having the house to herself for a change. Now, she could get around a bit on the cast and could at least take a nice sponge bath. *What I wouldn't give for a long, hot shower! I bet I'd smell a lot better.* She lifted her arm and sniffed.

"Hey." Ryan leaned down and kissed her on the cheek.

"Hi. How was work?"

Grabbing the patio chair across from her, he straddled it with his lean, hard-muscled thighs, and she stifled a sigh.

"Long and grueling, especially knowing you were here alone."

"I'm a big girl, Ryan. I did just fine before I met you."

"So, what did you do all day, princess?"

She cocked an eyebrow at his title for her. *That's a new one.*

"I watched television, made some lunch, came out here, and sat in the sun for a while, and listened to some of the CDs in Brett's cabinet."

"Uh-oh."

"What?"

"You touched Brett's CDs."

"Did I do something wrong? He said to help myself to whatever."

"I'm kidding, Whitney. Relax."

"Ass-wipe."

He flashed a wide grin, which sent shivers down her arms.

"What are we having for dinner?" she asked.

"What are you making?"

"Me?"

"You don't know how to cook?"

She had to think about that one. Actually, she liked to putter around the kitchen, but she didn't think she had that much freedom in Brett's home. "Yes, I can cook. In fact, I love to cook."

"Then what's stopping you?"

"It's not my house."

"Brett wouldn't mind."

"As meticulous as he is? You're kidding again, right?"

“No. I’ll even take you shopping since I’m home early, if you’d like.”

“Really?”

“Yep.” He stood and held out his hand. “Come on, let’s go.”

Ryan swept her up in his arms, and even though she grumbled that she could walk, really all she wanted to do was cuddle up next to his warm skin and press her nose to his neck. The urge to run her tongue along the tanned column almost overcame her until he set her down in the living room.

He didn’t drop his arms from around her waist, and they stood chest to breast for what seemed like hours, both breathing the same crackling air surrounding them. She’d known he’d wanted her from the first time he kissed her. But this was the first time he’d shown any inclination to kiss her again.

“Ryan,” she whispered, tipping her chin up.

His head dipped toward her, and she could almost feel his lips when the phone rang.

He growled low in his throat, pressing his forehead against hers for a second before he dropped his hands and moved toward the table.

“Hello?”

Whitney leaned against the arm of the couch, listening to the one-sided conversation. From what she could hear, she gathered it was someone for Brett.

“No, he’s not here.”

She cocked her eyebrow with a little tip of her lips into a smile.

“Sorry, Pam. He won’t be home until later. He’s at work.”

Ryan rolled his eyes, and Whitney fought the giggle bubbling in her throat.

After a few moments, he finally hung up and moved toward her. She tipped her head back and looked up when he stopped in front of her, spread her legs with his knee, and gave her a wicked grin.

“What’s the smile for?”

“Mmm...nothin’. I’m disappointed we were interrupted by the phone.”

“Do you want to kiss me?”

“Oh, I want to do a helluva lot more than kiss you, princess.”

“Maybe I want that too.”

“Do you?”

Dropping her gaze from his, she shrugged. She wouldn’t, couldn’t do anything about her attraction to the two hunky men who currently lived with her—not until Eric was no longer her husband.

“Let’s get some groceries. I want to see what kind of culinary delight you can whip up,” he said, grabbing his car keys. One arm snaked around her waist to help her out to his car.

“Not taking the Harley?” The motorcycle had fascinated her from the first time she saw it, but to think of Ryan straddling the heavy bike with his powerful thighs made her almost cream her panties.

A warm chuckle left his mouth, and she had to grin. “I’ll take you for a ride when that cast comes off. The thought of you behind me, cradling me with those luscious legs, makes me harder than marble.”

Her gaze wandered slowly down his muscular form, loving every dip, plane, and rock-hard surface she encountered.

“For now, we take the car.”

“Damn,” she murmured.

A roar of laughter left his lips, and she felt heat rush up her neck in embarrassment.

Unfortunately for me, I’m sure he knows exactly what he does to me. Brett, too.

Once they were done shopping, they returned to house, and she set about making the best meal she knew how to make. *It’s the least I can do for them since they’ve been so good to me.*

“What’cha makin’?”

“I’m not telling. You’ll find out when it’s done and on the table.”

“Tease.”

“Brat.”

She loved sparring with Ryan, but she wasn't going to give in and tell him what dinner consisted of. He'd have to wait.

"What smells so good?" Brett asked, walking in from the garage and setting his duffle bag on the granite countertop.

"Whitney's cooking."

"You cook?"

With a heavy exhale, she blew the hair off her forehead in a sigh. "Of course I cook. Why is that so hard to believe?"

"It's not, sweetheart. You've never mentioned it before. That's all," Brett said, and then lightly brushed her cheek with his lips.

He reached over to lift the cover off the pot on the stove, but she wacked his hand with the wooden spoon she held.

"Ouch!"

"No peeking."

Ryan grinned from where he leaned against the island.

"You could have warned me," Brett grumbled, rubbing his knuckles as he glanced at Ryan.

"Why? She's already done that to me. Twice."

"You are both incorrigible. Now. Out of my kitchen until I call you."

"Yes, ma'am," Ryan answered, but quickly kissed her on the lips as he passed by.

Brett continued to stand there with his arms crossed over his chest, a wicked twinkle in his eyes and a twitch on his lips as he fought a smile.

"Your kitchen?"

She blushed and dropped her gaze, but peeked at him through her lashes. "Well, for tonight it is."

He sauntered toward her with a tempting roll of his hips and stopped in front of her. The scrub shirt stretched across his chest did nothing to hide the muscles beneath, and her mouth watered at the thought of running her tongue across it.

“I’ll leave you to your culinary experimentations, but I want something first.”

“What would that be?” she whispered, already wanting to lean in and press her mouth against his.

“To taste.”

“Taste?”

“Uh-huh.”

Before she knew what he was about, he captured her mouth in a desperate kiss, sliding his tongue along the crease of her lips until she opened them for him. He groaned softly when she tentatively slid her tongue along his.

When he finally pulled away, he murmured, “Mmm...I can’t wait to have more.”

Whitney didn’t know whether he meant the food or her when his words penetrated her passion-fogged brain.

Giving her a wink, he turned around and left the kitchen while she struggled to bring her racing heart back under control and finish dinner.

Thirty minutes later, the three of them sat around the dining room table, enjoying the pasta and chicken parmesan she’d prepared.

“This is fabulous, Whit,” Brett said, cutting another piece of the juicy white meat and sticking it inside his mouth with a satisfied groan.

“Thanks.”

Ryan sipped his wine and watched her over the rim of his glass, his eyes skimming over her face in a caress. She shifted on the chair as her belly quivered with need.

He can send my thoughts between the sheets with nothing more than a look. She glanced at Brett and remembered his kiss in the kitchen. *Shit! Both of them make me wet and needy.*

“What shall we do after dinner?” Brett asked as a wicked grin played on his lips.

“How about a movie?”

“Anything in particular you want to see?” Ryan added.

“No, not really.”

“Action, romance, or slasher? I know Brett has some of each in that collection.” He nodded toward the massive amount of DVDs against the wall. “If he doesn’t have it, I probably do upstairs.”

“Leave it to a man that two out of three choices will be guy flicks.”

“What?” Ryan asked with an innocent look.

She rolled her eyes and smiled. “Nothing, Ryan.”

“I could show you my collection.” Ryan waggled his eyebrows suggestively, and she had to wonder at his provocative look.

“I haven’t seen your place yet.”

“Kind of hard to do with the cast, princess. The stairs would be a bit difficult to maneuver, but I could carry you up there.”

I love it when he holds me against his chest, but... “Alone with you isn’t a good idea. Alone with either of you is a really bad idea.”

“Mmm...Why?”

“You’re both at least one of the seven deadly sins in a finely wrapped package. A temptation I don’t need right now. I’m still married, remember?”

“Unfortunately, and yes, I do remember.” He glanced at Brett. “I’m sure Brett realizes that, too.”

“Definitely,” Brett murmured as his gaze slid from her face to her breasts, making her nipples pucker against her shirt. She clamped her teeth together, forcing the moan in her throat back down. Resisting the urge to rub the tight nubs to calm them, she shifted in the chair. *Damn! How in the hell am I going to fight this attraction for several more weeks?*

Chapter Four

The following Saturday all three of them were in Brett's car, zipping along the winding roads north of Flagstaff. "Where are we going?" Whitney asked. They'd given nothing away when Ryan had handed her a sexy black, strapless dress and told her to get dressed. It didn't surprise her that it fit perfectly, molding to her curves like a second skin. He'd handed her a pair of low heel dress shoes to go with it, even though she could only wear one with the cast. After she'd become their guest, they'd forked out a small fortune for clothes since she didn't have any. A quick check of the hotel where she and Eric had rented a room revealed he'd taken her suitcases with him when he'd disappeared.

"You'll see, princess," Ryan said with a secretive smile curving his tempting lips. Warm fingers brushed her bare shoulder, sending shivers down her back.

"I'm not one for surprises, you know. By the way, who picked out this dress?"

"Me," Ryan replied.

"How did you know what size to buy? I'm pretty sure I didn't tell you dress sizes when you bought clothes a couple of weeks ago."

"I'm a pretty good judge of a woman's curves." Ryan chuckled softly.

"I bet," she grumbled.

A quick glance from Brett had her nipples puckering. The wicked grin he wore got bigger, and his eyes turned even darker brown.

Damn it!

She looked out the front windshield again and watched the pine trees whiz by the car windows while she shifted uncomfortably on the seat.

A sign came into focus, and she glanced quickly at Brett and then Ryan.

“We’re going to the canyon?” Apprehension rolled down her back. The last time she’d gone there, Eric had tried to kill her.

“Relax, Whit. Nothing will happen. You can trust us,” Brett answered.

“I know,” she whispered, gripping her fingers together in her lap until her knuckles turned white.

He reached over and grasped them in his hand. “We only wanted to take you some place special for dinner. El Tovar is one of the best restaurants around. The view of the canyon when the sun goes down is spectacular, but if you’re uncomfortable, we can go somewhere else.”

“No. It’s fine. I’m being silly.”

Brett pulled the car over to the side of the road and slipped it into park.

“You’re scared, sweetheart. It’s completely understandable,” Brett murmured.

“I could kill Eric for doing this to you, Whit,” Ryan grumbled and gripped her free hand.

Exhaling forcibly, she replied, “I’m not going to let him ruin this for me. I’ll be fine. I know you two will take care of me and I’ve never seen the canyon when the sun is setting. Let’s go.”

“Are you sure?” Brett asked.

“Yes.”

“Okay then.”

Once he pulled back out onto the highway, she forced herself to relax against the seat. *I can trust Brett and Ryan. They would never do anything to hurt me.*

When Brett parked the car and came around to help her out, she had to giggle as she stood between them. The sight of her hobbling along toward the hotel between them, with a hand in the crook of each arm, must have been hilarious. The looks she got as they made their way inside had her chuckling and the two gorgeous men beside her smiling like Cheshire cats.

“Can I help you?” the maître d’ asked when they approached the dark wood podium. The man was dressed in a tuxedo, and Whitney had to silently thank Ryan for getting her the sexy dress. It fit in perfectly with the dark suits the two of them wore and the attire the other patrons sported.

“Yes, sir,” Brett replied. “Reservations for Novak.”

The man skimmed his finger down the list. “Of course, sir.” He turned and retrieved three menus. “Right this way.”

Brett led the way behind the host while Ryan held onto her hand and helped her maneuver between the tables. The man directed them to a beautiful table by the window overlooking the rim of the canyon and pulled out her chair.

“Wow,” she whispered, peering out the glass. The sun reflected off the rocks in the distance in bright orange, yellow, and deep red in different layers. The pale blue of the sky above was a stark contrast to the rich colors as the shadows shifted and slowly encompassed the canyon with the coming night.

“Beautiful,” Ryan murmured next to her ear.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” she replied, finally turning her attention back to the two men with her.

“That’s why we wanted to bring you here,” Brett answered.

“I’m glad you did.”

She picked up the menu and opened it to study the selections. With a good variety of food to choose from, she bit her lip, trying to decide what to eat.

“My name is Gregory, and I’ll be your waiter this evening. We have wonderful appetizers available in the front of your menu, and

might I recommend the Deviled Crab Cakes with Sonoran Remoulade?"

"Sounds yummy," she answered.

"All right," Brett replied. "One order of the appetizer with our drinks, please."

"Wonderful. What might I start you off with this evening?"

Brett ordered coffee, Ryan ordered a beer, and she decided on water. The crisp, white linen tablecloth beneath their plates, impressive silverware, and crystal goblets were a stark contrast to the dark wood of the interior of the restaurant. Muted lights over their heads kept the atmosphere cozy and quaint but still gave off enough light so she could see Brett and Ryan clearly and read the heat in their gazes.

Clearing her throat, she sipped her water and tried to focus on the menu in front of her. "What's good?"

"Pretty much everything," Brett replied.

"Been here a few times?" she asked, not liking the feelings creeping into her conscious thought.

"A few, yes," Brett answered.

Ryan nudged her ear with his nose. "What's the matter, Whit? Jealous?"

"No." She swallowed hard. Her toes curled when his warm breath flittered over the skin of her neck.

"You're a liar, too, but that's okay. I kind of like you being jealous of me and Brett with someone else." With a chuckle, he sat back in his chair and draped his arm across the back of hers.

The waiter returned and took their order, disappearing shortly afterwards as conversations from the other patrons floated around her.

"Once we are finished eating, we can go outside near the edge and watch the rest of the sunset," Brett said. "The canyon is breathtaking at night. Shadows moving around you, the vast expanse of the whole thing, the rustle of the pines over your head, the sounds of the animals while they scurry about finding their shelter for the night—it's kind of eerie actually. I think you'll like it."

Shivers rolled down her arms, puckering her skin with goose bumps. The thought of being held by one of these two made her weak with need. Eric wasn't the romantic kind, never had been. His idea of romance encompassed watching television together. Now that she had something to compare it to, she definitely realized the two of them had been having problems for a long time. She could see clearly the way he'd held himself back from her, not wanting to cuddle, hold hands, touch, or kiss unless he wanted sex. *Does he do those things with Mallory?*

"What are you thinking about, Whit?" Ryan asked, stroking her arm with his fingers.

"Eric."

"Why?"

"I realize now how bad things were for so long, and I wish I'd seen it earlier."

"It's over now. Don't fret your pretty little head about it. He'll get his when this is all said and done," Brett replied, stroking her hand across the table.

Their meal arrived, and her mouth watered at the succulent aroma filling her nose. Ordering the Black Angus beef tenderloin with shrimp, Madeira sauce, and duchess potatoes, she couldn't wait to taste the perfectly flame-broiled meat as it melted in her mouth.

"Looks good," Ryan said, eyeing her meal.

"Doesn't it though? I love red meat."

"Clogs your arteries," Brett interjected.

She rolled her eyes before she stuck a small piece in her mouth and sighed. "Such a doctor." Eying his chicken cordon bleu and then cocking an eyebrow at his food, she said, "I'm sure that's on your low fat diet there, Doctor Novak."

Flashing a devastating smile, he said, "We all have to indulge sometimes."

Indulge. A little indulgence never hurt anyone.

“Mmm...so true,” she murmured while she shifted in the chair. Her pussy throbbed at the thought of indulging in the two yummy men with her.

Their conversation turned to lighter subjects while they ate. Brett ordered crumble-top apple pie with ice cream for dessert and fed several bites to her across the table with a twinkle in his eyes.

Staying away from these two is getting increasingly difficult. I need to get this damned divorce filed.

“Finished, princess?” Ryan asked, stacking his plate on the edge of the table and then reaching for hers.

“Yes.”

They slipped cash into the leather pouch to pay for their dinner, and Ryan helped her to her feet.

Brett wrapped an arm around her waist and tugged her next to him. “My turn to get close.”

“You two.”

“What?” he whispered, nuzzling her ear with his nose.

“Never mind, Brett.”

The cool air of the coming night hit her face, and she shivered.

“Cold?” Brett asked.

“A little.”

He shrugged out of his suit jacket and wrapped it around her shoulders. “Better?”

“Yeah, but now you’ll be cold.”

“I’m fine. It’s not that cool. Besides, if I get cold, I’ll steal Ryan’s jacket.”

“Wait a damned minute,” Ryan grumbled.

She laughed and glanced over her shoulder as a frown settled on his mouth. Rolling her eyes and shaking her head, she moved closer to him, slipped her arms inside his jacket and around his waist, and stuck her nose near his neck.

“Mmm...nice,” she whispered, inhaling his cologne.

“I like this,” he murmured against her hair.

“Me, too.”

“Hey!”

Stepping back, she said, “Okay. It’s obviously not going to work like this so let’s try something.” She turned and headed toward the wall, sat down, and motioned for them to come closer. “Brett, you sit on my left. Ryan, you sit on my right.”

Straddling the stone, Brett’s left thigh rode along hers and Ryan’s right one rode against her right. They surrounded her with their warmth as each wrapped an arm around her waist.

“This is fantastic,” she said, leaning back a little against the arms behind her as the colors of the setting sun played on the rocks beyond.

Several people nearby gave them odd looks, especially when Ryan started to nibble on her right earlobe and Brett brushed his lips against her neck on the left.

“Guys?”

Both lifted their heads.

“We’re getting some funny looks.”

“Does it bother you, Whit?” Ryan asked.

“A little.”

“We can always take this home,” Brett suggested.

She frowned and shook her head slightly. “I can’t do that.”

“I know, sweetheart. Soon though, huh?” Brett’s voice near her ear sent shivers down her back while Ryan continued to nip at her other ear.

With her lip captured between her teeth, she sucked in a ragged breath and nodded.

* * * *

The sun beat down on Whitney’s face, warming her skin while she sat on the back patio, waiting for her roommates to come home. It had been six weeks since Eric had tried to kill her, and six weeks since she’d come to live with Brett and Ryan, and she was horny as

hell. The two of them took it upon themselves to keep her on high idle. With them constantly stroking her arm, kissing her shoulder, brushing their lips against hers before they went off to their own rooms for the night, she was about to go stir crazy with all the sexual tension. The attraction between the three of them had become a plausible, living thing as they shared a household.

But today, she had reason to celebrate. The cast had come off and her divorce was final, all in the same day.

The day Brett and Ryan had brought a visitor home after their dinner at the canyon slipped across her mind.

One very prominent divorce attorney sat across from her, jotting notes on his legal pad.

"I don't understand why you can't file this when you get home, Mrs. Scott."

"Don't call me that."

"I'm sorry. What would you prefer to be called? That is your married name, is it not?"

"Yes, Mr. Thompson, it is, but when this divorce is final, I want my maiden name back. Right now, I want nothing more to do with my soon-to-be ex-husband."

His gaze shifted to the paperwork in his hands. "Eric Scott? The attorney?"

"That's right." Her eyes narrowed into slits. "Is that a problem?"

"No. I can see why you want to change your name to what it was if he's your husband. He's a dick."

A very un-ladylike snort left her mouth. "You could say that."

"Why not let your father handle this?"

"Because I don't want my father involved. Besides, he's not a divorce lawyer. He's a criminal prosecuting attorney."

"And a very good one."

"Thank you. I'll tell him you said so after this is all over."

"All right, Ms. Morris." The paperwork was laid aside, and he crossed his arms over his chest as *he* glanced at Ryan and Brett

standing next to her chair. "I'll file these, but if I file in California, there's a six-month waiting period."

"That's not acceptable," she said. "Isn't there something else we can do?"

"I can file in Nevada, but you don't meet the residency requirements, I don't believe."

"What requirements?"

"You would have to be a resident of the state for the last six weeks."

"My father owns a condo in Vegas, will that do?"

Mr. Thompson rubbed his chin. "Maybe. You need someone to sign an affidavit that you've been a resident for the time period requirement. Can you do that?"

