



One for remembrance...one for healing...and one to seal her heart forever.

Lone Star Lovers, Book 4

Chrissi Page has tried to find one man who heats her bed the way the Kinzie brothers did one shameful night years ago. She's failed miserably, leaving her with no choice but to bank that inner fire—and keep a lid on her inner bad girl.

She'd been weak, unable to choose between three men who appealed to her in different ways. And when they'd confronted her as a tease, anger had boiled over into a passion so wild, she's still trying to live it down.

Since that night, Ezra, Cade and Joshua have individually sown their wild oats with pretty much the entire available female population of Two Mule, Texas. Yet nothing erases the attraction they still feel for Chrissi. And when she ends up stranded on the road near their ranch, it's their last chance to turn their mutual obsession into an unusual proposition.

One weekend, three on one. If she can't stand the heat, they'll let her go on with her life. And try to find a way to live with the hole she'll leave behind in theirs.

Warning: A girl who thinks she can't have it all, and three brothers who set out to prove otherwise. One on one, two on one, and three on one; bondage in the wild; a bit of riding crop action. And a pickup truck load of emotion.

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Breaking Leather
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Breaking Leather

Delilah Devlin

Dedication

To me. I need a medal for not self-combusting during the writing of this novel. ☺

Chapter One

Chrissi Page raised her cell phone in the air, staring at the screen. No bars. Not even a hint of one skinny, green nub. “Oh, come on,” she moaned as her radiator hissed behind her. “Damn, damn, damn.”

She’d been tempted to ignore the CHECK ENGINE light when it first appeared, wanting to take the chance she could limp back into Two Mule. However, the steam seeping from under the hood had pretty much killed that hope.

Today was not the day for her car to break down. Not so far from town. Not so close to *their* ranch. Any minute now one of the Kinzie brothers might happen by.

They’d stop because they’d never leave a woman stranded.

They might not let her go because of their shared past.

And she didn’t know if she had the strength anymore to fight fate or her own inexplicable needs.

Macy Pettigrew, her best friend and boss, had sent her to the Dunstan house to make sure the owners had followed her suggestions to increase the house’s curb appeal. Never mind that there wasn’t a curb. Not really even a road—more of a caliche-covered goat trail that meandered up a steep hillside, rutted from runoff during recent summer storms.

Something must have happened to her car on the run up that hill. She’d heard the rocks pinging against her undercarriage but had been too busy thinking about Ms. Dunstan’s handsome neighbors. She’d been afraid she’d pass them or that they might stop in to see old Lettie Dunstan, the widow selling off her roughhewn, century-old home.

Chrissi had forced a smile on her face, looked at the potted plants the old woman had placed in pretty window boxes and admired the paint she’d used to spruce up the weathered door and window frames. The junk the old woman’s husband had accumulated, and that she hadn’t had the heart to part with after his passing, was gone from the front lawn. And lo and behold, grass was beginning to grow to fill in the brown patches where engines and tires had lain.

Macy would be pleased. They had a potential buyer. One who’d relayed an offer via email, which had checked out with the mortgage lender. Details Macy had been eager to handle herself, leaving the showings to Chrissi.

Chrissi heard a powerful engine rev. She slowly lowered her arm and glanced nervously over her shoulder. A metallic sage pickup truck pulled off the road behind her, and her stomach dropped to her toes. She’d known the moment her CHECK ENGINE light had shone that this was going to happen.

And good Lord, it had to be Ezra Kinzie. His dark gaze narrowed on her through the windshield, the intensity of it feeling like the hissing heat of a brand against her skin.

He opened his door and stepped down, slamming it with a decisive shove. Everything Ezra did was deliberate. He never wavered once a decision was made.

Long ago, he'd decided he wasn't going to fight his brothers for her. If she wasn't going to decide among them, then she'd have to take them all.

And, Lord help her, she had.

She'd never gotten over that night, had never been able to push it to the farthest corner of her mind when she lay down to sleep. Just the memory of it made her hot, cold, *wet*...