She chewed her lip for a moment while she tried to think of someone. Tipping her head to the side, her lips curved into a small smile when she met the attorney's gaze again. "Not a problem. I'm sure I can find someone. Eric isn't the only one who knows people."

"We could have your divorced in three days if you can get the affidavit and we can locate him to sign the paperwork. If he contests, it will take a bit longer."

"Consider it done," Brett added.

Neither of the two men had said a word until now.

"Brett?"

"My mother lives outside of Vegas. She'll do it."

It had still taken weeks to get the divorce finalized. They hadn't been able to find Eric. The asshole had disappeared. She knew she could have left Flagstaff weeks ago and gone home, but she didn't want to.

"This is ridiculous," she said out loud as her thoughts returned to the present.

Brett and Ryan respected her decision not to cheat on her husband no matter whether he'd cheated first, but now she wanted—

She wasn't exactly sure what she wanted. *Brett or Ryan. Both?*

“Talking to yourself again, princess?” Ryan asked when he stepped through the sliding glass doors.

“You’re home!”

He bent down and kissed her cheek. The urge to turn her face and capture his lips with hers almost drove her crazy.

“Miss me?”

“Would you think terribly of me if I said yes?”

A wide grin spread across his mouth, showing off his pearly white teeth. “Not in the least. I’m glad you missed me.”

Okay. He’s a bit too cocky.

“It’s only because both you and Brett were gone today and I was alone in this big house by myself.”

His bottom lip stuck out like a pouting child. “Is that all?”

Laughter bubbled from her lips. “All right, no. I kind of like having you around.”

“That’s better.”

Before she knew what he was doing, he bent down again and brushed his lips against hers. *Oh yeah. That’s exactly what I want and need.*

“We need to celebrate tonight, so when Brett gets home, we’re going out.”

“Out?”

“Yep. Your divorce finalized today, right?”

“Yes.” She stuck her leg out and wiggled her toes. “And the cast is off.”

“Then you’re a free woman, Whitney Morris.”

“Mmm... a free woman to do as I please.” *Including going to bed with whomever I want. Intriguing thought.*

* * * *

Brad Paisley’s voice met her ears when they pushed through the entrance of the biggest cowboy bar in Flagstaff. She’d come to realize

over her time with the cousins that their tastes in music varied, but only from one end of the country genre to the other. They did listen to classic rock sometimes, but she considered most of that to be country anyway.

“Get us a table, Brett. We’ll be right back,” Ryan said, grabbing her hand and tugging her toward the dance floor.

A giggle left her lips. “What are you doing?”

“We’re gonna two-step, princess.”

“Ever heard of asking?”

He stopped and frowned. “You don’t want to dance with me?”

“I didn’t say that, Ryan. I just didn’t hear you ask. That’s all. A woman likes to be *asked* to dance.”

“Fine.” He quickly changed directions, found an empty chair, pushed her down into it and held out his hand. “Will you dance with me, Whit?”

Tapping her finger against her lips, she gave him a flirtatious glance and said, “I don’t know. I mean I’m here with these two absolutely gorgeous guys, and I don’t think...” A squeak burst from her lips when he leaned over her and tipped the chair back onto two legs with his hand.

“Gorgeous, huh?” he whispered. His lips hovered so close, all she had to do was lean a miniscule little bit toward him and she could feel the tempting fullness of his.

“Well, yes,” she murmured. “And they both seem to be very possessive with me. I haven’t been able to have hardly any *fun* in several weeks.”

One hand skimmed down her arm, raising goose bumps along the surface in its wake. “Oh princess, we’re going to have fun all right.”

“Promise?”

“Dance with me and we’ll get this party started.”

“How could I possibly refuse such a gallant request?”

Picking up her hand, he tugged her out of the chair and slipped his arm around her waist. “Good. I didn’t want to have to throw you over

my shoulder and drag you out there.” A moment later, they started scooting across the floor. She noticed the other dancers weren’t dancing quite as close, so she tried to wiggle herself a little farther from him, but he wasn’t about to let her go.

“Uh-uh. I want to hold you,” he whispered in her ear as he plastered her against his chest. His warm palm flattened against the small of her back, holding her close.

“Ryan.”

Warm breath ruffled the air near her ear and a shiver rolled down her back.

“Mmm?”

“Maybe you shouldn’t hold me so close.”

“Why?”

“We’re getting some strange looks.”

“I don’t care. Do you?”

“I wouldn’t except that a lot of the looks are from other women, shooting daggers at me.”

“They’re jealous. You’re the prettiest woman in here.”

“It’s probably more like they are exes of yours and Brett’s. I’ll probably get jumped if I go to the bathroom alone.”

“Then I’ll go with you and protect you.”

“You will not!”

The song changed, but Ryan didn’t let her go, only continued to sway to the music, never caring that the song playing had a fast beat.

“Mind if I cut in?” Brett asked, stepping up behind Ryan.

“Of course I mind, but since she’s here with both of us, I guess I’ll let you dance with her, too.”

“Aren’t you the benevolent one there, Ryan?”

“Don’t push your luck, Brett, or I’ll take her home and leave you here.”

“You two stop it.” She rolled her eyes and stepped into Brett’s embrace, while his warm hands settled on her hips. “I swear, if I

didn't know you two like to share, I'd swear I'm being pulled in different directions like a bone."

"Sharing is one thing, sweetheart, but we would both like some alone time with you, especially now that you are a free woman," Brett said, looking deep into her eyes.

"Interesting thought."

"Neither of us will push you, Whitney. Whether you want me or Ryan or both, it will be your choice."

"I know," she whispered. His lips brushed against her cheek before he pulled her closer.

They spent the rest of the night dancing, drinking, and laughing. She didn't think she'd had so much fun in one night in her life, but it was time to go home, and she shivered in anticipation. Sitting between the two of them in the cab of Ryan's truck, her nerves were wound tight. Earlier in the night, she'd come to the conclusion that she wanted both men at the same time. Unfortunately, she wasn't quite sure how to make it happen. Yes, she knew sharing wasn't an issue with them, but never having been with two men at once, she didn't know how to proceed.

Once they reached the house, she dropped her purse on the countertop and rubbed her arms to calm the goose bumps flittering across her skin. *Damn. I don't think I've been this excited in a long time.*

"I had a lot of fun tonight, guys."

"I did too, Whit, but I'm going to bid you goodnight," Brett said and then brushed his lips against hers quickly. "I'll see you in the morning."

What the fuck?

"Me too, princess. It was fun. See you tomorrow," Ryan added and kissed her too.

Moments later, she stood alone in the dark living room listening to their respective doors close.

She shook her head and grumbled under her breath as she headed for her bedroom. Once her clothes were piled on the chair by the window, she slid beneath the cool sheets and lay on her back watching the moonlight bounce off the ceiling. After they'd spent the last several hours celebrating her divorce with dancing and alcohol, she felt on fire.

Her pussy throbbed painfully with need. When she closed her eyes, her imagination went wild with visions of Ryan's hazel eyes sparkling with lust and Brett's brown ones raking over her with appreciation. *This is fucking crazy!*

Tossing her arm across her eyes, she groaned. *I don't even have my vibrator to take care of my raging libido.* She wiggled in the bed, trying to find a comfortable position, but nothing seemed to be working. Kissing both of them goodnight had made matters worse. Now she was horny *and* unsatisfied.

A light tap sounded at the door, and she struggled into a sitting position against the headboard.

"Come in."

One sliver of light splayed across the carpet from the hall beyond.

"Having trouble going to sleep?" Brett stepped into the room and closed the door behind him.

"Yeah. How'd you guess?"

"I can hear the bed creaking with every move you make."

She captured her bottom lip between her teeth. The scent of soap and man tickled her senses, lighting the fire in her blood further. The wet curl against his neck made her fingers itch to touch. *Shit! This is all I needed.*

"Sorry. I didn't mean to keep you up."

A rakish smile graced his full lips.

"You didn't. Anything I can do to help?"

You bet there is. Eat me, fuck me... "Mmm..." Her shoulders lifted in a shrug.

"Is your leg hurting?"

“No.”

“Then what seems to be the trouble?” Warm fingers brushed against her arm, sending goose bumps along her flesh, and she had to fight the urge to shiver under his touch. He scooted closer. “You can tell me.” The devilish smile appeared again. “I’m a doctor.”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with what a doctor can take care of.”

“Really. How about a man?” Brown eyes twinkled in the moonlight filtering through the filmy curtains on the window, and she had a feeling he knew exactly what her problem entailed.

Nipples puckered into hard little nubs, drawing his attention to her chest.

“I’m horny as hell, Brett. You two did nothing to help matters tonight. You know that.”

A soft chuckle left his mouth, and his oh-so-kissable lips lifted in a smile.

“Sounds like a bit of a problem.” One finger trailed over her lips, across her cheek and then down her neck, rasping against her skin deliciously.

Shifting a little to her left and arching her back, she knew her behavior bordered on wanton, but she didn’t care. She wanted his hands on her.

“Tell me what you want, Whit,” he murmured.

“Touch me.”

“Where?”

“Everywhere.”

After he moved next to her on the bed, his fingers drifted across her puckered nipple, and she fought the moan on the tip of her tongue. His mouth brushed softly against hers taking the time to coax the response he wanted from her.

His lips were different than Ryan’s—fuller, firmer, but just as intoxicating. They drifted over her mouth, his tongue caressing her lips lightly. A moan surfaced on her lips only to be swallowed when

his tongue dove inside her mouth. Their tongues entwined, stroking each other, firing the desire in her blood to boiling temperatures. Fingers slipped down her flat belly, under the elastic of her underwear, through the curls between her thighs, and glanced across her clit. Her hips lifted, eliciting a chuckle from his lips as they drifted across her cheek. Within moments, he had her silky panties off her legs and tossed them across the room.

“God, you are incredibly hot.”

She grasped his wrist with a groan and forced his fingers into her pussy.

“So wet. Spread your thighs and let me make you come.”

With a whimper, she complied; opening herself to him and feeling his lips drift down her chest before he sucked her nipple inside his warm mouth.

“Oh,” she groaned.

His tongue rasped against the hard nub, almost making her scream. One finger toggled her clit several times while she squirmed against his touch.

“I want—”

His lips moved down her belly until she felt his breath against her lower abdomen. She whimpered and spread her legs farther apart.

“Brett... eat me, pleaaasssee.”

A scream bubbled in her throat when his tongue flicked against her clit.

“So sweet,” he whispered between licks.

Fingers lifted the hood protecting her most sensitive spot from his tongue, giving him the access he needed to send her over the edge with a swiftness she’d never experienced before.

Her back arched, and the scream she’d held in sprang from her lips, echoing off the walls of the room as sweet heat spread through her belly. Two fingers slipped inside her, stroking her as cream flooded from her pussy.

He continued to eat her until she ceased to tremble, her body coming down from one of the best orgasms she'd ever had. Warm breath flittered over her clit for a second before he kissed his way up her stomach. His lips closed around her nipple for a moment while he sucked and flicked it with his tongue before they settled back on her mouth. He kissed her deeply, his tongue stroking the inside of her mouth, letting her know he wanted her. When he lifted his head, their gazes met and a self-satisfied smile drifted over his lips.

"Better?"

"Yeah," she sighed.

"Good."

"Not as good as the whole thing, but it'll do in a pinch."

"Tease."

"Me? No." She frowned. "What about Ryan?"

"What about him?"

She shifted back against the headboard, pushing him so he no longer sat over the top of her. Confusion zipped through her. *I am attracted to both men in different ways, but I just let Brett eat me until I came so hard stars burst behind my eyelids.*

"You're confused."

"Yeah."

"Don't be."

"I don't understand. I want both of you, but I don't know how this is supposed to work." Grabbing the quilt from the side of the bed, she pulled it over her nakedness, a little uncomfortable now that the passion had ebbed.

What would it be like having both men focused on my needs?

"You're imaging what it would be like," he murmured. His hand moved over her breast. "My mouth here, sucking your nipple until you scream." Pushing the quilt back until she was exposed to his wandering touch, he rasped one finger across the sensitive surface. "And Ryan's mouth on your pussy, licking your clit until you come for us." One finger dipped between her legs, and he smiled as he

spread her juices against her thigh. "You're hot." He leaned toward her, his mouth stopping a mere hairsbreadth from hers. "How about Ryan's cock in your pussy, driving into your hot center and pounding into your flesh as you wrap your fantastic thighs around his hips?" He ran his tongue up her neck. "And my cock in your ass? Have you ever had a man in your ass, Whit?"

"N-no."

"Ah fuck, sweetheart. I bet you're so tight." His finger dipped toward her back hole, nudging against the entrance.

"Stop, Brett."

"Why, baby?"

"Because I'm so hot now I could burst into flames."

The wicked smile was back. "Do you want me? Do you want me *and* Ryan?"

"Yes."

"Mmm...soon."

She shivered and scooted closer to his touch. "Damn it!"

"What's wrong?"

"I want you inside me. Not your fingers, not your mouth on my clit, I want your cock buried to the hilt in my pussy."

"Good. I want you bad."

Her pussy creamed when he stood on the side of the bed and whipped the t-shirt over his head as a wicked smile graced his mouth. *Damn, he's a sight.* All bulging muscles, sharp angles, and enticing planes met her gaze, making her mouth water to taste every tempting inch. She moved closer and ran her tongue down his chest, following the dark line of hair until she hovered over his cock. Pre-cum glistened on the head, begging for her mouth. Opening wide, she took him inside and swirled her tongue around him.

His hips rocked with her movements, and he fisted her hair in his hands as he fucked her mouth. A tortured hiss left his lips when she cupped his balls in her hand and rolled them, before her finger traced the skin back toward his ass.

“God, Whit,” he groaned, pulling back until she released him with a pop.

A squeak from the small drawer next to the bed revealed a small stash of condoms.

“Anticipating?”

“Hopeful,” he murmured, as he held her gaze. White latex found a path over his erection impressive erection. Brown eyes twinkled when he put one knee on the bed and crawled toward her like a cat stalking its prey.

Hard muscles and crisp hair scraped against her puckered nipples and the insides of her thighs. The whimper that escaped her lips took her by surprise, but it obviously didn’t surprise Brett. He chuckled and captured it with his mouth when his tongue dove between her lips.

“Open for me.” The cool air of the room spreading across her engorged clit made her moan. “That’s it.”

The wide head of his cock bumped against her pussy. One small shift of his hips, and the tip parted her pussy lips.

If he wants me to beg, then beg I will.

“Brett, please,” she pleaded.

With a soft chuckle and then a hearty moan, he slipped all the way inside.

“God, you feel incredible,” he murmured, burying his face in her neck.

“Move. I need you.”

“I don’t want this to end.” His warm breath whispered over her skin, prickling it into goose bumps.

“Oh God, please.”

A moment later, he lifted his chest, tilted his pelvis and slammed into her. With hips rotating, he stroked in and out until they were both moaning loudly.

“Come for me, Whit. I want to feel you milk my cock, sweetheart.”

His words drove her over the edge as she lifted her hips to meet each thrust and each stroke of his hard length inside her. Her world tilted, and she screamed as cum slipped from her pussy and slid down between them.

Within a few moments, his cry of climax echoed in her ear, and she thought for sure he had rung every bit of energy she had.

“Sounds like you two had fun. Mind if I join you?”

Ryan stood at the door with his arms crossed over his broad, naked chest. “Ryan.” Heat flushed her cheeks, and she dropped her gaze to the bed as Brett unsheathed his cock from her pussy and rolled to her side.

“Don’t be embarrassed, princess.” When he reached her side, he tipped her face up with fingers under her chin. “I’m disappointed Brett got to love you first, but I’m sure he told you, we don’t have a problem sharing. I’m hard as a damned boulder watching him fuck you. Are you okay with both of us? We didn’t want to push you, but since here we are—”

“I think so.” She sat up and pulled the quilt up to her chin, sneaking a look at Brett, who lay gloriously naked next to her on the bed. Ryan climbed in on the other side.

Ryan took a piece of her hair between his fingers and rubbed it like he was fascinated by the texture.

Brett’s lips drifted over her bare shoulder.

“It’s okay if you want to think about this. I know, it’s kind of sudden and overwhelming,” Brett said, tucking her next to him. “Let us hold you while you sleep and we’ll go from there.”

Her gaze skimmed Ryan’s chest and down his six-pack abdomen to the cock straining against the front of his shorts.

“Don’t look at me like that, Whit.”

“Like what?”

His mouth stopped near hers. “Like you want to see how my cock tastes.”

“Maybe I do.” Did I just say that? Can I really suck Ryan while Brett watches? Hell, yeah!

A low growl rumbled from his chest, and he closed his eyes as he shivered. He lay back against the headboard, his muscular arms crossed behind his head, his hot gaze pinning her to her spot. “I’m all yours.”

She licked her lips and moved out of Brett’s embrace and dropped the blanket down around her waist. Her fingers skimmed Ryan’s chest, raking through the curly hair spread across the expanse of muscles.

“I love chest hair.”

A warm chuckle sounded behind her and she’d almost forgotten Brett still sat next to her. “Good thing both Ryan and I have a bit then, huh?”

“Mmm...yeah. Just right.” Letting her breasts skim over Ryan’s thighs, across his cock, and along his abs, she settled her lips over his right nipple and rasped her tongue over the tip. Brett made sure she knew he enjoyed watching her with Ryan as he slid his hand down her back and cupped her ass, dipping his finger between her thighs.

Rolling Ryan’s other nipple between her fingers while she tongued the right one, she smiled against his skin when she heard a tortured moan escape his mouth. She worked her way down his chest, licking and nipping at the soft skin. His hips surged toward her when she opened her mouth and took the head of his penis between her lips.

“Ah, God! Suck it, Whit.”

Brett dipped his fingers into her pussy, and she moaned around Ryan’s cock.

“That’s so hot,” Brett murmured, his lips brushing down her back, kissing every inch of skin he came into contact with while his fingers pumped in and out of her pussy. He pulled them out, and she whimpered at the loss. “On your back. I’m going to eat you until you come so hard you see stars.”

Ryan's cock slipped from between her lips as Brett forced her over on her back. Ryan scooted to the top of the bed and she braced her head against his thighs. This way, if she turned her head, she could suck him while Brett ate her pussy. Once he was back inside her mouth, she scraped her teeth along him, bringing a moan to his lips.

"Easy with the teeth, babe," Ryan whispered.

Brett licked her from vagina to clit and then toggled the hard nub with his tongue. Two fingers drove deep between her labia, stroking in and out bringing her to the brink of insanity within seconds.

She cupped Ryan's balls in her hands, rolling the sack and fingering the skin between it and his back hole as she groaned around his hard flesh. He pumped his hips in time with her sucking mouth.

"That's it. That's it. Oh yes," Ryan murmured. "I'm gonna come. Yes!"

As Ryan's hips surged, pushing his cock deep into her throat, she felt the first spurts of his hot cum shoot to the back. Her own world exploded on the quick flick of Brett's tongue, flooding his mouth with her cum. The next moment, Brett's mouth moved away, only to be replaced with his cock as he pushed it inside her pussy.

"You are so sweet. Your climax is lingering, making your pussy ripple around me. God, you feel like heaven."

"Fuck me, Brett. Hard, oh God, hard, please."

Ryan sucked her nipple between his lips, nipping with his teeth, while Brett's pelvis slammed against hers. She climaxed so fast she hardly had time to focus on the sensations having the two men together brought to her body.

With a low, deep growl, Brett climaxed, surging fully into her and holding his cock deep inside her for a moment. His arms trembled when he braced his hands on either side of her shoulders.

Each breath he took seemed torn from his chest, and his eyes were glazed when he stared down at her. "You're amazing."

She chuckled softly. “You two are pretty good yourselves. I would never have thought being with two men would feel like this.”

Ryan laughed along with her as he scooted down and tucked her close to his side. “Just wait, princess. We’re just getting started.”

“At this rate, you two will be the death of me,” she whispered with a smile as her eyes got heavy and drifted shut.

Chapter Five

A warm, hard body was pressed against Whitney's backside, and she smiled when she felt soft lips brush across her shoulder. A rock-hard erection rested between her ass cheeks, but the other side of the bed was empty.

"Are you awake?" Ryan asked as he nibbled her ear.

"Mmm...I think so," she whispered, rolling over to meet Ryan's twinkling hazel eyes.

"Good. I'm hungry."

"It smells like someone is making breakfast. I assume it's Brett since he's not in the bed with us and I'm kind of hungry myself." She moved to swing her legs over the side of the bed, only to be tugged back to Ryan's side.

"Not for food but if pussy is on the menu, I'm game."

A quick glance through her lashes, revealed a devilish smile on his lips. "Could be."

A low growl rumbled in his chest. "Having you suck me off was fantastic, but I want to feel your sweet heat surrounding me when I come inside you."

His fingers slipped between her thighs and glanced across her clit, making her suck in a ragged breath. *Damn, these two can get me on high alert quick.*

"Is that a yes?"

"Keep that up and you'll definitely convince me."

He lifted her leg over his, opening her to his seeking fingers as two of them slipped knuckle deep inside her and pumped in and out with a slow, torturous rhythm.

“God, Ryan.”

“Do you want my cock, Whit?”

“Oh, yes.” She rocked her hips with his movements. “Now, right now.”

He chuckled, removed his fingers and slipped into her from behind with a soft moan. “Oh my. You’re tight and oh so good.”

His palm rasped against her hard nipple, and she pushed her breast into his hand. His pace was slow and languorous, not at all hurried.

She whimpered, wanting him to move faster as she pushed back, but he didn’t speed up. One hand came around the front to slip over her clit and toggle it quickly.

“Please.”

“Tell me what you want. This is for you, too, babe, not just me. I want you to come along for the ride.”

Not like Eric. He only cared about himself, never me.

Her movements stopped at his words, and when she didn’t move, he stopped, too.

“What’s wrong? Am I just not getting it?”

Biting her lip, she wiggled until he slipped from her pussy. *Why am I even thinking of that ass? A tear streaked down her cheek. Unfortunately, he left me a child to remember him by, and it ruined anything I could ever hope to have with Brett and Ryan.*

“Uh-uh. Whit, talk to me.”

He pulled her back around and forced her face up with his fingers under her chin.

“Why are you crying? I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

Afraid to speak, she shook her head.

“Then what?”

“I can’t,” she whispered, burying her face against his chest.

“Shh. Don’t cry.” He held her tight, stroked her back and whispered words in her ear she could understand, but it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that Ryan and Brett wanted her, not because of

who her family was or how much money they had, but because she was just Whitney.

“What the hell did you do, Ryan?” Brett grumbled from the doorway.

“Nothing.”

Brett set the tray he’d been carrying on the dresser and crawled onto the bed with them. He took her hand and tugged her out of Ryan’s grasp and into his arms.

“It’s okay, sweetheart. He can be such a brute,” Brett said, his lips in her hair.

A watery chuckle left her lips, and she tipped her face up.

Brett brushed the tears from her cheeks and tucked her hair behind her ear.

“Now. Tell me what has you so upset.”

How can I explain? How can I tell them I don’t deserve this from them? No, this has to stay a secret. This is something I can’t share, even with them.

“It’s nothing.”

“It’s not nothing, Whitney, if you’re crying. Something has you upset.”

She moved out of Brett’s embrace, not wanting to touch either man while she tried to gather her thoughts.

“I need to get dressed.” Sliding toward the edge of the bed, she scooped up her clothes from the floor and slipped her tank top over her head.

Ryan shifted on the bed and grabbed his own clothing. The tinkle of his belt buckle sounded loud in the room as she fought the tears still clogging her throat.

Tucking her pants and underwear beneath her arm, she headed for the bathroom. Grumbling under her breath about men in general, she plopped herself down on the toilet, trying to think.

What the hell am I getting myself into? It would be too easy to fall for one or both of these two, but I can’t expect them to accept

everything about me. There are things they don't know and probably won't be able to get past. Getting involved with them will only hurt them in the end. She came to a decision while she sat in the bathroom—one she knew they wouldn't like, but it had to be done. *I refuse to hurt them. They've been too good to me.*

Once she dressed, she pulled the door open to find the two of them standing on the other side with their arms over their chests, waiting.

“Can't a girl get any privacy around here?”

“What's going on, Whitney?”

With a rush of air from between her lips, she sighed. “I'm leaving.”

* * * *

What the hell? She can't leave.

“What do you mean you're leaving?” Ryan asked. He stepped in front of her and grasped her shoulders. “What about Eric?”

“He doesn't matter anymore, Ryan. He can't get his hands on the insurance money now since I've changed the policy and we're divorced.” She moved out of his embrace and walked around the other side of the bed. “I need to get on with my life. I can't just forget everything in Los Angeles and live here with you two.”

“Why not?” Brett asked.

Her startled gaze shot to Brett. “I'm not staying here.”

“What are you running from, Whitney?”

She captured her lip between her teeth for a moment before she answered, “Nothing.”

Ryan moved to her side and pulled her to his chest, letting his hands skim down her back. “Don't leave.”

“I wish I could stay.”

He took her lips, trying to convince her she belonged there with them.

Her hands wound around his neck as she moaned and fit their mouths together.

The next moment, Brett stepped behind her while his hands drifted over her shoulders and then down her sides.

“Stay, Whitney,” Brett whispered against the back of her neck, running his lips over the exposed skin.

She ripped her mouth away and pulled out of their arms, her eyes wide with glistening with unshed tears. “I can’t! You don’t understand. I want to, but I can’t.” She grabbed her backpack from the corner and walked out.

Ryan looked at Brett, and he knew the same astonished look on his cousin’s face probably graced his, too. Both of them followed her out, but she was quick. The front entrance slammed shut in the distance before they even reached the living room. They raced after her, but when they opened the door, they couldn’t believe what they saw. A white BMW sat in front of the house, and Whitney was struggling against the hold of a strange guy.

How the hell did he get through the gates?

“Let me go, Eric. Nothing you do now will gain you anything.”

Eric. Son-of-a-bitch! I’ll kill him.

“Not on your life. You’re still my wife, Whitney, and you’re coming with me,” the man yelled as he forced her closer to the car.

She laughed as she struggled to pull her arm out of his grasp. “No, I’m not. Our divorce was final yesterday, you ass.”

“You can’t divorce me without my signature.”

“Bullshit. I did. The papers are in my bag. Take a look if you want.”

Eric stopped, obviously startled by the revelation. It gave Ryan and Brett enough time to reach the guy and slam him against the hood of the car.

“I’m going to break you in half, buddy,” Ryan growled into Eric’s face.

“Ryan, stop.” Her terrified words penetrated the fog of anger that had encompassed his brain with the name Eric.

“He tried to hurt you. I’m going to kill him,” he said, his gaze never leaving the man he held.

“And you’ll go to jail, Ryan. He’s not worth it.”

Ryan pushed Eric and then stepped back. “Fine, but you aren’t going anywhere with him.”

“I won’t.”

“Oh yes you are,” Eric said, struggling to stand before moving toward her. He pulled his hand back and slapped her hard across the face. She spun around, flipped over the wall surrounding the driveway, and landed in a heap on the ground.

Brett dove on top of Eric, and they rolled across the pavement, each grappling to be on top. Finally, Brett got the upper hand, pulled back his fist and punched Eric several times, knocking him out.

Brett stumbled to his feet and said, “I’m calling an ambulance and the police.”

Ryan jumped over the fence and cradled her against his chest. “Whitney? Baby, talk to me.” He brushed the hair out of her face, growling low in his throat when he saw the bruise already starting to form on her face.

With cell in hand, Brett called nine-one-one and the police and paramedics were on their way.

“Let me see her, Ryan,” Brett said, coming to her side. He brushed the hair back from her forehead and then pulled her eyes open to check her pupils.

“Brett?”

His cousin didn’t look up while he continued to examine her. “Yeah.”

Ryan pulled his hand back from underneath her and started to shake when he saw the sticky, red blood on his hand.

* * * *

The sound of beeping brought Whitney out of her haze, and she squinted when the bright florescent lights hit her eyes. Sirens blared as she tried to focus. An ambulance. She tried to turn her head, but she was strapped to the board. Looking to her left, she almost expected to see someone she knew on the bench next to her, but she couldn't think of who that might be. She didn't know any paramedics.

"Ah. You're awake. I really didn't expect to see you again so soon."

"Soon? Do I know you?"

The guy frowned. "Cale? I was with Ryan when we got you out of the canyon?"

She tried to shake her head. "Ryan? Canyon?"

"Do you know where you are?"

"Los Angeles?"

"What's your name?"

"Whitney Scott."

"What's the date?"

Searching her mind, she tried to remember. "I don't know."

"We'll be at the hospital in just a minute."

"Hospital? Where am I?"

"Flagstaff."

"Arizona?"

The guy chuckled, and she frowned. She really didn't think it was very funny. "Last time I checked, yeah."

A moment later, the back doors whipped open and two hands grabbed the gurney. They wheeled her through the glass doors, and the feeling of déjà vu washed over her. The face that bent over her and looked into her eyes wasn't right. *Something's wrong here, but I can't think of what.*

"I'm Doctor Reese, Whitney."

"Hi."

"Do you know where you are?"

“The guy in the ambulance said I’m in Flagstaff. I’m assuming this is the hospital?”

“Yes, the emergency room, to be exact.”

“What am I doing in Arizona?”

“You don’t remember?”

“No. The last thing I can recall is being in Los Angeles at my house with my husband.”

“I’m coming in there, damn it!” a loud male voice yelled from the other side of the curtain. The doctor frowned before he moved away.

“You can’t come in here, Ryan. Neither can you, Brett. Neither of you are on duty and you know the rules,” the doctor said.

She tried to see, but couldn’t move her head at all. The voice was familiar, but she couldn’t seem to place it.

“I don’t give a flying fuck.”

“Keep your voice down, O’Rourke, or I’ll have you thrown out of here.”

“Easy, Ryan. They’ll let us in after they examine her. Right, Bill?” another familiar voice said.

Why can’t I remember?

“Maybe, but if you two don’t calm down, I’m not letting you anywhere near her. She’s obviously been beaten. Care to explain?”

The voices moved off, and she couldn’t hear what they said anymore.

“Nurse?”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“Where’s my husband?”

A frown moved over the woman’s face. “I don’t know. He didn’t come in with you that I’m aware of.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Doctor Reese returned to her side. “Whitney. We need to do a CAT scan of your head to make sure there isn’t a bleed since you lost consciousness and don’t remember. Do you hurt anywhere else?”

“Yes. My stomach feels crampy.”

Doctor Reese pushed on her abdomen and asked her where it hurt. She couldn’t tell. It didn’t hurt when he pressed. “When was your last period?”

“Um...”

“It’s okay, Whitney. The nurse will put in a catheter in your bladder, and we’ll get some urine to do a pregnancy test, just to make sure.”

“All right.”

Several moments later, the nurse went to insert the tube, but stopped when she asked, “Whitney, were you on your period when this happened?”

“I don’t think so.”

“I’ll be back in a minute,” the nurse told her, before she walked toward the curtain. After she returned, she put in the catheter, took some urine and left.

I hate this. I hate hospitals. I hate doctors. Where’s Eric?

“Whitney? Honey?”

Her gaze found a set of hazel eyes and another set of brown when they stopped next to the gurney. Her head began to pound, and she closed her eyes.

Warm fingers grasped hers on the both sides, bringing her gaze to their faces. “Do I know you?”

* * * *

Brett glanced at Ryan and then back to Whitney. *She doesn’t know us?* “I’m Brett. This is Ryan. Don’t you remember us?”

A frown creased the skin between her eyebrows. “No.”

Ah hell!

Ryan’s gaze met his before he tipped his head, indicating they needed to talk privately.

“We’ll be right back.”

“Okay. Can I ask you a question before you leave?”

“Sure,” Ryan said, and Brett had the same gut-wrenching feeling he could see on Ryan’s face.

“Where’s my husband?”

“Husband?”

“Yeah, Eric. He should be here.”

“I don’t know, but we’ll see if we can find him.” He pulled Ryan away from her side. “We’ll be back in a minute.”

When they were down the hall from her, Ryan yanked his arm out of Brett’s grasp. “She doesn’t remember? What the hell is up with that?”

“I’m guessing she has a bad concussion, Ryan. It can cause amnesia sometimes.”

“She thinks she’s still married to that asshole.”

“I know. We can’t push her.”

Ryan raked his fingers through his hair. “Push her, hell! All I want to do is take her in my arms and make her remember us.”

“She will in time, Ryan. We can’t force her. It could cause more damage if we do.”

Brett looked over Ryan’s shoulder and saw the technician wheel her out of her curtained off area toward x-ray with a heavy heart. *What if she doesn’t remember? She had every intention of leaving us and going back home.*

“What about the blood, Brett? She was bleeding pretty heavily.”

He shook his head. “Without examining her, I couldn’t tell you. Hopefully, Bill will have some answers soon.”

“Well, Eric certainly isn’t coming here, no matter what she wants. The fucker is in jail, and he’ll stay there until he rots, if I have anything to say about it.”

“Brett, you know the cops have to be involved since this is an assault,” Bill said as he stopped next to him and Ryan.

“It’s fine, Bill. They were at the house so they know what’s going on.”

“Care to fill me in?”

“Her ex-husband came by my house. From what I can tell, he planned to force her to leave with him, but when Ryan and I stepped in, he hit her.”

“I hope he was arrested?”

“He was,” Ryan growled.

“Good,” Bill answered.

“Doctor Reese, some of the test results are coming in on our lady in there,” the nurse said when she walked near.

“Great. I’ll be there in a second.” Bill shot him a penetrating look.

“How involved are you two in this with her?”

“She’s been staying at my house.”

“And?”

“I’m not going into it, Bill. She’s special to both me and Ryan, and that’s all you need to know.”

“All right then.” Bill looked at him for a moment before he moved back toward the nurse’s station.

“What are we going to do if she doesn’t remember?”

“We’ll get through it. If she wants to go back to L.A., we can’t stop her, Ryan.”

Brett saw them wheel her back into the trauma bay, and Bill moved inside it before he shut the door. He and Ryan headed toward her room, but when her raised voice met their ears, they both stopped and stood with open mouths.

“What do you mean I’m pregnant?”

“The urine test shows you’re pregnant, but I’m pretty sure you’re miscarrying, Whitney,” Bill said. “You’re bleeding pretty heavily, but the only way for me to tell for sure is to do an ultrasound.”

“Pregnant?” Ryan’s question brought their gaze colliding again.

Is that why she wanted to leave? She’s carrying her ex-husband’s child?

* * * *

"I..."

"I take it you didn't know?"

Her gaze bounced around the exam cubicle. *Pregnant? Eric's child? We've been having so many problems, fighting all the time. I'm not sure how I feel about being pregnant.* "I don't know. I can't seem to remember much of anything. What day is today?"

"August eleventh."

"It can't be August. It's June. I know it is." Her voice started to rise as panic set in. *Two months? I've lost two months of my life?*

The two men who'd come in before moved to her side and took her hands, one in each of theirs.

"Whitney," the hazel-eyed one said. "It is August. You've been here in Flagstaff for two months now."

"How can that be?"

"You fell earlier today and hit your head. You probably have a case of amnesia," the brown-eyed one added.

"Who are you two?"

"I told you. I'm Brett, and this is Ryan."

"But *who* are you? How do you know me?" She started to shake, and the doctor moved next to her. "I don't know these two. I want them out of my room, now!"

"Calm down, Whitney," Doctor Reese said, touching her hand. He looked at the two strangers. "I think you both need to leave."

"No!" Ryan yelled, grasping her hand and leaning so his lips were close to hers while he brushed the hair back off her forehead. The scent of his cologne tickled the back of her mind, calming her and making her feel safe but at the same time, confusing her further. "We aren't leaving. You'll remember, Whitney. You have to."

Fear and something else sparkled in his eyes. She shook her head. "No. Leave, please," she pleaded, tears choking her throat.

“Come on, Ryan,” Brett murmured, grabbing the other man’s arm and pulling him toward the curtain. Angry words drifted to her as they walked away.

“What if she never remembers, Brett? What if the memories of the three of us never come back?”

When she couldn’t hear them anymore, she closed her eyes as a tear slipped into her hair.

The three of them? What the hell have I done?

“I’m going to give you something to calm you,” the nurse said, attaching a syringe to the tube in her arm.

“Will it make me sleep?”

“Probably.”

“Good. Maybe when I wake up, this whole nightmare will be over,” she whispered.

“It’ll be okay, Whitney. You’re one lucky girl to have Brett and Ryan in your corner.”

A sob escaped her lips.

How can they be in my corner? I don’t even know them.

Two hours later, she was wheeled into a hospital room.

“My name is Kelly. I’ll be your nurse until tomorrow morning. This will be your room for tonight. The call light is there on the bed. If you need anything, you let me know. Please, don’t try to get up by yourself.”

“I won’t. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I’ll come by and check on you in a little while,” Kelly told her and then moved toward the door.

The phone on the bedside table rang, and she frowned. Who even knew where she was?

“Hello?”

“Whitney?”

“Daddy? Oh, Dad,” she sobbed.

“What’s happened now, sweetie?”

“How did you know where to find me?”

“Brett called me.”

“Brett? I don’t understand.”

“He said you don’t remember the last couple of months.”

“I guess not. Are you sure it’s not June and this is a cruel joke or something?”

“Sorry, sweetie, but no.”

“Dad, where’s Eric?”

“My understanding is he’s in jail.”

“Jail?”

“He tried to hurt you. He’s been arrested for assault, but I’m working on getting some other charges to stick.”

“God, Daddy! I don’t remember anything! This is so frustrating.”

“Honey, I’m fueling the jet now. I’ll be there in a couple of hours.”

“Okay.”

“Are you all right?”

A sob left her lips. “No, I’m not. The doctor downstairs told me I was pregnant, but I’m miscarrying the baby.”

“Oh, sweetie, I’m sorry.”

“It’s probably best anyway. Eric and I weren’t getting along. I think he was having an affair.”

Silence.

“Dad?”

“I’m still here.”

“Why do I get the feeling you know all about this?”

“You said that before you left to go up there with him.”

“Oh.”

“Hang tough, sweetheart. I’ll be there soon, and I’ll bring you home.”

The thought of leaving Flagstaff left a hole in her soul that confused her. *Why wouldn’t I want to leave here? Does it have to do with Brett and Ryan?*

“All right. I’ll see you soon.”

“I love you, Whitney.”

“I love you, too, Dad.”

* * * *

The commanding presence of Aaron Morris swept into her room the next morning, and she smiled.

“Oh, baby,” he said, scooping her up in his arms and hugging her tight.

“Daddy, I’m glad you’re here.”

“I’ve already talked to the doctor, and he’s doing your discharge papers now. We’ll be back home by this afternoon.”

She frowned as her heart clenched.

“What’s wrong?”

“I don’t know, Dad. I feel like if I leave here, something will be wrong. Like I’ll be walking away from something that means a lot to me.”

“Have you seen Brett or Ryan?”

“Not since yesterday in the emergency room. But how do you know them?”

“I’m not sure how much I should tell you, honey, or how much you need to remember on your own.”

“It’s best not to tell her anything,” a voice said from the doorway. Her gaze stopped on Brett as he stepped into the room.

“How the hell would you know?” she asked, perturbed he would interrupt her reunion with her father.

“I might not be a psychologist, Whitney, but I am a doctor.”

Pain zipped across her head, and she moaned softly as she closed her eyes. Memories flashed across her mind, and she fought to grasp them. Images of falling and pain in her leg had her grasping her thigh. Another of Ryan smiling as he walked toward her with a bouquet of mixed flowers in his hands and gallantly bowed at the waist before

presenting them to her with flourish. Laughing with Brett as they watched a movie on a couch in a room she didn't recognize.

"Are you remembering something?"

The images disappeared when the voice interrupted her thoughts.

"I remember falling down a steep incline and my leg hurting. I remember you and Ryan, but the memories are vague."