And horribly ashamed. Anyone could have seen them beneath the bleachers at the homecoming game. Gossip hadn't followed, but that didn't make her any less self-conscious when she strode down the sidewalk on Main Street.

Someone might know. Someone might tell. The thought of that sordid night being revealed left her feeling nauseated. Her life had been circumspect ever since, her love life nonexistent.

They'd left her scarred. Unable to move on.

Not because they'd harmed her physically, but because she hadn't been able to shake off the terrible attraction that tempted her every single day since that fateful night.

Boots crunched on the gravel at the side of the road. The brim of Ezra's straw cowboy hat left his ice-blue eyes in shadow.

She straightened away from her car and squared her shoulders.

"Havin' trouble, Chrissi?"

"It just showed up," she said under her breath, determined not to let him see how flustered she felt.

One side of his mouth quirked up. He glanced up at the sky, squinting against the bright Texas sun before leveling that devastating stare on her again.

Her belly clenched, and she fought hard not to give him any clues about how he still affected her. Just the rumble of his deep voice always made her think of crisp, cool sheets and hot, slick skin.

Her glance flicked over his body-hugging dark tee, noted his well-developed chest, the bulge of his biceps, his taut abdomen. She started to sweat. "Will you call a tow truck for me when you get home?"

A frown dug a deep crease between his dark brows. "Get in my truck, Chrissi. I'm not leavin' you on the side of the road."

"I'm not goin' anywhere with you, Ezra Kinzie," she said tightly.

A muscle rippled alongside his jaw. "I'm just offerin' you a place to wait out of the sun. And a cool drink. Nothin' more."

His features were stern, his jaw rigid, but the heat blazing from his eyes mesmerized her, made her want to sway toward him. The intensity of that unblinking stare made her wish he'd take the decision right out of her hands. She'd never willingly take that first step. Her days of following his commands were over.

Chrissi swallowed hard and broke from his glance, looking down the road and praying someone else would appear over the crest of the hill. She needed rescuing from the deep emotions roiling inside her—from the temptation his large, hard frame embodied. However, only the shimmer of heat waves rose off the black tar.

A trickle of moisture dripped between her breasts, gliding along one curve—and just like that, her imagination replaced the slide of that hot little bead with the tip of his tongue. She turned away from him and dragged in a couple of deep breaths, trying to stiffen her resolve, but the only things hardening were the tips of her breasts. She crossed her arms over her chest and lifted her chin, then turned to aim a glare at the one man who had the power to make her knees quiver.

So many memories swamped her as she stared into his handsome, rugged face. So many regrets sat like soured milk in her gut. He'd been "the one" until she'd succumbed to a dark sensual greed.

Too bad she couldn't turn back the clock about seven years. She'd make damn sure she'd never let him take her hand and pull her into the shadows.

Ezra barely suppressed the urge to step closer and crowd her tall, lithe body against her car. He'd love nothing better than to snug his dick between her legs while he licked that trickle of sweat tracking down her chest, and then follow the curve of her sweet, round breast.

But he and his brothers had planned this abduction down to the last detail. No time now to let a hard-on get in the way. "I'm not leavin' you on the side of the road. It's a hundred damn degrees out here, sweetheart. Get in the truck."

"Don't call me sweetheart," she said, sounding a little breathless.

It did his ego good to know she wasn't unaffected. This was the closest they'd stood in seven years. Since he'd kissed her before letting her head to the girls' restroom to clean up after he and his brothers had her.

A sordid little chapter he was determined to remedy. If he could get her ass inside his truck.

However, Chrissi, stubborn as ever, jutted her chin high and crossed her arms over her chest. Did she know she was plumping up her breasts, drawing his gaze to the creamy tops? Her clothing stuck to the sweat coating her skin. Her light blouse skimmed close to her narrow waist. Her dark blue trousers pulled tightly as she braced apart her legs. Did she know how well they cupped her pussy?