"That's a start," Brett said, moving closer to the bed. "You fell in the canyon back in June and were brought here. Your femur was broken in that leg." He nodded toward where her hand still rested.

"Femur?"

"Your thigh bone."

"Oh." She captured her lip between her teeth. "How do you know this?"

"I was the doctor who treated you in the emergency room."

"And Ryan?"

The gaze that rested on her told her he fought with himself about how much to tell her.

"Tell me, Brett, please."

"Ryan was the rescue paramedic who pulled you out of the canyon and brought you here."

"That's why I felt like someone I knew should have been in the ambulance with me when I came in yesterday," she whispered. "How do I know you and Ryan other than that?"

"I can't tell you that. You have to remember on your own."

"Why?"

"It could be detrimental to your recovery if you are told what should be happening rather than those memories returning naturally. Your system could go into overload from too much information at once."

"I hate this! I want to know what happened. Why am I in Flagstaff? Why is Eric in jail? Who are you to me?" Tears welled up in her eyes and fell down her cheeks.

Her father pulled her into his arms and stroked her back. “It’s okay, sweetheart. The memories will come back in time.”

Gut-wrenching sobs shook her frame as she clung to her father’s shirt. “Take me home, Dad. Right now. I want to go home.”

Chapter Six

Her tears tore Brett's heart in two. He wanted to comfort her. He wanted to be the one holding her and drying her tears, but he couldn't. Not now.

If I get my hands on that fucking bastard who hurt her, I'll kill him. Eric. That son-of-a-bitch has managed to tear her away from me and Ryan without even trying.

She was going to leave you, his heart whispered, and he frowned.

He raked his fingers through his hair as he watched her sob against her father's chest. *I need to get out of here before I say something I shouldn't.*

Moving to her side, he put his hand on her shoulder and said, "Whitney. I need to go, but I wanted to say something before I do."

She lifted her face and stared into his eyes.

"I know this is all confusing to you. I can't imagine losing two months of your life and not knowing what happened. I wish you weren't leaving, but I understand your reasons. Even if you don't remember me or Ryan, we care about you and would never do anything to hurt you. If someday you do remember, we'll be here."

A single tear slid down her cheek, and he couldn't stop himself from brushing it away with his thumb.

Trembling lips and a tear-stained face were the last things he saw when he left her room.

Quickly walking to his car in the hospital's garage, he stopped next to it and tipped his head back with a deep sigh.

Seconds later, a tortured cry burst from his lips before he slammed his fist down on the top, leaving a small dent in the metal. Yanking

open the door, he slipped inside, jammed the key into the ignition, and cranked the engine so it started with a dull purr. *Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!* His fist pounded on the steering wheel. He popped the car into reverse and peeled out with a squeal of tires loud enough to turn the few heads of those in the garage.

Once he reached the outskirts of town, pine trees zipped by as he pushed his foot to the floor. Speed. He needed speed to block the image of Whitney from his mind before he went insane. Mile markers blurred. White lines looked like dots on the pavement. All he could think of were the tears on her face and the blank look in her eyes when she met his gaze.

Pulling the car abruptly into a turn-out, he pushed the door open and moved near the edge of the bluff. Off in the distance, he could see the scattered lights of Sedona below. The scene usually helped him relax and let his cares go, but tonight, nothing helped. Not the purple sky of the coming evening, not the sounds of coyotes in the distance yipping for their mates, and not the breeze ruffling the hair against his neck. Nothing could replace the empty feeling in the pit of his stomach.

How long he stood there he didn't know. He wasn't keeping track, but the sun had disappeared from the sky and blackness surrounded him, enveloping him in the deepest loneliness he'd ever felt in his entire life. Whitney had become the other half of him with her bright smile, bubbling laughter, and kind heart. He knew Ryan felt the same way. Neither of them had ever wanted a permanent fixture, a woman to come home to, but she had barreled her way into their lives and hearts without even trying.

What the hell am I going to do without her? She completed me. Completed us.

* * * *

Sweat cut a path from Ryan's temples and down his neck and back in rivulets. Droplets glistened across the expanse of his chest while he pounded the heavy punching bag in his spare room. With each strike, the sound of leather hitting vinyl sounded loud in the room.

Brett had broken the news of Whitney's departure not fifteen minutes ago, and now, Ryan felt like his heart lay shattered in his chest. Her name echoed in his brain every time his gloved fist hit the rock-solid weight of the bag. The chain holding it securely to the ceiling clanked with every punch.

Whitney. Whitney. Whitney.

She's gone. Get over it. She doesn't remember you, doesn't recall the feelings that engulfed the three of us when we made love.

Ryan didn't realize he had tears rolling down his cheeks, mixing with the sweat, until a sob escaped his lips and he hung onto the bag. After a moment, he stepped back, wiped his brow with his arm, and hit the bag again.

No one has ever meant this much to me. How did she invade my heart so easily? Not even Sara held me so tight, and I was engaged to her.

Sara Reynolds. Even the memories of her didn't hurt nearly as much as Whitney having no recollection of him or Brett. Honestly, Sara had meant the world to him, but Whitney being part of his life made it brighter, made it shine like diamonds on Lake Mary. He'd thought his life was over when Sara died in that accident five years earlier in the canyon, but he knew she wasn't coming back and he knew he had to move on without her. It was the reason he became a paramedic and rescue climber for the canyon rescue team.

This situation with Whitney had him wondering and wishing. Would she ever get her memory back? She was terrified, he knew that, but it didn't change the fact he still wanted to take her shoulders in his hands and shake her. The emptiness, the complete lack of recognition in her eyes when she looked at him, hurt. God, did it ever

hurt. When she'd looked at him before, he could see the wonder in her gaze, the excitement surrounding her as she contemplated making love with both him and Brett and thought about a life with the two of them. Sure, none of them had confessed feelings, but he knew she cared even if she hadn't realized it yet. Now, she looked at him and Brett as if they were complete strangers to her. In a sense, he supposed they were. If her memory stopped prior to her accident, she wouldn't know them from anyone else she might meet on the street.

I'm not giving up on her. She'll get her memory back eventually, and when she does, she'll be back. Brett and I just need to be patient.

* * * *

The car pulled into the circular driveway of her parents' house. The heat of the August day beat down on her head when she stepped out and headed for the front door.

"Whitney, sweetheart," her mother said when she moved inside. "My God! What happened up there? First, your father tells me you fell in the canyon and broke your leg, and then you were staying with that doctor at his house. The next thing I know, you are back in the hospital because Eric hit you."

"Mom, I don't remember."

"What do you mean you don't remember?"

"Alice," her father said, stopping next to Whitney. "She doesn't remember anything from the last couple of months. I think the last thing that comes to mind is before she left with Eric to go up there."

"I don't understand. Where's Eric now?"

Her small suitcase was dropped near her feet. "In jail, Mom."

"Jail?"

"Yes, Alice. Jail and he'll stay there."

"That's ridiculous, Aaron. I'm sure this is all a big misunderstanding." Alice looked at her and said, "Eric loves you, Whitney."

Whitney closed her eyes when her head started to pound. More images flashed behind her eyelids. Images of Eric standing over her, laughing as he told her he wanted Mallory.

She gasped when her gaze focused on her mother again. “No, he doesn’t, Mom. He tried to kill me. He pushed me down the incline, and when he came to my side, he told me he wanted me dead because he wanted to be with Mallory.”

“Mallory?”

“Do you remember, sweetheart?” her dad asked.

“Not everything, just that he tried to kill me for my insurance policy, and that he’d been sleeping with Mallory.”

“This has to be a mistake.”

“Mom, listen to me. Eric is after nothing more than money.”

“Why would he, Whitney? He’s a successful attorney in his own right,” Alice said.

“No, Alice, he’s not.”

“What are you talking about, Dad?” Whitney asked, not sure if she wanted to know the details.

“Sit down, sweetheart. I didn’t want to tell you while we were in Flagstaff, but some things came to light in the last twenty-four hours since I found out you were in the hospital again.”

Whitney sat wearily on the couch in the living room, and her father took the seat across from her.

“Eric is heavily in debt.”

“I don’t get it.”

“I’m not sure what’s been going on, but he’s been trying to borrow from several of our well-known clients at the firm. They all turned him down. John Watson called me last night and told me after I talked to you.”

“The insurance money.”

“It appears he needs a lot to get out of debt.”

“Millions apparently,” she whispered in awe as the whole scenario came to light. She stood and moved toward the stairs. “I’m going to

bed. I'm exhausted with trying to remember, losing the baby, and everything."

"Baby?" her mother asked, shocked.

"Yes, Mother. I was pregnant I guess, but not anymore. I lost it when Eric hit me."

"Eric hit you?"

A rush of air escaped her lips in a heavy sigh. "I'll explain later. Talk to you in the morning."

Grabbing her suitcase, she wearily trudged up the stairs and headed for her former bedroom. Once she pushed open the door and moved toward the bed, the tears started to fall as emptiness surrounded her. She felt like she'd left her soul in Flagstaff. Sitting on the edge of the bed, she buried her face in her hands and cried until there weren't any more tears. Curled up on the bed on her side, she wiped the tears and tucked her hands beneath her face. After several moments, she sat up and grabbed her suitcase, unzipping it to retrieve her clothes.

Several sheets of folded paper lay on top of the things inside. She frowned and opened them. Her mouth dropped open when she read the top one. *Divorce Decree*.

* * * *

Two weeks. It'd been two weeks since she'd left.

"Doc?"

"Yeah."

"What's gotten into you? You've been moping around here for the last two weeks."

"Nothing," he snapped.

"Sorry I asked," Mara said, moving toward the other side of the nurse's station.

"Chopper One to Flagstaff ER."

Brett moved toward the radio. "Flagstaff, go."

“We got a hot one, Brett,” Ryan said from the other end of the radio. “Head-on collision, Interstate Seventeen. One DOA coming in via ambulance. I’ve got a young pregnant woman, mid to late twenties. She’s twelve weeks with some vaginal bleeding. Currently unconscious, vital signs stable, fluids infusing. Be there in five.”

“Copy, Ryan, see you in a few,” Brett answered before he dropped the receiver back on the cradle. *Shit!* He raked his fingers through his hair and sighed. *This is all I need today, someone who reminds of Whitney. Who the hell am I kidding? Everyone reminds me of her.*

“Get trauma one ready,” he ordered the nurse standing nearby.

The emergency room staff scrambled to get everything ready moments before Brett heard the helicopter land and Ryan burst through the doors, pushing a gurney.

“Hey, cousin.”

Brett met Ryan’s gaze over the body of the woman on the stretcher. “What have we got?”

Ryan gave him a quick report and moved out of the way so Brett could work. When he stopped at the head of the gurney, he sucked in a harsh breath when he saw the woman lying there.

“Whitney?” Brett asked, meeting Ryan’s gaze across the room.

“It’s not Whitney, Brett. Her name is Laura Oliver. Her husband is the DOA coming in.”

“But she looks just like Whitney.”

“I know. Focus, Brett.”

Shaking his head, he started barking orders for tests, fluids, and a CAT scan of her head and her abdomen. He could figure out what the hell was going on after he got her stabilized.

Two hours later, he sighed and leaned back in the chair at the desk. The woman hadn’t regained consciousness, and it worried him. Luckily, she hadn’t lost the pregnancy. The baby still sat snugly in her womb. *Not like Whitney. She lost hers.*

Neither he nor Ryan had heard from her since she left, and he fought with himself over whether to call her, go to L.A. and force her to remember them or do what his brain said and let her go. *But what the hell? The woman lying in there on the gurney could be Whitney's twin or sister.*

"Could she be Whitney's sister? She said she had three sisters, but she never told us what their names were." The chair rocked forward when realization hit him. *Maybe it is Whitney's sister.* He turned to the nurse next to him and said, "Do we have any more information on the woman in there?"

"No. Just that her name is Laura Oliver and her husband is the DOA in the other room. She lives in Los Angeles, apparently, according to her driver's license."

I have Aaron Morris' number. I wonder if I should call him. It would be an excuse to find out how Whitney's doing, too.

"I'll be in the doctor's lounge if you need me. I need to make a phone call."

"Sure, Doctor Novak."

Heading down the hall, he pushed open the lounge door and pulled out his cell phone. With shaking hands that he flexed to try to calm them, he flipped through the contacts. He quickly found Aaron's phone number and hit talk.

"Morris, Armstrong and Collins, Attorneys-At-Law. Can I help you?"

"Yes, I need to speak with Aaron Morris."

"I'm sorry, but Mr. Morris isn't available right now. May I take a message?"

"My name is Doctor Brett Novak, and I need to speak with him or his daughter Whitney immediately."

"I believe Whitney is still at her parents' home. You could probably call her there. Mr. Morris is in court this morning and can't be reached."

"Can you give me that number?"

“I’m sorry, sir, but I can’t give out that information.”

“Listen, I don’t have time to argue with you. I need to speak to one or the other of them right now. I’m an emergency room physician in Flagstaff, and I may have one of their family members in my ER.”

He heard a gasp on the other end.

“Well, I don’t know. I should check with—”

“All right, listen. Call Whitney and tell her to call Brett. Here’s my number. She’ll know who you’re talking about.”

Even if she didn’t remember their time together, she still knew who he was. *God, I hope she calls.* With a heavy sigh, he moved toward the door to check on his patient.

* * * *

“Brett called and wants me to call him?” Whitney asked the woman on the other end of the line.

“Yes, ma’am. He said it was important and that you needed to call him right away. He said he may have one of your family members in the ER there.”

“I’ll call right now.”

Whitney hung up the home phone and grabbed her cell. She quickly dialed the number her father’s new secretary gave her, praying it wasn’t one of her family that now lay in Brett’s emergency room at the hospital in Arizona.

“Hello?”

His deep baritone sent her heart racing. She still didn’t remember him other than when she woke up, but seeing him and hearing his voice gave her goose bumps.

“Brett?”

“Whitney?”

“Yes. What’s going on? My father’s secretary called and said—”

“I need to ask you a question. What are your sisters’ names?”

“Why?”

“Just answer me, please.”

“Cindy is the eldest, then there’s Sherry, me, and the baby of the family is Laura.”

“Last names. I need last names, too.”

“Cindy isn’t married so it’s still Morris. Sherry’s last name is Compton, and Laura’s last name is Oliver.”

“Shit.”

“Brett, what’s going on? You’re scaring me.”

“You need to call your dad, sweetheart. Get in touch with him immediately.”

“Brett?”

“I have your sister in my emergency room. Your family needs to come. Her husband was killed, and she hasn’t regained consciousness.”

“Oh my God,” she whispered, her hands shaking as she pressed them to her lips.

“Whit?”

No one ever called her Whit. *Except Brett and Ryan.*

She blinked several times.

Oh God! I remember!

“Oh, Brett.” Tears streamed down her cheeks. Memories zipped across her mind. Dancing with Ryan at the bar and Brett cutting in. The laughter they shared so many times at his house while she recuperated from Eric’s attempted murder. Cooking for them the first time and Brett’s shocked expression when she’d smack him with the spoon. Watching movies with both of them and arguing about what kind because they always wanted to watch action flicks or slasher movies.

Ryan carrying her upstairs to show her his apartment and cuddling on his couch for over an hour before he took her back downstairs. How much she loved his smell. His cologne. *That’s why his scent made me feel so safe at the emergency room.*

The three of them making love after they celebrated her divorce and how cherished she'd felt in their arms. And finally, her telling them she was leaving even though she couldn't tell them exactly why.

The pain in their eyes had made her want to stay.

God, I hurt them. I wanted to protect them, and all I did was hurt them anyway.

She had been pregnant with Eric's child, and she couldn't expect them to raise a child that didn't belong to either of them.

A heavy, forlorn sigh escaped her lips. *Neither of them had said he loved me. It didn't mean anything more than another notch on the bedpost, another woman they shared, to add to the growing list.*

"We'll be there in a few hours. Take care of her for me, please."

"Of course. I wouldn't do any less."

"I know."

* * * *

"Whitney's coming here?" Ryan's raised voice asked on the other end of the phone.

Brett could hear the excitement in his cousin's voice, and he hated to be the one to burst the bubble. "Yes, but it's only because of her sister, Ryan, not us. She still doesn't remember."

"Shit. I wish I knew how to get through to her."

"Me, too, but we can't force her. She'll remember when she's ready. The memories could be blocked because of the trauma of trying to be killed, the pregnancy she didn't want us to know about, or even because of the three of us making love. For a lot of people, that's not normal."

"I know."

"Are you coming up here?"

"Of course. I wouldn't miss the chance to see her again, even if she doesn't recall me or us. Did she say when she'd be there?"

"It should be shortly. I talked to her several hours ago. Mr. Morris had to have the plane readied, and when I called, they told me he was in court."

"You fucking talked to her and you didn't tell me?"

"I've been busy, Ryan. This is the emergency room. I called the minute I had a break in patients."

"Sorry, Brett. I just miss her. That's all."

"Yeah, me too. I guess I'll see you when you get here."

Brett hung up the phone and pulled the chart out of the rack. *I have to be missing something. Why hasn't she regained consciousness?*

"Doctor Novak?"

"Yeah," he said, with a quick glance at the nurse.

"I think she's coming around a bit."

Standing quickly, he almost ran around the corner toward Laura's room. When he got close to the gurney, she moaned softly.

"Mrs. Oliver? Can you hear me?"

She groaned, and her eyelids fluttered slightly.

"Open your eyes, Laura."

A moment later, she lifted her lids and eyes the same color as Whitney's stared into his.

"Where am I?" she murmured.

"You're at Flagstaff Medical Center in the emergency room. I'm Doctor Brett Novak."

Frown lines appeared between her eyebrows. "Flagstaff?"

"Yes. There was a pretty bad car accident."

Her hand went to her stomach and splayed across the slight rounded area.

"Your baby is fine."

"Thank God." A tear slipped out of her eye and into her hair. "My husband?"

"I'm sorry, Laura. He didn't make it."

"No! He can't be dead!" she sobbed. "He can't be. Matthew?"

Brett took her hand in his and held on tight while she cried almost hysterically. The gut-wrenching sobs that shook her frame tore him apart.

It's like Whitney all over again.

He heard movement behind him and turned to see Aaron Morris and the woman who haunted his days and nights come into the trauma bay. Stepping away from Laura's side, he made room for the family as Aaron took one side of the gurney and started talking quietly with Laura as Whitney stopped beside Brett on the other side.

Whitney took his hand and pulled him out into the hall before she asked, "How is she?"

"She regained consciousness a few moments ago. I had to tell her about her husband."

"This is horrible. How could this happen?"

"Head-on collision with a semi. She's lucky to be alive, but her husband was killed instantly. Ryan brought her in."

Their eyes met, and he had to force himself to breathe.

I wish I knew what she's thinking.

"Thanks for taking care of her." She dropped her gaze and moved back to her sister's side. "Laura?"

"Whitney. Matthew is dead. Oh, my God! He's dead."

"I know, honey. Dad and I are here for you. We'll get through this together. You know you have us."

Laura sobbed uncontrollably, and Brett fought the tears that wanted to clog his throat. He'd never felt this torn before. *They're Whitney's family, and since I care about her, I can't shut off the need to hold her while they grieve.*

"Let me know if you need anything. I'll be at the desk."

She nodded, but when she looked his way again, he could see the tears swimming in her gaze. The pain in her blue eyes tore at his heart.

Reaching the desk and his chair, he sat down heavily, tipped his head back on his shoulders and released a sigh.

Within moments, Ryan came bursting through the double doors between the desk and the ambulance bay.

“Where is she?”

“Chill, Ryan. You can’t go running in there.”

“I haven’t seen her in at least two weeks.” Ryan raked his fingers through his hair and leaned against the desk.

“I know. Neither have I.”

“But you talked to her.”

“On the phone, Ryan. It’s not like we had a meaningful conversation. I had to tell her Laura was here and hurt. That’s not the type of thing you want to tell the woman you love.”

Ryan’s eyes widened. “You love her?”

Damn. Did I say that?