Just that hint of a cleft was enough to add a spike of steel to his already raging erection.

"Maybe you'd let me use your cell phone?" she ground out.

Ezra let a hint of a smile curve the corners of his mouth. One thing he'd learned over the years was the value of patience. He'd waited a long time to be where he was, standing in front of the one woman who had the power to make his knees buckle. The one woman he'd gladly share if that was the only way he could have her.

"Chrissi, don't you think we've waited long enough?" he asked quietly.

Her breath caught, lifting her chest. "I've waited long enough for you to act the gentleman and do what I asked. I'll walk back to town." She dropped her arms, reached through her car window for her purse, then straightened.

She'd have to stride around him, and he guessed she was girding herself to do just that. Her gaze didn't rise above his shoulder. She sucked in a deep breath and gave him a wide berth as she brushed past.

Ezra let her go, easing a hip against her red Mustang and watching her walk away—on three-inch heels that stuck to the hot tar, making a sticky sound with each step she took. She made it only about ten feet past the end of his truck before she slowed.

Her shoulders fell, her head turned to the side, but not quite far enough for her to meet his gaze. "You're not gonna let me go, are you?" she asked softly.

Her profile, so pure and pretty, stirred a suffocating desire inside him. He steeled himself to pretend a strength he was far from feeling. So many hopes rode on the next few minutes.

"I'm just givin' you a few moments to make up your mind, sweetheart. I have every confidence you'll do the smart thing."

"Just a ride to your place to make a call?"

"And a cool drink. Whatever else happens will be up to you. I've always let you make your own choices. Even when you were dead wrong. Even when it was killin' me."

And even though she still hadn't moved, he straightened away from her car and walked to the passenger door of his truck. He opened the door and waited.

Chrissi turned her head toward the road, and Ezra held his breath, praying another vehicle wouldn't come along, praying he'd have the strength to do what had to be done, no matter how much she might beg him to end it later.

When she faced him, he couldn't read her expression. Her mouth was firmed into a thin line. Her chin tilted. Her brown eyes raked him up and down, and she stepped out, her body moving fluidly, hips swaying. Not a conscious invitation, but he knew if he touched her between her legs right this minute, she'd be wet.

He fought a smile of satisfaction as she walked toward him and stepped up into his cab. Before he closed the door, she laid a hand on his bare arm.

Was she reconsidering? He stared down at her short, peach-colored nails and slender, ringless fingers.

"I'm not stayin' any longer than it takes to make that call." Her fingers tightened on him, and then slowly dragged away.

That touch had felt like a caress. Like she couldn't resist the urge to test the muscle beneath his hot skin.

She turned to stare out the front windshield, her purse in her lap. Her hands crimped around the leather as though she might use the bag to defend herself.

He slammed her door closed and loped around the front of the truck, slid into the seat beside her and started the engine. As soon as it roared to life, he turned the AC knob to full. "That better?" he asked softly.

"Dammit, don't be nice."

Fuck, the last thing he felt was *nice*. He gripped the gearstick and slammed the truck into first, then a quick second and third, roaring down the highway toward the ranch. Chrissi Page sat in the seat next to him. He'd gotten her this far. Unless she wanted to eat pavement, he wasn't slowing to let her out until he had her at his home.

Aware of every little movement, every little sigh or nervous twitch, he watched her from the corner of his eye. He'd seen her from time to time over the years, but hadn't been this close.

She'd aged well. Time had trimmed the youthful roundness of her cheeks and honed the stubborn jut of her chin. Her dark eyes, her best feature as far as he was concerned, still held the wary innocence of a fawn. However, tension etched fine lines at the corners.

He'd always loved her eyes, loved the way her stare would follow him around the hallways at high school or while she sat atop a corral fence when he worked with a horse. He'd never felt uncomfortable, had warmed to her approval. In those days, all it had taken was a shy glance or a little half-smile to brighten his day. She'd trusted him then.