He looked to his right and saw several pairs of eyes focused on him.

Shit.

“It doesn’t matter.” He dropped his gaze to the computer screen in front of him before he started tapping away at the keys.

“Answer my question, Brett. Do you love her?”

“Yes, all right? Yes, I’m in love with Whitney.”

“This sucks,” Ryan grumbled.

“Why?”

“Because I love her, too, and she doesn’t remember either one of us.”

His shoulders slumped. “I know.”

“Brett?” The silky sound of his name on her lips had his dick at attention inside of a heartbeat when she stopped next to Ryan. “Hi, Ryan. I didn’t realize you were here, too.”

“I came when Brett told me you were coming in.”

“Oh.” Her gaze focused on his face again. “My dad has some questions for you.”

“Sure.” He stood and moved around the desk to follow her back behind the curtain. “What can I do for you, Mr. Morris?”

“Do you know exactly what’s wrong with my daughter?”

“So far, all I can tell is that she has a pretty severe concussion, some lacerations, and a case of whiplash, and probably should be kept overnight here for observation. She only regained consciousness a few moments before you and Whitney arrived.”

“Where is my son-in-law?”

Brett glanced at Laura, who still cried and held on tightly to Whitney’s hand. “Let’s go out in the hall.”

Mr. Morris followed him out of the room and when they stopped at the desk Brett said, “He’s in the morgue.”

“I will make arrangements for him then. I appreciate you getting in touch with us about Laura.”

“I’m glad we were able to get in touch. Laura looks so much like Whitney, it’s scary. When Ryan brought her in...” He shook his head. “Whitney never told us her sisters’ names. It was a guess on my part.”

“No matter how it came about, I still appreciate all you and your cousin have done for my family. I could never repay you.”

“No repayment needed, sir. Ryan and I care about Whitney.”

“That’s obvious, son.”

Brett met Aaron’s gaze, and a frown settled on his face. “You know, I’m not so sure how things would work between you three.”

“It’s complicated to explain.”

“Well, as long as Whitney is happy, then I wouldn’t stand in her way, no matter how unconventional of a relationship she decides to be in.”

“Has she said anything? I mean, did she give you any indication she might remember?”

“Sorry son, no. There have been a couple of times that she’s had flashes of memory, but she hasn’t mentioned you or Ryan, other than when she woke up here.”

“Damn it!”

Aaron laid a hand on his shoulder. “I know it’s frustrating.”

“You have no idea.”

“Doctor Novak. We have a room for Mrs. Oliver upstairs when you’re ready to have her moved,” the nurse said.

“Thanks.” Brett looked at Aaron and said, “I’ll get her orders ready, and we’ll move her shortly. You and Whitney are welcome in my home until Laura is ready to go back to Los Angeles.”

“Thank you for the offer, Doctor Novak.”

“It’s Brett, please.”

“All right, Brett, but I’m not sure if staying at your home is wise with what happened between you, Ryan, and Whitney in the past.”

“Its fine, Dad,” Whitney answered, stopping next to the two of them.

Brett could have sworn his heart ceased to beat when she focused on him.

“Are you sure, Whit? I don’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“Does that mean you’re withdrawing your offer?” A teasing smile lifted the corners of her mouth, and he had to fight the urge to grab her and kiss her senseless.

“Absolutely not. You and your family are welcome there.”

“Then we accept.”

Chapter Seven

Once Laura was settled into a room upstairs, Whitney and her father went to get some food.

“Are you sure you want to stay at Brett’s, honey? I would think it might be a bit weird for you.” The two took a seat at one of the booths in the dining room of the hospital.

“I didn’t say anything on the way up here, but I remember everything, Dad. I’ve been trying to come to terms with all that went on during the summer.”

“Everything?”

“Yes. How Eric tried to kill me. How Brett and Ryan took me in and cared for me when they didn’t have to, and even how Eric found me at their house, hit me and how I woke up in the emergency room.”

“And?” His penetrating gaze fixed on her face, and she knew she couldn’t hide her feelings for the two men who’d slipped into her heart before she could stop them.

“I’m in love with them, both of them, but it doesn’t matter because they don’t love me. I might be able to survive if one of them cared about me, but it’s killing me that neither cares.” A tear slipped down her cheek and her father reached over to wipe it away.

“Then why did you agree to stay there tonight?”

“Sucker for punishment?”

Aaron chuckled softly. “Don’t count those two out yet, sweetheart. I think they care more than you know.”

Her shoulders lifted in a shrug before she slipped a piece of lettuce between her lips.

“Are you going to tell them you remember? You obviously didn’t let on when we were back there with Laura.”

“I don’t know yet. It might be easier just to walk away from them if they think I still don’t remember our time together.”

“Is that what you really want?”

“No.”

“Don’t walk away from them if you really love them, Whitney. You’ll be miserable the rest of your life, even if you do find someone else eventually.”

She cocked her head to the side and really looked at her father for the first time in a while. “You sound like you speak from experience, Daddy.”

“I do, Whitney.”

“Do you want to tell me about her?”

Aaron dropped his gaze to the tabletop in front of them and pushed his plate away. By the look on his face, Whitney couldn’t tell if he was going to tell her or not.

“You know I was born and raised in the south.”

“Yes.” She smiled. “Your southern accent still comes out sometimes.”

“I fell in love with a girl in high school. We were a couple for more than two years before we graduated.”

“What happened?” she asked, pushing her own food away.

“I wanted to move to Los Angeles to make a career for myself. I had a scholarship to Stanford. She refused to leave Tennessee.”

“Have you seen her since?”

“No,” he murmured.

“How long has it been, Dad?”

“Thirty-five years.”

“You still love her.”

“Yes, Whitney, I do. I never stopped, and letting her walk away was the worst mistake I’ve ever made in my life. Don’t get me wrong,

I love your mother, but it's just not the same as the love you've looked for all your life—your soul mate or, in your case, soul mates.”

“Why didn't you try to contact her?”

“I had my life, my wife, and my beautiful daughters.”

“And?”

“All right. Call it stubborn pride, I guess.”

“Is she still there? In Shelbyville?”

“No. She married and moved not far from where we grew up. Near Murfreesboro, I think.”

“I'm sorry, Dad.”

“Nothing for you to be sorry for, Whitney. I don't want you to make the same mistake I made and walk away from the men you love.”

“But, there's a difference here. You know she loved you, but you chose your career over love. I can't make Brett and Ryan love me.”

He grasped her hand and squeezed her fingers. “All I'm saying, sweetheart, is give it a chance.”

Wrapping her arms around her father's shoulders, she hugged him tight and whispered, “Thanks, Dad.”

The conversation turned to things at home as they finished their food and then dumped their trays on the conveyer belt.

“Let's go up and say goodnight to Laura, and then we'll head over to Brett's.”

“Sure.” Aaron pushed the button on the elevator that would take them back upstairs.

* * * *

The house looked the same, but what did she expect? It hadn't been that long since she'd been there, even if it felt like years since Brett and Ryan held her. Capturing her lip between her teeth, she bit down when she spotted the wall she'd fallen over when Eric hit her.

I'm not letting that asshole take everything away from me. He's not going to come between me and the men I love.

The front yard still needed to be mowed and raked. A small smile drifted over her mouth. *Ryan still hasn't gotten around to it.*

"What a nice place," her father said when they pulled up in front of the door.

"Yes, it is. And you should see the kitchen. It's huge!"

Aaron chuckled, and she blushed. He knew how much she loved to cook. *Luckily, he doesn't have any idea what else we did in the kitchen besides making food.*

"You'll have to whip up one of your special recipes for us."

She was just about to ring the doorbell when the massive wooden panel swung open and Ryan grabbed her, twirling her around several times before setting her back on her feet and kissing her on the lips.

"Brett said you were coming." He wrapped his arm around her waist and ushered her inside as she shot a glance over her shoulder.

If I didn't know better, I'd swear he already knows about my memory returning.

"Mr. Morris. I don't believe we've met officially. I'm Ryan O'Rourke." Ryan stuck out his hand for her father to shake once they made it into the living room.

"Nice to meet you, Ryan. I understand you were the rescuer that picked up Whitney when she fell in the canyon and also the one who transported Laura to the hospital."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, son, I believe I owe you my sincerest thanks for taking care of my girls."

She'd never seen Ryan blush, but the color staining his neck and splashing across his cheeks made her smile.

"No thanks needed, sir. Just doing my job."

"I didn't think it was part of your job to bring Whitney home with you."

Ryan shot her a confused glance. “No, sir, but she needed somewhere to recuperate.”

“Don’t get me wrong, Ryan. I’m not chastising you for taking her in. I’m glad she had friends to help her.”

A sigh escaped Ryan’s mouth, and then he smiled with a flash of white teeth as he tucked her against his side again.

“What time is Brett supposed to be home?”

“Mmm...shortly.”

“Good. Where do you want my father to sleep tonight?”

His eyes narrowed, and she realized she didn’t ask where she should sleep.

“Brett said he could have the room at the top of the stairs to the left. You can have your old room.”

One eyebrow cocked questioningly as he waited for her to answer.

“And that is where?” she asked, not ready to let him know she knew exactly where the room sat.

“Down the hall next to the bathroom,” he said, tipping his head to the right.

“Thanks. I could use a nice, hot shower.”

Did his hazel eyes just get hotter? Her breath hitched in her throat when a wicked smile crept over his lips. *We never did break in the shower.*

“There should be clean towels and stuff in there for your use.”

Her father stretched exaggeratedly and smiled. “I’m going to find this bedroom of mine and get out of these clothes. My sweats are calling my name from the bottom of my bag. I’ll see you after awhile, sweetheart.”

“Sure, Dad.”

Ryan stepped closer after her father disappeared up the stairs. “I could wash your back,” he whispered against her ear, sending shivers down her arms. “Even if you don’t remember me, princess, your body does.”

“Ryan,” she whispered as she closed her eyes. Her nipples puckered against her top, and she fought the moan bubbling in her throat.

The front entrance swung open, and Brett stepped inside. With a guilty flush of skin, she stepped away from Ryan and turned to face the other man she’d fallen in love with.

“Hi honey. I’m home,” Brett joked, but his face fell when he noticed the proximity of her and Ryan. “Whitney?”

“You’re early.”

“Is that a problem?” he asked.

“No actually, I’m glad you’re here, Brett. The three of us need to talk.”

Brett swept past her, tossing his duffle on the countertop. “Talk?”

“Yeah.”

“About?” he asked over his shoulder as he grabbed a beer from the refrigerator and offered her and Ryan one.

“Thanks,” she said, taking it from his hand, letting her fingers brush against his. Happiness bubbled in her chest when he seemed affected by her touch still.

“You’re welcome.”

“Can we sit somewhere? The living room, maybe?”

He shrugged and swept his arm to one side.

Taking a seat in one of the arm chairs, she faced the two of them and took a long sip of her beer.

“The house hasn’t changed at all.”

“It hasn’t been that long since you’ve been here,” Brett replied, his eyes narrowing in suspicion.

“No. I see you haven’t mowed the lawn either, Ryan.”

“I haven’t had time. I’ve been...” His voice trailed off a second before his eyes widened and he said, “Wait a minute. You remember?”

Swallowing hard, she nodded, moments before Ryan swept her up in his arms and kissed her soundly on the mouth.

When he finally set her back down, she glanced at Brett, and her heart dropped into her toes. He looked angry.

“How long, Whitney? Did you remember at the hospital?”

Biting the inside of her mouth, she fought the tears threatening to fall. “Yes. I remembered before I came up here. Actually, the memories came back when you called me Whit on the phone. You see, no one else ever calls me that but you and Ryan.”

“We’ve been going through hell the last two weeks! You could have at least told us,” Brett yelled and jumped to his feet.

“I’m sorry. I-I wanted it to be the right time. Why do you think I agreed to come and stay here tonight?”

“Brett, calm down. She remembers. That’s the important thing.”

“She lied to us, Ryan. I don’t know if I can forgive and forget that easily.”

Moving out of Ryan’s embrace, she stopped in front of Brett and placed her hand on his chest. “I didn’t lie, Brett. I just didn’t tell you right away.” *I’m screwing this up. God, he’s mad.* His skin quivered under her touch.

“What about the pregnancy? You were going to leave and not even tell us why. Even after what we shared.”

Shit.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, feeling the tears slip down her cheek. She knew she was in trouble when he didn’t even move to wipe them away. “I never meant to hurt you or Ryan, and it seems that’s all I’ve done since we met.” Stepping away from him, she turned and headed down the hall to the bedroom she’d sleep in one last time.

* * * *

“What the hell is wrong with you? Are you going to let her walk out of our lives again? I thought you said you loved her?”

"I do," Brett whispered as he moved toward the window. Staring out into the darkness settling on the landscape, he fought the urge to go to her and wrap her in his arms.

"I don't get you, Brett."

"She can't stay if she doesn't love us, Ryan, both of us. I couldn't stand to see her with you and not me, and I'm sure you feel the same way. She was willing to walk away from us because she doesn't love us. I can't be with her if she doesn't love me as much as I love her. I won't settled for anything less, and you shouldn't either."

He didn't realize she'd come back into the room until she murmured, "You love me?"

Fuck.

She walked up behind him, and he could see her reflection in the glass. "Answer me, Brett. I need to hear you say it."

Closing his eyes and pressing his lips together, his head argued with his heart, but the errant organ beating wildly in his chest won out. "I love you, Whitney."

Her hand came down on his shoulder, and she tugged until he turned around and faced her. He felt her breath on his lips as he waited for her to say something, anything.

"I love you, too."

Ryan hissed softly from his spot near the couch. "I'm glad you two found each other."

"Don't you dare walk away, Ryan O'Rourke. You're a part of this too, so get your ass over here," she demanded.

"But..."

"But nothing. We're in this together, all three of us. I can't choose between you two. I never could, and I want us to be a threesome or whatever you call it," she said with a sigh.

"A ménage, princess," Ryan answered with a smile.

"Fine. A ménage. It has to be you." She touched Ryan's face. "Me and you." She brushed her fingers against Brett's cheek. "I won't

have it any other way. I love you, both of you, and I refuse to let either of you walk away from me.”

“I love you, too, princess.”

“Good.” She wrapped her hand behind Ryan’s head and kissed him on the lips before she did the same with him, and God, did it ever feel good.

“Why were you going to leave before?” Brett asked.

She chewed her lips.

“Tell me, Whit. I need to know,” he continued.

A rush of air escaped her lips in a heavy sigh. “I realized I was probably pregnant with Eric’s baby. We had been trying before we came up to Flagstaff, or at least I was. I had quit taking my birth control pills about three months before that. The day the divorce was final, I realized I hadn’t had a period in over two months.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Ryan asked, nuzzling her neck.

“I knew even then I was falling in love with you, both of you, and I couldn’t ask you to raise a child that didn’t belong to either of you. That wouldn’t be fair, and I didn’t want to hurt you so I figured the best thing was to go back to Los Angeles and try to forget the time I’d spent here.”

“You know now that we would have stood by you no matter what, right?” Brett asked.

“Yes.”

“Good. Now, I need to love you so bad, I hurt.” Ryan swept her up in his arms as she giggled, and Brett shook his head as he followed them toward Ryan’s apartment. Brett knew it was the farthest spot from her father’s room in the house.

Once they’d made it inside and shut the door behind them, he braced himself against the wall and watched Ryan quickly strip Whitney of every last bit of clothing she wore and push her back on the bed. Blood rushed to his groin, and his dick hardened to the point of pain when Ryan took one of her nipples in his mouth. She arched

her back and whimpered low in her throat. *God, she's absolutely beautiful with her hair spread out on the bed.*

"Are you going to just stand there and watch?" Her hooded gaze fixed on him.

"I'm enjoying myself immensely watching him make you squirm."

"Please, Brett, I need you."

Pushing away from his spot, he slowly walked toward the bed, relieving himself of his clothes in the process.

Ryan kissed his way down her stomach, but her gaze stayed fixed on Brett while she chewed her lips.

He put one knee on the bed and leaned over to take her lips with his in a desperate kiss. It had been so long since he'd kissed her, he almost devoured her mouth, sweeping his tongue inside to scrape along hers. Her moan of pleasure when Ryan tongued her clit was captured in his mouth.

When Brett finally lifted his head, he said, "I've missed you."

"I missed you, too. I love you so much..." Her words ended in a small sob.

"It's okay, sweetheart. We're here together now, all three of us."

Her eyes rolled back, and another whimper spilled from her mouth. "Ryan, please."

Brett dropped his mouth to her breast and flicked her nipple with his tongue.

Fingers threaded through the hair at the back of his neck as she pressed his head against her chest.

A cry burst from her lips, and he felt her quiver under his mouth when her climax rolled over her.

Brett captured her lips in another kiss as Ryan worked his way up her belly.

"Better?" Brett asked, sweeping the hair from her forehead.

"Mmm...for now. I know there's a lot more to come though, and I can't wait," she whispered, her eyes hooded with satisfaction.

Ryan rolled off the bed and quickly shed his clothes before he slipped in on her other side. "Are you up for both of us, princess?"

"Both of you?"

"We sort of did it before, but I want your ass, Whit. Have you ever had a man there before?" Ryan asked.

Trust shone bright in her eyes when she said, "No, but if you two help me, I'm willing to try."

Brett groaned and closed his eyes.

"Just make sure you tell us if it hurts or whatever. Since you've never had a cock there before, it's going to be uncomfortable at first, but we're going to get you so hot, you'll love it. For any reason, if you want to stop, all you need to do is say the word, okay?"

She nodded.

"I'll get the lube."

Ryan disappeared into the bathroom.

"Are you sure about this, sweetheart?"

"I want this, Brett. I want both of you."

Her fingers wrapped around his cock, and a low groan rumbled in his chest. "Be careful, baby. That's loaded."

A perfectly arched eyebrow cocked as a saucy grin lifted the corners of her mouth. "I'm counting on it. I can't wait to feel you in my pussy, pounding away at my flesh and making me scream in pleasure."

"You're a witch."

With an unexpected bounce, Ryan returned to the bed, and Whitney giggled. "Anxious?"

"Oh, you have no idea, woman," he groaned and slipped his fingers between her thighs. She hooked one calf over Brett's and one over Ryan's, spreading her pussy for Ryan's fingers.

"That is so hot. I love watching him pleasure you," Brett whispered. Two of Ryan's fingers dove into her and she arched her back.

Brett skimmed his palm over her nipple and smiled when it puckered against his hand.

“I want your mouth, Brett.”

“Where, sweetheart?”

“Between my legs, on my clit.”

“My pleasure,” he said. He ran his tongue down her stomach and then positioned himself between her beautiful thighs. One finger slipped down between her clit and her labia, eliciting a tortured moan from her lips.

Ryan shifted up and did his own slow caress of her breasts.

“Please...”

He pushed two fingers into her vagina when he tongued her clit, toggling quickly against the hard nub.

* * * *

Warmth spread up her legs with a tingle, washing over her belly and bursting through her pelvis as she screamed, “Brett!”

He continued to lap up her cum until she felt like a limp noodle lying on the bed.

“I can’t move.”

“We’ll do all the work, princess,” Ryan murmured against her breast. “You enjoy.”

Brett moved up to her side, turned her face and kissed her, his tongue diving between her lips when she moaned.

Ryan was between her legs, grasping her hips with his hands as he said, “Roll on your stomach.”

When she lay sprawled on her belly, he lifted her buttocks until it stuck up in the air and her head lay on the pillow. His hand skimmed over her ass cheeks.

“You have no idea how hot this is. You should see this, Brett.”

“I’ll get my turn.”

Sucking in a ragged breath when the cold lube hit the crack of her ass, she whispered, "That's cold."

"I know. It won't be in a minute," Ryan said, spreading the slick liquid across her puckered hole and pushing a finger past the ring of muscles. "Relax."

"I'm trying."

"Here. Let me distract you," Brett added, squirming until he was under her. He took her nipple in his mouth and sucked.

"Oh, Lord."

"Good?" Ryan asked, bending over her back and running his tongue up her spine.