He wished she'd trusted herself as much.

The rest of her had matured just as well. Possessed of curves at an early age that could make a man weak at the knees, her body had only improved. High-set, rounded breasts, a narrow waist and full hips. He'd often caught a glimpse of her ass, twitching beneath her conservative clothing—round, plump, peach-shaped curves that were Cade's favorite feature.

And her legs... Josh had long ago decided hers were perfect. Long, slim, and beautifully curved at the calf and inner thigh.

Yeah, they each had their favorite Chrissi-part, one they wanted to claim for their own. Too bad she'd thought their attention was something dirty.

She was nervous. He could tell that from the way her fingers clenched her purse and then played with a wisp of dark brown hair that defied the clasp holding up the rest. And she should be wary. If she had any idea what lengths they'd gone to in order to engineer this rescue she'd have them all up on charges.

As it was, they might still wind up in jail if the plans they'd made ever came to light. They wanted this weekend to happen naturally, but they hadn't left anything to chance. Opportunity was there. She only had to have the courage to surrender.

“How have you been keepin’?” he asked, wanting to break the brittle tension.

“Fine. Yourself?”

Ezra clamped his fingers around the steering wheel, hating the tenor of her voice. It was a little high and strained, like she was afraid. “Been busy. We’ve had to move the cattle more than usual. Grass is dried up. We’ve shipped in hay from as far away as Iowa to keep ’em fed.”

“Sorry about that. Everyone seems to be having similar issues.”

Dammit, they sounded like a couple of strangers. “Still workin’ for Macy Pettigrew?” he asked, although he knew damn well she was. He’d been in close communication with Macy, tendering the private offer for the Dunstan property.

Macy thought she was helping Ezra with a love connection. The fact there were three interested bachelors hadn’t been mentioned.

“Yes. Three years now. Right after I got my realtor’s license.”

“Thought you wanted to be a teacher.” Actually, she’d wanted to teach until she married, and then become a full-time mom, but he thought better of mentioning that.

Her mouth tightened. “I took business in college.”

Had they been responsible for her change of heart? “Must be good at what you do.”

“Why do you say that?”

“You’ve lasted. Macy’s a bit of a shark.”

“She’s a pussycat if you’re not afraid of a little hard work.”

“I’ll take your word on that.”

The ranch’s high arched gate loomed. Letting out a relieved breath that he’d gotten her this far, he turned off the highway onto the dusty gravel road that led through the gate. They bumped over the cattle guard grating, and he slowed as he approached the house. In the distance, he saw Josh, bent over his horse and riding at full tilt—coming from the direction of the Dunstan property line. Ezra almost smiled, except he caught Chrissi’s expression as she watched Josh.

The longing in her dark eyes, and the way her mouth parted around her quickening breaths, had jealousy streaking through him. She hadn’t reacted that way to him. She hadn’t gone all soft and dewy. She’d turned up her nose and stiffened her back.

Ezra tamped down his sudden anger. He and his brothers had entered a pact. If one of them earned an advantage, they’d use it to help the others in this battle for her heart. They’d all thought he’d be the one to punch through her reserve. He’d been her first boyfriend. He’d been her first lover and the one who’d tempted her into sharing.

Maybe that was the problem. Chrissi blamed him for her fall from grace.

Chapter Two

Josh Kinzie watched the truck drive along the last hundred yards of gravel road before bumping over a cattle guard and into the fenced yard. He made out two figures in the cab—the bear-like figure of his brother and a slender, dark-haired feminine one sitting beside him.

Ezra had done it. Gotten Chrissi into the truck. With a little help from him. While Chrissi had been busy with Ms. Dunstan, he'd been busy making sure her radiator hose sprang a leak.

He pulled the reins to the right, whipping his horse around, and let out a loud “Yee-haw!” before racing toward the house. He pulled back when he neared the front porch and slid from the saddle to the ground in one fluid glide.

Cade sat on the top step, squinting against the sun as he watched the truck come to a stop. “We may still hit a snag, bro.”

Josh glanced back at the truck. The couple inside appeared to be arguing.

“Not a good sign if he can’t even get her out of the truck,” Cade muttered.

Josh snorted, not too worried. He remembered how Ezra and Chrissi bumped heads in the old days. “Ezra may not be one for sweet-talk, but he does have a way of makin’ the ladies do exactly what he wants. Eventually.”

Cade grunted. “Chrissi’s grown a metal-plated backbone.”

“Our girl’s all grown up.”

They shared a glance, but turned to the sound of a door slamming.

Ezra crammed his cowboy hat on his head and walked around the truck, his features stern and his jaw grinding.

The sound of a click made Josh choke down a bark of laughter. “Did she just lock him out of his own truck?”

Cade grinned. “Won’t do her any good. Though I think he’s only givin’ her a chance to behave. He’s got the keys in his hand.”

“Still, she’s playin’ with fire.” Everyone knew you didn’t defy Ezra Kinzie and expect to come out unscathed.

The two younger brothers watched, amusement growing, as Ezra cursed softly and tried the handle again.

“Chrissi,” Ezra said, his voice deepening in warning, “thought you wanted to use that phone.”

Even through the windshield, Josh could see the stubborn tilt of her chin.

Dark humor glinted in Chrissi's eyes. "I'm thinkin' I'd be better off usin' your truck to get back to town all by myself."

Ezra held up the keys. "Woman, how do you plan on doin' that? Do you know how to hot-wire a truck?" He tugged off his hat and raked a hand through his short, dark hair. "You were fine a minute ago. What the hell changed?"

Through the windshield, her gaze shifted to the two men on the porch and held.

Josh cursed under his breath.

Cade stood and brushed off his jeans. "Guess it might help if we made ourselves scarce for a couple o' minutes."

Josh grabbed up his horse's reins and spared one last look at Chrissi.

Her gaze met his, and her eyebrows furrowed into a fierce scowl. He tipped his hat to her and ambled toward the barn. Not looking back once.

It was hard pretending he was relaxed and indifferent to her anger. While she'd blatantly ignored Ezra and Cade over the years, she hadn't been quite as harsh with him, giving him the occasional subtle nod or tight smile.

He'd thought maybe she didn't hold as deep a grudge against him because he'd always been the one eager to soothe her bruised feelings, the one to coax a smile when things got out of hand with Ezra. And everyone always thought of him as the little brother, even though he and Cade had been born only minutes apart. That fact afforded him a little extra leniency with the ladies.

Josh cupped himself, readjusting his cock. Yeah, relaxed was the last thing he'd felt for days since they'd hatched this wild-ass plan. He tugged on the reins, pulling his trembling horse behind him. Sooner he turned him over to one of the ranch hands to walk, the better.

He didn't like leaving everything in Ezra's capable hands when Chrissi was on a tear—even though Ezra had always been the one who could bend a woman to his will, usually with just a look.

Josh ignored a pang of worry over the fact his brother's naturally dominating will didn't appear to be working at the moment. Chrissi was here. Within reach. One of them would shatter the armor she'd built around her heart.

Chrissi watched Josh lead away his tall roan gelding and breathed a sigh of relief. She'd thought her worst fears had already been realized when Ezra arrived to rescue her. Seeing Josh and Cade, in close proximity to Ezra, had sent her body into apoplectic shock, stirring up all those old memories.

Foremost in her mind, she remembered skinny-dipping in the river with them. Innocent enough since Ezra was her boyfriend and had approved. And how could she resist when the three brothers had eagerly shed their clothes?

Sweet Jesus, the three of them, so alike and yet so different... She'd gotten love-drunk on the sight of them.

Ezra, older by only a year than the other two, had always seemed so much more mature. His body even then had been broad and sturdy—ripped from his shoulders to his calves. His size and strength had always made her feel safe, except during sex—but then his largeness and sexual intensity thrilled her, frightened her almost, she'd wanted him that badly.