"Strange, but incredible."

Ryan chuckled and nipped at her shoulder blade, sending electricity straight to where Brett's mouth played and then between her legs.

Two fingers slipped inside her, spreading the tight muscles of her ass, and she fought the moan in her throat.

"Let it go, princess."

Her pussy quivered, and her ass clamped down on his fingers as he worked them in and out in a slow, agonizing rhythm. She pressed back toward his hand, riding his fingers in desperate need.

"Ah God!"

"Easy."

"I want...I need..."

His fingers disappeared, and she whimpered.

The head of his cock bumped against her back hole, and she stiffened.

"Make her come so she enjoys this."

Brett shifted between her legs, and his mouth fastened on her clit as Ryan pushed slowly forward. With Brett's mouth doing wonderful things to the hard nub of nerve endings and Ryan's cock pushing into her ass, she couldn't focus on one thing. The sensations bombarding her overwhelmed her senses. Two fingers drove into her pussy and

Brett sucked her clit between his lips as Ryan pushed past the ring of muscles.

“Relax, princess. The rest will be easier.”

Brett finger fucked her and toggled her clit so hard she climaxed on a rush, pushing back against Ryan’s pelvis as he pressed the rest of the way inside.

“Ah fuck. You are so tight,” Ryan growled in her ear.

Even though she’d just had the best climax of her life, she tried to squirm away from the pressure in her ass and vagina.

Ryan held her hips in place.

“You’re too big, Ryan.”

“Does it hurt?”

“No. It’s...” She didn’t know how to describe the fullness she felt—full, but at the same time, empty.

“It feels fantastic, Whit.”

Brett scooted back up under her front and sucked a nipple into his mouth while his fingers skimmed down her stomach and across her clit.

“God,” she breathed in a rush.

“Can you take us both, sweetheart?” Brett asked, his fingers continuing to glance across her clit in a torment, but not enough to make her come.

Opening her eyes, she looked at the gorgeous man beneath her, his cock hard and straight against his stomach, pre-cum glistening on the end. *For me. He wants me.* Ryan flexed his hips, driving his cock deeper into her ass, only now it wasn’t uncomfortable all. *They both want me.*

“Yes.”

“You have no idea how sexy you are,” Brett murmured against her lips.

“Either fuck her or leave her alone, Brett. She’s sucking my cock so hard with her ass, I’m going to come right now.”

"I'm going to bring her hips down," Brett said. The head of his cock bumped against her slit and slipped slightly inside.

"Oh," she moaned.

"You okay?"

"Yeah. Please. I need you, Brett. God, please."

With a tortured groan of his own, he pushed farther inside her pussy and she tamped down, the climax lingering just beyond reach. She didn't want to come yet.

"That's it, princess. Take us both. That's it, baby," Ryan whispered behind her.

Brett pushed all the way inside, and she stifled a scream.

It feels incredible. So full.

"Whitney?"

Opening her eyes a crack, she stared up into the face of one of the men she loved with all her heart.

"I love you, Brett." She turned her head slightly as she felt Ryan's lips against her shoulder. "I love you, Ryan."

"I love you so much. You have no idea," Brett said, before he brushed her lips with his.

"I love you, princess. Now stop talking and start fucking."

She laughed, but it turned into a hearty groan when both men started to move at the same time. Brett took one nipple between his teeth and bit down, sending electricity zinging straight to her clit and bringing her to the brink in seconds.

"Shall we alternate?" Ryan asked.

"Yeah," Brett agreed.

Their thrusts changed, alternating between them, Brett pushing into her pussy as Ryan withdrew from her ass. It was incredible.

The feeling of having them both inside her at the same time, both loving her at the same time, had her heart swelling in her chest and tears falling on her cheeks.

Heat rushed up her legs and burst through her pussy, sending cum spilling around Brett's cock. Within moments of her climax, Ryan

pumped into her quickly before he groaned and shuddered. Seconds later, Brett slammed into her pussy several more times, his own climax sending cum deep into her vagina.

Brett buried his nose in her neck, and Ryan kissed her shoulder as they all tried to catch their breath.

“You’re amazing,” Brett murmured.

“I bet you say that to all the girls you have in this position.”

“No, I don’t. I love you, Whit.”

“I know, Brett. I was kidding.”

Ryan slipped out of her back hole and moved to their side. When she rolled off Brett, the emptiness she felt made her frown.

“I think I really need a shower now.”

Ryan wagged his eyebrows. “Mmm...sounds like fun.”

She chuckled, not believing her luck. “Good Lord. You two will keep me busy for a long time to come. It’s a good thing you both have full time jobs, or I wouldn’t be able to walk.”

Chapter Eight

The next morning, Whitney sat sipping orange juice at the dining room table with a silly smile on her lips when her father came downstairs.

“Coffee, Dad?”

“That sounds wonderful.”

“Coming right up.”

“Where are Brett and Ryan this morning?”

“Work.”

“Ah.” He gave her a knowing look.

“What?”

“I take it by the smile on your face, you made up with them.”

Heat crawled up her neck and fused to her face as she slipped back onto the seat of the chair. “Yeah. You could say that.”

“That would explain the noises I heard.”

“Daddy!”

“I’m kidding, daughter.” He held up his hands in surrender with a laugh. “I didn’t hear anything, I promise.” His face sobered. “I take it you’ll be staying here when I take Laura home.”

“I don’t know. I should go home with you and help, but I want to stay here.”

“I understand, Whitney.”

“I know you do, Dad, but Mom won’t understand, and I don’t know how Laura will feel. I don’t want her to think I’m abandoning her if she needs me.”

“Then talk to your sister.”

"I guess I should." *How will I explain loving two men to her? I hope she can understand.* "I'll go to the hospital after I take a shower then. Do you want to stay here or go with me?"

"I'll go, but I'm going to give you some time alone with her. Don't worry, honey, she'll be happy for you. She hated Eric anyway."

Whitney laughed. "I know. She couldn't stand him."

Two hours later, the two of them walked into Laura's room to find her crying.

"Oh honey," Whitney said, sitting on the side of the bed with her sister and wrapping her arms around Laura's shoulders.

"What am I going to do? I can't go on without Matthew."

"I know it doesn't seem like the pain will ever heal, but someday you'll move on. You've got a baby to take care of now, a part of Matt that will be with you forever."

Laura sniffed and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "How did you get so smart, sis?"

"Believe me, I don't feel very smart sometimes. Look at the mess I made with Eric."

Whitney looked over her sister's head to lock eyes with their father.

"Yeah, but someday you'll find the perfect guy for you," Laura replied, tipping her head back.

"That brings me to something I need to talk to you about."

"I'm going to leave you girls alone a bit to talk," Aaron said, moving toward the door. "I'll be back in a little while. I'm going to get some coffee."

"Sure, Dad," Laura answered with a frown.

Whitney and her father exchanged a knowing look before he disappeared out the door.

"What's up, Whitney? You're acting strange."

"I wanted to talk to you about something. How would you feel if I didn't go back to L.A. with you and Dad?"

"I don't understand. Why wouldn't you be going to back home with us?"

"Well, honey, I've met someone here in Flagstaff."

"I'm happy for you, sis. If you need to stay here then I understand."

My sister needs me. I'm being selfish by wanting to stay here.

"You know what? Never mind. I'll come home with you and help you. You're going to need it with the baby coming and everything."

"Are you sure? You know I'd love it if you could. It's going to be hard going home without Matt."

Whitney wrapped her arms around her sister's shoulders and prayed Brett and Ryan would understand.

* * * *

Whitney sat on the leather couch in Brett's living room, tears rolling down her face when he walked through the door.

"Aw, sweetheart. What's wrong?" he asked when he pulled her into his arms. She curled up against him and rubbed her nose on his shirt.

"It's Laura," she murmured.

"She's okay, isn't she?"

She nodded.

"Then what, honey?"

"I went to the hospital to tell her about you, me, and Ryan, but I couldn't, Brett."

"Oh."

Raising her face, their gazes locked, and he brushed the tears from her cheeks with his thumb. "I'm sorry. I'm proud to be with you two. Really I am, but it's hard to make people understand how you could love two men. It's not normal, is it?"

"For most people, no, it's not, Whit. For us, it works, and that's what is important."

“I know.”

Her nose found the crook of his neck, and he had to suck in a ragged breath to keep from burying himself in her warm heat. *Right now she needs me to be the understanding lover, not the overbearing brute after what’s between her legs.*

Her lips brushed his neck.

Shit.

The rough pad of her tongue flicked against the skin, and a groan rumbled in his chest.

“Whit,” he murmured. “You’re torturing me, here.”

“Good. Make love to me, Brett.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I want to feel your skin against mine. I want your hard length deep inside me.”

Pushing to his feet, he swept her up in his arms and headed for his room. He knew there would times when he would be alone with her and times when Ryan would have her to himself, but up until now, it hadn’t really happened. Yeah, the first time she’d been with either of them, he’d had her for a short time alone, but Ryan had joined them afterward, taking away the cuddle time Brett craved. He’d get it this time. Holding a woman after sex was special to him.

They reached the edge of his bed, and he gently laid her on the spread.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he whispered when he skimmed his fingers across her cheek. He cupped the back of her head and tugged her closer.

“Make love to me.”

“Oh, I plan to, sweetheart. Very slowly.”

Cheeks flushing with desire and eyes sparkling like diamonds, her face held him spellbound for a moment as he stared. His woman, his friend, his mate. The love he held in his heart for her encompassed his entire soul. He never thought he’d ever feel this way toward anyone after Corrine, but his feelings for Whitney amazed him beyond

anything he could think of. And to share her with Ryan made her all the more special.

One knee pressed into the edge of the mattress as his lips locked with hers and his palm slipped across her breast. He settled over the top of her, chest to breast, and licked her lips.

“Brett, please.”

“We aren’t going to rush this, sweetheart. I want to savor every second with you.”

Skimming his mouth across her cheek, he made his way to her ear and nibbled the lobe with his teeth. He could feel her heart hammering against his chest, matching the rapid tempo of his, when he continued his journey down her neck. When the buttons on the front of her blouse were free, he slipped his hand inside and palmed her breast through her bra.

“I love black lace.”

“I know. Why do you think I wore this today?”

“For me?”

She nodded. “And a skimpy little thong.”

“Damn.”

Frown lines settled between her eyebrows. “I missed you so much,” she murmured.

“I missed you, too, sweetheart. You have no idea how hard it was to keep from coming to L.A.”

Her fingers trailed across his face. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“For putting you and Ryan through hell the last few weeks. I can’t imagine how you must have felt knowing what we shared, but not being able to tell me.”

“It’s over now. We’re together again. That’s what counts.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too, and I plan on showing you just how much for several hours.”

A wicked giggle burst from her lips. “Several hours, huh?”

“Oh, yeah.”

With a quick flick of his fingers, the front of her bra lay open, giving him free access to the round flesh he craved. One hand skimmed across the nipple of her left breast while he encircled the right one with his tongue. He sucked it between his lips, and she moaned softly as she arched toward his mouth. He slid his hand across her flat stomach until he reached the waistband of her jeans and released the button with a twist of his wrist.

“Too many clothes,” he whispered against her skin. Two fingers slipped under the edge of her underwear.

“Definitely.” With a slight shift of her hips, she gave him better access to the treasure he sought.

One finger glanced over her clit, and she whimpered her need as she spread her thighs farther apart. Pleading eyes met his when he shifted above her. “Patience, sweetheart.”

She lifted her hips and he grasped her pants, tugging, pulling them off swiftly, and then tossing them across the room in his haste. Her soft giggle met his ear and he smiled.

“Brat,” he grumbled.

“Who’s the impatient one now?”

“We’ll see how needy you are when I eat you until you scream.” He kissed the inside of her knee, working his way up her thigh. A quick swipe of his tongue had her moaning her need, but when he blew a warm puff of air over her wet clit, the whimper that burst from her lips made him smile. He had her on edge, and he liked it that way. Knowing just how she liked to be licked, he settled his tongue against the bunch of nerves and toggled quickly. She tossed her head from side to side on the pillow, and her hands fisted the bedspread beneath her. When she teetered on the edge, he removed his mouth and kissed the insides of her thighs.

“Son-of-a-bitch. Don’t stop.”

Brett nipped the tender skin on her legs, she yelped at the pain he was sure it caused, and then groaned when he soothed it with his tongue.

“Quit teasing me. I need...”

“What do you need, sweetheart? Tell me.”

“I need to come, Brett. Please. Oh God, please.”

The torture in her voice snapped his control. Sucking her clit between his lips and sliding two fingers into her vagina, he felt her pussy quiver and tighten when she arched her back and screamed his name.

He lapped up her sweetness until she sighed and relaxed. Working his way back up her stomach, he kissed every inch of skin until he reached her breast. Palming the round flesh, he sucked her nipple into his mouth and flicked it with his tongue until she squirmed.

“More?”

“God, yes. I need you inside me. But first, I want your skin against mine,” she murmured, tugging at the tail of his shirt. Moving from his position above her, he stood on the side of the bed, whipping his shirt over his head. When he went to grab the button at his waist, she stopped him.

“My turn.”

She slipped the button free and slid her hands around the waist of his pants before she worked them down over his buttocks.

“Mmm...”

Once his jeans pooled at his ankles, she scooted closer and ran her tongue over the head of his cock.

“Whit.”

The hum of her answer on his flesh sent his own desire spiraling out of control, but when she went down on him and palmed his balls, he thought for sure he’d died and gone to heaven. Bumping against the back of her throat when he rocked his hips, he fucked her mouth until he bordered on ecstasy.

“Whitney, sweetheart.” He rocked forward again. “Baby, I don’t want to come in your mouth. I want to be buried in your sweet heat.”

Releasing him with a quick flick of her tongue, she tilted her head back and smiled. “Good. That’s what I want, too.”

Tucking her hair behind her ear, he kissed her as he pushed her back against the bed, and she cradled his hips with her thighs. Penetrating her, he closed his eyes and fought for control over the desire to bury himself until they were flesh against flesh. He rocked slightly, and she lifted her hips to take whatever he wanted to give.

“All, Brett. I need all of you.”

“You have no idea how incredible this feels,” he whispered.

“I’m on the receiving end here. I have a clue. Trust me. Fuck me, Brett. Hard and fast.”

With a hearty groan, he sheathed his cock deep inside her pussy until he thought he’d go mad with the sensations. Never had anyone felt so right, so perfect, surrounding him, pulling every feeling, every need from his heart to hold within her grasp.

Lifting his head, he looked deep into her eyes and said, “I love you, Whit. Don’t ever think I don’t. I want you with me always.”

A tear slipped from her eye and disappeared into the hair at her temple. “I love you, too. God, I love you so much. The thought of being away from you and Ryan tears me apart.”

“Good. Then you’ll stay?”

“I couldn’t leave even if I wanted to. You two hold my heart in the palms of your hands.”

Gritting his teeth as he fought for control, he shifted his hips, sliding in and out of her warmth, loving each stroke, each quiver of her pussy around him.

He lifted his chest and braced himself on his arms when he finally had to speed up. With every rock of his hips, she whimpered. When she wrapped her legs around his back and locked her ankles, he couldn’t hold back any longer.

“Oh God. Oh God,” he whispered with each slap of his pelvis against hers. The answering pleas of need drove him over the edge.

“Brett!” she screamed as her pussy clamped down on his cock. Hot cum spilled from inside her to coat his flesh.

One last pump of his hips, and he shot his seed deep into her vagina.

Collapsing against her, he buried his nose in her neck as she softly ran her hands through the hair at his nape and then down his back.

“I love you,” she whispered.

“I love you, too.”

“I’m hungry. How about you?”

“Me, too, but not necessarily for food,” he replied with a low growl.

He slid from her warmth and pulled her against his side when he lay against the pillows. Her head rested on his chest, and he drew small circles on her arm, loving the feel of her next to him.

“Are you always this insatiable?” she asked, threading her fingers through the hair on his chest.

“Only since you came along. You better be taking your vitamins, woman. We’ve got a lot of lovin’ to make up for.”

“I’m going to love every minute of it, too.”

* * * *

Fucking bitch! You’ll pay for this. Eric stared at the divorce papers and the copy of her life insurance policy in his hands. *Cut me out of all that money? I don’t think so, Whitney my love. You can’t get rid of me that easily. You’ll leave that little sanctuary at some point, and then, I’ll have you right where I want you, begging for mercy as I ream your ass with my dick. Your boy toys won’t be able to save you.*

An evil laugh bubbled from his lips as he tucked both sets of papers into his suitcase and snapped it closed. Getting out of jail had

been the easy part. It was always good to have connections. Bail bondsmen, hoods, gangbangers, they all came in handy at some point.

When she's dead, with her memory lapse, it won't take anything to have her declared incompetent. I can claim she was mentally unstable when she filed for the divorce and changed the insurance policy.

He tapped his fingers against his temple.

Think. A plan. I need a plan.

Moments later, a smile formed on his mouth.

I'll take all of them out. Her lovers and Whitney. I may even rip into those two guys and get three pieces of ass before I'm done. Wouldn't that be the best?

The door to the sleazy hotel room opened with a squeak of hinges before he let it slam behind him as he headed to his rental car. After he'd been arrested, Aaron Morris made damned sure the money in his bank accounts had been frozen. Luckily, Eric knew several loan sharks in Los Angeles that were more than willing to front him some cash, at a hefty price, of course.

I need a gun.

Stevie. He remembered the gang leader he'd help spring several months before. The man had been arrested for murder, and Eric had been his attorney. Fortunately for Stevie, the evidence against him didn't amount to much. How Aaron Morris ever thought he could put the man behind bars on the shit they'd had, he'd never know. Eric relished that victory over his father-in-law.

When Stevie had walked free, the last words he said to Eric hadn't meant anything at the time, but they did now.

"I owe you, man. You ever need anything, anything at all, you call me. I take care of my homies."

Sitting in Flagstaff, in front of the Denny's on Milton, Eric knew what he needed, and Stevie could get it for him. Grabbing his cell phone from his jacket pocket, he found the number he sought, pushed talk, and held it up to his ear.

"Yo."

“Stevie?”

“Yeah,” the voice grumbled.

“It’s Eric Scott.”

“Hey, homie. What’s up?”

“I need a favor.”

“No problem, man. You know I’ll take care of you. What’cha need?”

“A gun.”

“Can you meet me?”

“I’m not in L.A., Stevie. I’m in Flagstaff. Can you take care of me?”

“Sure. Let me make a couple of phone calls. What kind do you need?”

“Something lightweight and easy to handle.”

“Gotcha covered. I’ll call you back in, say, an hour.”

Eric shut the phone with a click and chuckled. *Sometimes it helps being a criminal defense attorney for some of the biggest gangbangers in Los Angeles.*

Three hours later, Eric stood outside an abandoned warehouse, shuffling his feet nervously as he looked around. Only the wind could be heard, banging a loose door against its frame. Gangbangers couldn’t be trusted. He knew that, but he needed this. A gun, something no one could trace if it was ever found.

An older Cadillac Deville stopped in front of him, the loud rap music bouncing off the metal of the large building behind him. Sweat poured down Eric’s back. *I shouldn’t be nervous. This is the same type of guy I’ve defended several times in L.A.*

A twenty-something-year-old guy stepped out of the car and slammed the door behind him.

“Scott?”

“Yeah.”

“Stevie sent me.”

“Good. You got it?”

“Of course I’ve got it, moron. What the hell else would I be doing out here?”

Eric’s gaze narrowed on the man. He didn’t like him, but he wasn’t here to make friends.

“Where’s the cash?”

“How much?”

“Five.”

“Five hundred?”

The punk cocked an eyebrow and grinned, showing off the two gold teeth in the front of his mouth. “Got a problem with that?”

“Son-of-a-bitch.” Eric pulled out his wallet, counted out the bills and shoved them at the man. “Hand it over.”

A nine-millimeter Berretta appeared from somewhere Eric didn’t want to contemplate.

“Bullets?”

“In the clip.”

Eric grasped the grip, held it up and pointed down the barrel, aiming at a distant object.

“Perfect. Thanks.”

“No problem. Stevie said to take care of you. As I’m sure you know, being an attorney and all, it’s been ground.”

“I don’t want it traceable to me in any way.”

The man nodded, slid back inside his car like the snake Eric compared him to in his mind, and peeled out of the dirt parking area in a cloud of dust.

Eric headed for his own car, chuckling when he thought of how he would take Whitney out before the end of the week. The Painted Desert seemed to be a perfect place to stash a body or three.

Chapter Nine

“I love you, Brett, and tell Ryan I love him, too,” Whitney said, standing next to the small set of steps that led into the jet. Brett had brought Whitney, Laura and their father to the airport, but Ryan was at work.

“I love you, too, Whit. We completely understand your need to go home and help Laura.”

She looked at the small window several feet away where she could see Laura’s profile. “Thanks. It means the world to me.”

Brett ran his hand down her arm and then pulled her into his embrace. “It’ll be all right. We’ll be here when you’re ready to come back. Maybe we can come out and visit in a couple of weeks.”

“I’d love it if you could. I shouldn’t have to stay there too long, I hope. A couple of months at the most, I would think.” With a small sniff, she stepped forward and kissed him.

“You’d better get going. This trip will be taxing enough on her.”

She headed up the stairs, but glanced behind her one last time and lifted her hand to wave. Once inside, she took one of the leather seats next to her sister. The stairs retracted and the door closed, echoing the loneliness creeping into her heart.

I’m leaving my heart behind.

“Are you okay, Whitney?” Laura asked.

“Yeah. I guess.”

“You should have stayed here with him.”

With him? You mean with them.

“You need me, honey. I’ll be there for you. They’ll still be here when I get back.”

“They?”

Shit. I don't want to have this discussion with her right now.

“Brett and Ryan. They live in the same house where I stayed so I always think of it as their house.”

“Oh. I can see how you would. Kind of like having a brother living with you and Brett.”

“Mmm...yeah.”

Drop it, Laura. I can't go into this. You aren't strong enough nor is it a good time with Matthew's death.

“How much have you got for the baby?”

Sadness reflected in Laura's eyes. “Not a lot. Matthew and I had planned to go shopping when we got home from this trip,” she whispered as tears welled up in her eyes. “I'm sorry.”

“It's fine. You need to grieve,” Whitney replied.

“What am I going to do without him, Whitney? He was my life.”

“I know. Your heart will heal in time. Don't rush anything.”

“I can't even imagine myself with anyone else. I've been with Matthew since high school.”

Laura continued to talk and reminisce about her life with her husband, the coming baby, and everything in between while Whitney held her hand and listened.

“You'll stay at the house with me, right?”

“Of course.”

“I love you, sis.”

“I love you, too, Laura. You should rest. It's been a long day.”

Laura nodded and leaned the chair back before she closed her eyes.

Within an hour, the plane touched down in Los Angeles, and their father had the two of them hustled into a car headed for their parents' house. The plan was to spend the night there and then go to Laura's the next day.

The only thing Whitney could think of was getting on her cell and calling her men.

When the car pulled up to the house, Whitney saw the door fly open and her mother rush out.

“Laura, honey. Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, Mom,” Laura answered. The look on Laura’s face gave Whitney pause.

What the hell?

“You need to rest, Laura. You’ve been through so much the last few days.”

“What do you care? You couldn’t even leave your little social parties to be there for your daughter!” Laura yelled as tears streaked down her cheeks.

“Laura, please. You don’t understand. You’re distraught and...”

“Leave me the hell alone. I don’t care what your excuse is. You should have been there for me.” Laura raced up the front stairs and into the house.

“Aaron?” her mother asked.

“Don’t start, Alice. You should have come with me to her bedside. She needed her mother, and you had your own agenda,” her father said before too went inside.

“Whitney?”

“It doesn’t matter, Mom. You’ll have to work this out with Laura.” After she walked into the house, she found her cell phone and headed up to her old room.

When she dialed the house, Brett answered.

“Hey, baby.”

“Hi. We’re home, or should I say back at my parents’. This isn’t home anymore. Home is where you and Ryan are. God, I wish I would have stayed there with you.”

“I know, honey, but your sister needs you.”

“I need you—you and Ryan.”

“Well, hopefully it will only be for a couple of weeks and you’ll be back here in my arms where you belong.”

"I miss you already. I missed you before we even left," she whispered. One finger traced the pattern on her bedspread.

"I miss you, too, baby. God, I want to hold you so bad."

A heavy sigh rushed from between her lips. "I should go. We'll be going to Laura's tomorrow. It's going to be a rough day. Dad is taking care of the arrangements for her, but she'll still have to go through his things and all."

"Take care of yourself, too, Whit."

"I will. Stop being such a doctor, Brett."

"I love you. This is me talking, not the doctor."

"I love you, too. I'll try and call tonight and tomorrow. Is Ryan off?"

"Yeah, he'll be home, but I'll be working."

"I'll call again before bed tonight so I can talk to him for a few minutes."

"I'll tell him."

After a couple of more 'I love you's', she hung up the phone and stretched out on her bed.

No one except her father knew of her relationship with Brett and Ryan. She wanted to tell them—needed to, in fact, but she held back. Not knowing if they would understand, the thought of being an outcast by her family wasn't something she wanted to contemplate.

"And what the hell is up with Mom? She's never been the overly loving type mother, but to turn her back on the needs of her daughter for her social events?" Whitney shook her head and sighed. Dinner would be ready soon, and hunger gnawed at her stomach. She hadn't eaten since breakfast, but unfortunately, she knew the meal would be a strained affair.

Without meaning to, Whitney drifted off to sleep until her mother knocked on the door of her bedroom and announced dinner.

"I'll be right down."

The moment she stepped into the dining room, she could feel the thickness in the air and the uncomfortable tension.

“Uh. How are you doing, Laura?” she asked her sister as she took the seat next to her.

“I’m fine,” Laura answered, but didn’t meet Whitney’s eyes.

Whitney squeezed her fingers and met her father’s gaze over the table. “Don’t ask,” he mouthed.

I hate this.

“When are we leaving tomorrow, Laura?” she asked.

“Early.”

“Okay. I’ll set my alarm.”

“Have you talked to Brett and Ryan?” her father questioned.

Heat crawled up her neck and splashed across her cheeks when Laura and her mother each gave her a quizzical look.

“I talked to Brett before I fell asleep. Ryan is at work. I’ll call back before bed.”

“Brett seems to be a really great guy, Whitney. I’m sure you’ll be happy together. You know I hated Eric anyway.”

“I know, Laura,” she said with a smile. Her sister had never been quiet about her dislike of Whitney’s ex-husband.

The rest of the meal passed in uncomfortable silence and when she could, Whitney excused herself and went to her room.

Within seconds of her dialing Brett’s house, Ryan picked up.

“Hey, princess.”

“Hi. How did work go?”

“Fine, but I wish I would have been there when you left.”

“I wish you could have been, too. I miss you terribly.”

“I miss you, too, princess, but you’ll be home soon, right?”

“I hope so, Ryan. This separation is killing me. We only got reacquainted a few days before I came back here again.”

“Everything will be okay. I love you and so does Brett. We’ll be fine.”

“I know. I want both of you to hold me so badly.”

“Soon.”

“Not soon enough, but I better go. We’ll be heading to Laura’s in the morning and the next several days are going to be hard. The funeral is set for the day after tomorrow and then I’ll have to go through all of his things with her. I can’t even imagine what she’s going through. I’d be so lost if either you or Brett were gone.”

“Okay. We’ll talk to you again soon. Call when you can.”

“I will. I love you.”

“I love you, too. Sleep well.”

After she hung up the phone, she went into the bathroom to take a long, hot bath. It would be a long night without her men there to hold her.

* * * *

Two months. Two months of pure hell since she’d seen Brett and Ryan. They hadn’t been able to come out to Los Angeles and she wasn’t sure she wanted them to. Not because she didn’t love them or because she wouldn’t kill to see them again, but because she still hadn’t told her sister about her relationship. It was now or never.

“Laura?” she called as she walked into the living room.

“Hey, sis. What’s up?”

“I know I told you I would be here for you, but it’s time for me to go back to Arizona.”

“Its okay, Whitney. I understand,” Laura said. “I’m sure Brett misses you terribly.”

“Yeah, and I miss him, too,” Whitney replied after she took a seat across from her sister. “There’s something I need to tell you though, and I pray you understand.”

Laura’s eye narrowed and she tilted her head to the side. “Spill it, sis. Something is obviously bothering you.”

“Do you happen to remember the guy who flew with you to the hospital?”

“Vaguely.”

“His name is Ryan O’Rourke. Actually, Brett and Ryan are cousins. Their mothers are twins.”

“Okay. Now you’re confusing me.”

“Brett and Ryan live together. Well, Ryan rents an apartment over Brett’s garage.”

“Yeah.”

“When I stayed there with them, I got really close to them. Both of them.”

A moment later, her eyes widened in realization, and her mouth formed a small oh. “Oh my God, Whitney! You’re attracted to both of them, aren’t you?”

“Not only attracted, Laura. I’m in love with both of them.”

“But, how can you be? How are you going to choose?”

“I’m not.”

“I’m really confused. You’re not what?”

“I’m not going to choose between them, Laura.”

Laura shook her head as confusion zipped across her face.

Whitney exhaled forcefully. “We are a threesome, if you want to call it that. From what I’m told, the correct term is ménage.”

“You can’t be serious? You are going to be in a relationship with both men?”

“Yes,” Whitney murmured, praying her sister would understand.

Laura jumped to her feet and started to pace. “I don’t believe you! That’s disgusting, Whitney, both men touching you at the same time, both men making love to you at the same time.” Her lips curled in revulsion. “You’re no sister of mine if you are going to participate in that kind of relationship.”

“Laura, listen to me. I know you’re upset over Matthew’s death, but this is what I want. I love them.”

“Get out, Whitney. I don’t want you near me. Go back to Mom and Dad’s until you leave,” Laura whispered with a shiver as she rubbed her arms.

“You can’t mean that.”

“Yes, I do. Stay in your ménage, but don’t come near me anymore.”

Tears burned behind her eyelids as she pressed her lips together to keep them from falling. “I’m sorry, Laura. I wish you could understand. I love Brett and Ryan with all of my heart. It’s no different than your love for Matt.”

Laura faced the window and refused to even acknowledge Whitney’s leaving. Whitney moved toward the bedroom she’d been using since she came to Laura’s, but glanced at her sister one last time.

* * * *

“Thanks for setting up for the jet to take me back to Flagstaff, Dad.”

“It’s what dads are for, honey.” After he gave her a quick hug, he said, “I’m sorry about Laura.”

“I hope she comes around. I would hate to lose my sister over this, but I love Brett and Ryan.”

“I know you do, and I’m glad you’ve found happiness, even if it’s in an unconventional relationship. You have to do what’s right for you.”

“Thank you for understanding.”

“I love you, Whitney.”

“I love you, too, Daddy. Hopefully everyone can come up for Christmas.”

“I’d like to, but I’m not sure about your mother and Laura.”

“Well, at least Cindy and Sherry understand.”

“You’d better get going.”

“Yeah. I’ll call you when I get home.”

After quick kisses goodbye, she boarded the plane and within moments she was headed home. The one hour flight seemed to take forever. Anticipation made her jittery.

When they taxied in, she flipped open her phone and dialed first Brett and then Ryan and got no answer.

“Where the hell are they? I told them I’d call,” she grumbled when the plane stopped and the stairs slowly made their descent to the ground. When she stepped off the plane, the sight that met her eyes made tears well up and threaten to fall.

A huge sign saying, “Welcome Home Whitney” graced the top of the hangar and her two men leaned against the side of Brett’s car with their arms crossed over their chest and huge grins on their handsome faces.

With a laugh, she ran towards them and flung herself first into Ryan’s arms, and then into Brett’s. Once she had kissed them both thoroughly, she said, “Let’s go home.”

“After you, princess,” Ryan replied, opening the door.

Silence enveloped the car on the ride back to the house. She wasn’t sure what to say now that they were alone again and it appeared she would be staying, at least for a while. Sure, all three of them had confessed their love for each other, and Brett had mentioned her staying, but did that mean they wanted her there permanently?

Not liking where her thoughts were going, she kept her silence until they reached the house and headed inside.

“All right, Whit. What’s wrong?” Brett asked, trapping her against the granite countertop in the kitchen.

“Nothing. Why?”

“Your silence in the car and the confusion on your face tell me otherwise.”

Dropping her gaze to his chest, she chewed her bottom lip until he stuck two fingers under her chin and forced her to look into his eyes again.

A shrug lifted her shoulders. “I guess I don’t know what to expect from here.”

“I don’t understand.”

Ryan stood next to Brett with a confused look, too.

"I love you, both of you, but I've never done this before. I know how a regular relationship is supposed to work, but..."

"You want to know where we go from here," Ryan said.

"Yeah. I mean, normally if two people confess their love, they move into together, get married, or whatever."

"I thought we were at the moving in part, sweetheart. Don't you want to stay with us?" Brett asked.

They aren't getting this at all.

"Of course I do. I want that more than anything, even if my family doesn't understand. If I didn't, I would have stayed in Los Angeles."

"Then stay," Ryan replied, moving toward the refrigerator. "How hard is that?"

"Okay. Say I stay. What then? What happens in the future? I obviously can't marry both of you."

"Whoa. No one said anything about marriage," Brett answered, stepping back.

Her heart dropped to her toes. *I hope this wasn't a huge mistake.*

"I mean. Maybe someday, but for now, we just need to leave things the way they are," Brett added.

Cocking her head to the side, she finally began to understand. "You've been burned."

Brett moved toward the living room and took a seat in one of the leather chairs, not meeting her gaze when she sat across from him.

"Tell me about her, Brett."

"I don't want to talk about it, Whit."

"How can you say you love me if you're still hurting?"

"I do love you, but what's in the past is just that, in the past."

"And I want to avoid the same issues, but I can't if you don't tell me what they were."

He tipped his head back against the chair and sighed. Whitney didn't think he'd answer until the words spilled from his mouth, making her heart break in two for him.

“She cheated on me, Whitney. I caught her fucking one of my co-workers in the doctors’ lounge at work. I came in for an extra shift she didn’t know I was working. I walked in on them.”

Tears rolled down her cheeks. *No wonder he tried to tempt me into having sex with him while I was still married to Eric. He wanted to test me.* Dropping on her knees at his feet, she laid her cheek against his knee.

“Did you and Ryan ever share her?”

“No.”

“You don’t think of it as cheating to share me with Ryan?”

Fingers slipped through her hair as he let a curl slide between them.

“There’s a difference when I share you with him. We both love you and want you here with us. My relationship with Corrine never met my needs. I see that now. She only wanted the prestige of being married to a doctor, not to be my other half. You are the other half of my heart, or third if that makes sense. But, I’m not sure I could ever marry you. Are you okay with that?”

“If that’s the way it has to be, Brett. As I said before, I can’t marry both of you anyway. If that means we all stay single in the eyes of the law, then so be it. It doesn’t mean I won’t think of you two as my husbands if we get to that.” Lifting her head, she met his intense gaze. “I think we are rushing things right now.”

“I think so, too,” Ryan said, taking her hand and pulling her to her feet. “Enough of this serious stuff. I need to hold you.”

“Are you saying you’ve never been in a serious relationship, Ryan?”

He frowned and pulled her down on the couch with him. “I never said that.”

Damn it! Both of them have been hurt. Am I walking into two broken hearts that may never be able to move on?

“So what’s your story?”

“I was engaged. Sara died in the canyon. She’s the reason I became a rescue paramedic. I felt so useless when I sat there holding her hand as she took her last breath.”

“Shit, Ryan. I’m sorry. No wonder you were so intense when you picked me up.”

“It’s okay. Five years was a long time ago.”

Whitney took his face between her hands and kissed him. Pressing her forehead against his, she looked deep into his hazel eyes, but only saw the love he held for her there. No pain, no regret, just love.

Wiggling around so she could see Brett, she held out her hand, hoping he would accept her offer and join them on the couch. She needed to feel the two men she loved next to her more than anything at that moment.

After a moment’s hesitation, he moved to her side and slid in next to her.

“I want to say something to both of you, and I want you to be quiet until I’m finished, okay?”

They both nodded.

“I love you, both of you, more than anything, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. If that includes marriage, that’s fine. If it doesn’t, that’s okay, too. We’ll take it one day at a time, but I want you both to know that I’m not going anywhere.” She touched Ryan’s face. “I’m not leaving.” Cupping Brett’s cheek, she said, “And I’m not going to cheat on either of you. I would never do that. It’s not in my makeup. My father taught me to value fidelity above all else, and after Eric’s cheating, I couldn’t put anyone through what I went through. I felt like I wasn’t good enough, couldn’t keep him satisfied sexually, if he had to cheat. If, for some reason, either of you get to the point you feel there’s something missing, please tell me. Communication has to be the most important thing in this relationship. If we don’t have that, we don’t have anything.” After a quick brush of her lips against Brett’s lips, then Ryan’s, she sat back

and smiled. "I'm really horny, so one of you better make love to me soon."

With a warm chuckle, Brett swept her up in his arms and headed down the hall toward her room as Ryan followed close behind.

"How about both of us?"

"Mmm...sounds like a plan to me."

"Shall we flip for who gets the back and who gets the front? Heads I get the front, tails I get back," Ryan said behind them.

"Incorrigible, both of you," she whispered, already feeling her pussy clench. The thought of both of them making love to her at the same time made her wet and ready. *I'm such a wanton woman, but God, I love it!*

* * * *

Eric watched from behind the curtained window as the three of them moved up the hall. *I bet she's fucking both of them at the same time. Little bitch! She'd never let me fuck her ass, but she's letting them.* He moved to the window a little farther up from where he'd been watching and saw the light flick on for a moment. The sight through the gauze curtains on the window pissed him off even more as the light went off again. His dick swelled behind the fly of his pants as he watched the two men peel her shirt off over her head. The one named Ryan stood behind her, kissing her bare shoulder and cupping her breasts in his hands as the one named Brett kissed her from his position in front. Next, her bra disappeared, and Brett took her nipple in his mouth, sucking it until she squirmed. Ryan slipped a hand inside the front of her jeans, sliding his finger between her legs. Eric could hear her whimpers of need from his spot outside and her cries of passion as she called their names.

Unable to stand the need raging through his blood as he watched, Eric unzipped his pants and wrapped his hand around his cock as Whitney got fucked by the two men inside the house. Ryan ate her

pussy and finger fucked her while she sucked Brett's cock deep into her mouth. Eric's strokes got faster and faster the more she begged for them to give her what she wanted.

When they finally got around to the actual act the pain in Eric's dick and balls bordered on excruciating. Ryan slipped into her pussy and Brett reamed her ass as cum spurted from Eric's cock, shooting over his hand while he muffled his cry of satisfaction by biting his free hand. He leaned back against the tree, trying to catch his breath.

I haven't been that damned horny in a long time.

Whitney screamed as she came, and Eric heard the satisfied grunts of the two men a moment later.

Eric quickly zipped his pants back up and scooted from his position, returning to his car for the gun on the seat. *Now's the time, while they are sedated and satisfied from their romp.* He grabbed the Berretta and headed back toward the house. The handle on the front entrance turned easily in his hand as he quietly let himself inside and shut it behind him. It took him a minute to get the layout and which direction he needed to head to find the bedroom where the threesome lay sedated.

The whisper of voices met his ear as he moved down the hall. Whitney giggled, and Eric ground his teeth together. Her laugh always did grate on his nerves.

Turning the knob quietly, he eased the door open a crack, enough that he could see the three of them cuddled together on the bed. Rolling his eyes, he pushed it open a little farther.

"Isn't this fucking cozy."

Three sets of eyes fastened on him as he leaned against the doorjamb.

"Eric," she whispered.

Ryan jumped from one side of the bed buck-ass naked and growled. Rage turned his lips into a scowl of contempt while his eyebrows slashed over his eyes in a menacing frown.

“Uh-uh. Be careful, cowboy,” Eric spat, waving the gun in front of him. “I don’t think you really want to find out if this thing is loaded or not. Do you?”

“Ryan!” Whitney screamed. “Please.”

“I’ll kill you with my bare hands,” Ryan snarled.

“I doubt that, buddy, but you’re welcome to try. Blood doesn’t bother me,” Eric said as he turned the gun on the couple sitting on the bed. “Do you want it to be your cousin’s or Whitney’s?”

Ryan didn’t move.

“That’s better. Now get dressed.”

Whitney and Brett got up from the bed and reached for their clothes, and Ryan moved back to where he lay on the floor.

“Not you, love,” he stated, pointing the gun. “You’re going in nothing more than a t-shirt and shoes.”

“Eric, please. Do you want to humiliate me, too?”

An evil laugh ripped from his mouth. “I spent three days in a filthy jail cell, fending off men who wanted to stick their prick in my ass, take my clothes, and make me suck their dick because of you, and you have the balls to ask me that?” He waved the gun again. “No, sweetheart, you’ll go just as you are.”

Brett finished dressing and wrapped an arm around her shoulders when Eric waved them toward the door with Ryan following.

“Get the car keys, cowboy. You’re driving.”

* * * *

Whitney shivered in the afternoon air, even though it was still warm outside.

Eric sat behind Ryan. She sat in front, and Brett sat behind her.

“Where are you taking us, Eric?” she asked, trapping her hands between her knees to still the shaking.

“Somewhere no one will ever find you.” He pressed the gun to Brett’s temple, and she whimpered, scared he’d do something like pull the trigger.

“Eric. I’ll do anything you want, just leave them alone, please.”

“Isn’t that fucking sweet! I couldn’t give a shit about you or what you want, Whitney.”

“What do you want from me?”

“Other than to ass fuck you like you let them do? You never let me even when I asked.”

She bit her lip as tears rolled down her face.

“It doesn’t matter. Maria and Mallory made up for your lack of imagination in the bedroom.”

“Maria and Mallory? Good God, Eric. How many women were you sleeping with while we were married?”

“Anyone I could get, sweetheart. You were an absolute bore. Now, shut your mouth.” He pressed the gun harder against Brett’s head again. “Drive. Interstate Forty. We’ve got a ways to go.”

The tension in the car felt like it could have been cut with a knife as they continued to drive into the fading night. *Think. I’ve got to think of something to stop this.*

They pulled up to the ranger station going into the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest sometime later.

“Here.” Eric handed Ryan the money needed, and she could see Ryan trying to communicate to the ranger something was amiss, but the man ignored them and waved them on through.

They continued to drive until they pulled into the small turn-out Eric indicated.

“Out of the car,” he ordered. Once they all stood in front of the car, he waved the gun toward the vast desert in front of them. “Walk.”

“You can’t be serious, Eric. There’s nothing out there except emptiness.”

“What does it matter? Within an hour or so, there won’t be any reason for you to care. Your bodies will lay in the middle of that

expanse, waiting for the buzzards and whatever else wants to feast on your flesh. I'll be headed back to L.A. to pick up where I left off."

"My father will—"

"Your father won't do shit, Whitney. He's a dried-up old man who should have retired years ago and let me take over the office. I could have made them famous."

"Famous for what, Eric? Defending gangbangers and hoodlums, making sure they never did time for their crimes?"

Eric pulled back his hand and slapped her hard across the face, throwing her to the ground. Brett grabbed her hands and helped her to her feet as Ryan growled low in his throat.

"What'cha gonna do, cowboy?"

"You better plan on using that thing, because if you leave either Brett or me alive, you'll be a dead man before you can make it back to the car."

"Oh, I plan to. Now, walk."

Ryan and Brett flanked her, helping her to walk as they headed down the embankment.

"We have to think of something," she murmured.

"Don't worry, princess."

"How can I not worry, Ryan? He's going to kill us."

"Shut up!" Eric yelled.

They continued to move deeper into the desert and even the blooming flowers and fluttering insects couldn't draw her into their stark beauty.

"That's far enough," Eric said. "Turn around."

They stopped near a pretty bush blooming with bright purple flowers, and Whitney heard a faint buzz near her ear. She turned her head and saw several bees flitting from flower to flower.

Wait, Eric is allergic to bee stings.

Shifting to her left, she tried to move around so Eric stood near the bush. Brett and Ryan moved with her.

Eric seemed oblivious to their movements as he came closer, waving the gun in their faces.

"I'm going to enjoy watching you die. You've been nothing but a pain in my ass since I met you. Wining and dining you. Making you fall in love with me so I could get my hands on your parents' money and your daddy's law firm."

Ryan dove, knocking Eric over and rolling with him across the desert floor as they struggled for the gun. Eric managed to hit Ryan and knock him sideways as he struggled to his feet. Eric shuffled back, tripping over a rock, and falling backwards toward the bush.

He started waving his arms and screaming as a large cloud of bees exploded from the bush and began attacking him.

Whitney, Ryan, and Brett backed up several hundreds of yards. They watched in horror as Eric was stung multiple times, all over his body.

The bees disappeared quickly, and the threesome approached the prone body on the ground.

Eric groaned, his breath coming out in a wheezing sound as he struggled to breathe.

"Whitney," he moaned. "Help me."

Brett did what he was trained to do, dropping next to the man and trying desperately to open his airway.

"Is he allergic to bee stings?" Brett asked, glancing at Whitney.

"Yes."

"Does he have an EpiPen somewhere?"

"I don't know," Whitney answered.

"Search his pockets while I keep his airway open, Ryan."

Ryan didn't move.

"Did you hear me?"

"I heard you."

"We can't leave him like this, even if he was going to kill us. It's against everything we believe in, and you know that," Brett spat. "Now help me."

With a grumble, Ryan moved toward the two men, kicked the gun away from Eric's grasp, and began searching his pockets.

"Here," Ryan said when he'd completed his search, holding out the pen.

"Give it."

"Damn it, Brett!"

"Give it, Ryan. You can't ignore this."

"Fuck!" Ryan stabbed Eric in the leg, pushing the contents of the pen into his skin. "There."

"You have your cell. I saw it in your pocket, Ryan. Call 911."

"Fine." He pulled out his phone and dialed. "I need rescue near the Painted Desert Inn. About a mile into the desert. Bring life support. We have a man with an anaphylactic reaction to a bee sting."

Within several minutes, they could hear the helicopter in the distance as it got near.

"Jack's flying. He'll probably land on that mesa over there," Ryan said, pointing to the nearby flat area.

"They better get here quick. I'm not sure how much longer he can wait. He's about done. I can't keep his airway open. He's swelling too badly."

"Ryan?" a voice called from the distance.

"Over here," he yelled back.

Seconds later, the paramedics were by their side, and Ryan wrapped his arm around her, holding her close. The tremors started in her legs and soon encompassed her whole body.

"It's over, princess. We're safe now."

She watched as Cale and another man she didn't recognize worked on Eric. They gave him more epinephrine and stuck a breathing tube down his throat before they loaded him on the stretcher and headed back for the helicopter.

"Let's get out of here," Brett said, joining Ryan and Whitney before he took her hand. "You okay, sweetheart?"

With short, jerky movements, she nodded but pressed her lips together to hold in the sobs threatening to erupt.

When they reached the car, Ryan opened the trunk and pulled out a blanket. He wrapped it around her shoulders and then pulled her to his chest.

"I was so scared," she whispered, pressing her face to the crook of his neck.

"I know," he murmured into her hair.

Brett pressed against her back, sandwiching her between the two of them and rubbing her arms with his hands. His lips touched her ear. "If anything would have happened to you, he would have had to kill me. I wouldn't have rested until he was dead."

She turned and looked at Brett. "Then why did you try to save him?"

"He hadn't really hurt you at that point. I'm a doctor, Whit. I can't turn my back on a person whose life is in danger, no matter how much I hate them and wish them dead."

"I know, Brett. You wouldn't be the man I love if you could."

"Let's go home," Ryan said, pushing her toward the door.

* * * *

Whitney stood on the back patio the next afternoon, letting the breeze lift the hair from her shoulders as she looked out over the pine trees in the distance. *I wish this whole situation hadn't ended this way, but I guess it's God's way of taking care of things.*

A warm pair of hands came down on her shoulders, pulling her back against the solid chest behind her.

"You okay?" Brett asked.

"I guess."

"There's isn't anything we could have done, Whit. We tried."

"I know. It doesn't make it any easier to accept. Even if he was rotten to the core, I didn't want his death on my conscience."

"It wasn't your fault, sweetheart. He chose the path his life took. God took it out of our hands." He turned her toward him and cupped her face with his hands before he placed a quick kiss on her lips. "Come on," he said, taking her hand in his and tugging her toward the house.

"Where are we going?"

"Out."

"I really don't feel like—"

"I'm not taking no for an answer," he replied.

"Me neither," Ryan answered, coming into the room.

"I didn't know you were home," she said.

"Exactly. Now, go put on that pretty black dress we love so much," Ryan insisted.

With a rush of air from between her lips, she sighed exaggeratedly. "Fine."

"Good girl," Brett told her, swatting her on the butt as she walked away.

When she returned approximately thirty minutes later, she found the two of them sitting in the living room, dressed to the nines.

"What's the occasion?"

"Nothing," Brett answered, standing and moving toward her.

She cocked a questioning eyebrow in disbelief. "Oh yeah, like you two dress in suits every day of the week."

"Don't spoil the surprise, princess."

"What surprise?"

"We aren't telling," Ryan said, pushing her toward the door.

Shaking her head, she slipped inside the car and, through the windshield, watched Brett go around to the driver's side.

Within moments, they were zipping along the curving road she recognized as the one leading to the Grand Canyon. *Okay. Obviously they have something special planned. Maybe dinner at that restaurant we went to before and a pretty sunset wrapped in their arms again. I could do that.*

When the El Tovar came into view, she smiled.

“Dinner up here again?”

“Sort of,” Ryan answered.

Once she stepped out, Ryan’s warm hand found the curve of her lower back as Brett took her hand and escorted her in through the front entrance.

“Wait here,” Brett insisted, directing her and Ryan to stand near the window.

“What’s going on, Ryan?”

“Not telling, princess.”

“Brat.”

A warm, wet tongue traced the shell of her ear. “You’ll love it. I promise,” he whispered.

Brett returned a moment later and took her hand again, escorting her toward the gilded elevator doors.

“The restaurant’s not upstairs.”

“No, it’s not. We’re having our own private party,” Brett replied with a wicked grin.

“Mmm...I like this idea,” she murmured. She traced the lapel of his jacket with her fingernail once they stepped inside. Luckily, no one else joined them before the doors closed.

“Tease,” Brett growled.

“I’ll make it worth your while,” she whispered against his lips. Ryan pressed against her back, his hard cock nudging between her ass cheeks.

As the elevator doors opened, Ryan moved back and grasped one hand while Brett took the other.

“Close your eyes,” Brett told her.

Doing as they instructed, she followed their lead until they’d passed through a door and she heard it shut behind them.

“Okay, open,” Ryan said.

The sight that met her eyes brought tears to the surface, and she had to bite her lip to keep them from falling. “Oh my God.”

There was a table set for three with the finest china and silverware right in front of the big glass windows looking out over the rim of the canyon.

"Your chair, princess," Ryan said, pulling out one of the cushioned seats.

"I can't believe you two did this."

"Why not? We love you, Whit," Brett replied.

"I love you, too, both of you."

The two men exchanged looks.

"What?"

"Shall we?" Brett asked, glancing at Ryan.

"I think it's perfect," Ryan replied.

They turned her chair as she looked at them confused.

Brett took her right hand and Ryan took her left before they both went down on one knee.

"Whitney, you've come to mean everything to both of us, and I know I told you I didn't know whether I'd ever get married," Brett began. "But you've changed my thoughts. Almost losing you out there in the desert really made me think, and I've come to the conclusion I don't want to live without you. I love you with all of my heart. I know we can't legally get married, not the three of us anyway, but in our hearts, you are already our wife. It will have to be between the three of us even though it won't be legal." He pulled out a diamond solitaire from his pocket. "Will you be my wife?"

She opened her mouth to answer, but Ryan put a finger against her lips.

"Before you say anything, it's my turn," Ryan started. "I think I fell in love with you the minute I saw you all battered and bruised. I told you I became a paramedic because of losing Sara in the canyon, but you've made me realize it was my calling all along. It was destiny for me to be the one to find you that day and bring you in. I don't want to live without you either. I can't. You complete me like no one

ever has.” He retrieved a diamond wrap ring and held it up in front of her. “Will you be my wife, too?”

Tears rolled down her cheeks as a sob escaped her lips. Placing her palms against their cheeks, she smiled and nodded. “I’d love to be your wife.”

She leaned in and kissed Brett first and then pressed her lips against Ryan’s, too.

When she sat back in the chair, a watery chuckle left her lips as the two men put the rings together and then slid them on her left hand. *I’m married to them in my heart, and that’s all that counts.*

Chapter Ten

Tiki torches lit the backyard of the Morris home in Los Angeles as a bonfire burned brightly in the fire pit set off to the side.

"Hi, Dad," Whitney said, kissing her father on the cheek.

"I'm glad you could make it, sweetheart. Where are those two lucky men?"

"Getting something to drink from the bar."

"Good. Have you seen your sisters?"

"Not yet." She glanced at Laura who sat off by herself in a lounge chair, cradling her ever-growing stomach. "How's Laura?"

"Okay. She misses Matthew, of course, but she's excited for the birth of the baby," Aaron answered.

"There you are!" Sherry squealed as she and Cindy stopped next to her and grabbed Whitney in a warm hug. "I haven't seen you in forever. How are you, sis?"

"I'm fine, Sherry. Where is that husband of yours?"

Sherry tipped her head toward the bar, and Whitney saw Brett, Ryan, and Carlos in deep conversation. "Talking to your men."

Thank the Lord for Sherry and Cindy. They'd both accepted her decision to be with Brett and Ryan without batting an eyelash. "Uh-oh."

"Yeah. That's what I thought, too," Cindy added.

"Shall we?" she said, tugging both sisters' hands as they headed toward their men. Whitney slipped between Brett and Ryan, wrapping an arm around each one as Sherry stopped next to Carlos, and Cindy stood across from them.

"What are you three up to?" Sherry asked.

“Us? Nothing,” Carlos replied, winking at the other two.

“Brett, Ryan, this is Sherry, my next-to-the-eldest sister. I see you’ve already met Carlos. And this is the oldest sister, Cindy”

“Nice to meet you, Sherry,” Brett said, shaking her hand. “Cindy.” He shook her hand as well.

“You’re the doctor?” Cindy asked.

“Yes.”

“Mmm...interesting.” She turned to Ryan. “And you’re the paramedic?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Well, sis, I’d say you’ve done rather well for yourself. You’ve got not one hunky man, but two,” Cindy said, and Whitney felt heat crawl up her neck.

“Cindy!”

“Just an observation, Whitney.”

Whitney frowned. “I only wish Laura could be as understanding as you two.”

“Don’t worry about her,” Sherry said.

Glancing at her youngest sister, she sighed and turned her attention back to her men.

The group made small talk, drank, and made jokes as the afternoon wore on and the light slowly began to fade, streaking the sky with orange, red, and purple.

Whitney felt a soft touch on her shoulder as she sat snuggled between Brett and Ryan while they stood near the bar.

“Can I talk to you for a minute?” Laura asked and then stepped back.

“Whatever you want to say you can say in front of them. They are my life partners.”

Laura dropped her gaze to the ground for a moment before her eyes returned to Whitney’s.

“I’m sorry for the way I acted. You’re my sister, and I love you. I may not agree with your choice of relationship, but I respect your

decision. I can see how much the three of you care for each other. Maybe someday I'll understand. For now, it's enough to know you love them and they love you."

She wrapped Laura in a warm hug. "I love you, too, Laura. Thank you for this."

When the two women separated, Whitney wiped the tears from her sister's cheek. "I hope someday you'll find someone to love again. I know Matthew would want you to."

"I don't know, sis. Maybe."

"You should come up for a visit." Terror crossed Laura's face, and Whitney felt like hell. "I'm sorry, Laura. I shouldn't have suggested that."

"No. It's okay. I need to face my fears at some point, but not yet. After the baby is born. I shouldn't be traveling too far anyway. This little guy will be making his debut soon."

"I'll you what. Come up for Memorial Day. We'll have a party at the house and invite some of Ryan and Brett's friends. We'll invite the whole family. We've got room, right, Brett?" she asked, glancing at his face. He nodded and smiled as their gazes met. "See?"

Laura laughed and wiped her cheeks. "All right. Memorial Day, then."

Epilogue

The party was in full swing as Whitney watched from the corner, sipping her soda. Her whole family had come up to Flagstaff for the holiday, and she silently hoped Laura might find a nice guy in the bunch of friends they'd invited. Her gaze found Drew and Melissa, Brett and Ryan's cousins. They'd come up from Phoenix with their new baby, and Whitney loved it. It gave her a chance to practice. Having all of them here for the holidays meant the world to her, and hopefully later, she would be able to share her good news with them.

She smiled when she noticed her sister talking to the baby-faced Cale from the rescue crew. *He's such a nice guy. I hope they can find something in common.* Tipping her head to the side, she noticed another set of eyes focused on the couple. Joshua. Ryan had introduced her to the sexy man tonight, and she couldn't help but be happy about the way he looked at Laura. Interest shone in his green eyes while he stood braced against the bar.

"What's the sly grin for, princess?" Ryan asked, nuzzling her ear with his nose when he came up behind her.

"Grin? Me?"

"Are you playing matchmaker?"

"Nope. I'm letting nature takes its course."

He lifted his head and glanced at the couple in the corner. "Maybe." Turning his attention back to her, he said, "Think we can sneak off for a while?"

She sipped her drink again and looked up through her eyelashes. "Once today wasn't enough?"

"I could make love to you every day for the rest of our lives, and it would never be enough with you."

"Well, you'll have to keep that thought in mind and wait for our family and friends to settle in for the night or head home."

"Damn," he grumbled, and she grinned.

Another warm set of hands settled around her waist from behind.

"No sneaking off without me," Brett murmured against her bare shoulder.

"You two. What am I going to do with you?"

"Love us until the end of time," Ryan said.

"That I can do," she whispered and then turned to face them. "We need a minute alone. Follow me."

Grasping one of each man's hands in each of hers, she led them into the kitchen.

"What's up, princess?"

She chewed her bottom lip. "Okay. I know we didn't really talk about this, but we really didn't do anything to prevent it either."

"Whit?" Brett asked, a worried look in his eyes.

With a forced exhaled, she plunged in with both feet. "I'm pregnant."

"You're what?" Ryan whispered.

"Pregnant. You know. Going to have a baby?"

Brett grabbed her in a huge hug and swung her around in circle, whooping excitedly as her family grew silent from the living room. When he finally put her down, he kissed her soundly on the mouth and then Ryan turned her toward him with a big grin on his face.

"A baby?"

"Yes, Ryan, a baby."

He wrapped both arms around her and pulled her tight against his chest. When he finally let her out of his embrace, she stood between her two men and faced her family. Tears streamed down her cheeks when she looked first at Brett, and then at Ryan.

"We're going to have a baby!"

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandy Sullivan is a romance author, who, when not writing, spends her time with her husband Shaun on their farm in middle Tennessee. She loves to ride her horses, play with their dogs, and relax on the porch, enjoying the rolling hills of her home south of Nashville. Country music is a passion of hers and she loves to listen to it while she writes.

She is an avid reader of romance novels and enjoys reading Nora Roberts, Jude Deveraux, and Susan Wiggs. Finding new authors and delving into something different helps feed the need for literature. A registered nurse by education, she loves to help people and spread the enjoyment of romance to those around her with her novels. She loves cowboys so you'll find many of her novels have sexy men in tight jeans and cowboy boots.

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