Cade had been the quiet one. The nice one. Always courteous, always respectful, but his slow smile, so seldom seen, had had the power to melt her to her toes. And although the most reserved of the three, the memory of being held inside the circle of his strong arms whenever she'd suffered a fright was a cherished one.

And Josh, dear God, Josh was the golden child. Blond where the other two were dark-haired, his tall, lean body and the wicked glint in his crystal blue eyes, as though he was always ready for an adventure, had never failed to make her hot. How many times had she smoothed her thumb over that dimple in the center of his chin and warned him not to break a woman's heart? Why hadn't she taken her own damn advice?

That day by the river, the sight of their tall, tanned bodies, lined up prettier than any Chippendales' review, had sucked the air right out of her lungs.

She hadn't been as eager to get naked, feeling a little insecure among so much perfection, but they'd teased her, joking with each other, jostling and shoving until she'd laughed at their antics and joined them.

Even then she'd felt their combined illicit allure. Her nipples had prickled, her sex had tightened—but she'd been relieved to know she wasn't the only one affected as each of the boys' cocks had hardened.

They'd laughed, as though it was the most natural thing in the world to watch each other get hard. Her stare had lingered as she assessed their size, the slight upward curve of their shafts, the ruddy tan color that gave way to a reddish-purple at their fat, round crowns. When they'd grown silent, she'd dared an upward glance.

Ezra's steamy blue gaze had locked with hers. "Not anything to be ashamed of, Chrissi. We're guys. It's what happens when we're around a pretty girl. Only you can't always see it when we're dressed."

She'd thought about that often, wondering how many men walked around with hard-ons inspired by a stray glimpse of an attractive woman. Not something she wanted to think about, considering she'd been living like a nun for a very long time.

“Open the door,” Ezra repeated, his voice sounding as rough as gravel. She shivered at the quiet intensity of his order. Even after all this time, she wanted to do exactly what he asked. However, she knew where her submission would lead.

She folded her arms over her chest and looked away.

The locks sprung. The door slammed open. Startled, she glanced up, but Ezra already had her wrist inside his hand and was pulling her from the seat.

She slid to the ground, stumbled against him, and felt that rock-hard chest she’d sighed over for years. Resisting the temptation to explore, she shoved away.

“You always this stubborn?” he bit out.

She tossed back her head. “Guess you don’t know me as well as you thought.”

“I know more than you think, Chrissi.”

She arched an eyebrow. “You don’t know me. You haven’t for a very long time.”

“I know you’re wet.”

Her jaw sagged.

He turned on his heel and walked away.

“Am not,” she whispered furiously. She turned to pick up her purse where it had fallen from her lap to the dirt and closed the cab door. Then, stiffening her backbone, she strode toward the porch.

The screen door slammed behind him as he walked inside without giving her a backward glance. She hated it when he did that, pretended his mama hadn’t taught him any manners, because she knew it was deliberate. Something he did when she disobeyed him. A punishment.

And he knew she liked punishment.

She gave a silent moan and climbed the steps. The sooner she placed that call the better. Already she felt some of her carefully erected reserve crumbling away beneath the liquid heat her proximity to Kinzie testosterone generated.

Entering the house, she noted that not much had changed since Mr. and Mrs. Kinzie had moved to Padre Island to enjoy their retirement. That had happened after Cade and Josh graduated; Ezra had already been in charge for a couple of years.

And word was that Ezra was a capable rancher. Fair to his employees and as hard-working as any hand. So were Josh and Cade, although Josh liked his playtime.

She’d heard about his exploits, all the women he’d been through. Gossip about the other two had been harder to glean, but she knew they hadn’t been celibate for long after she’d departed their lives.

Even though it had been her decision, she’d still been hurt. She’d nursed an aching heart for a very long time. However, she knew she’d done the right thing. There wasn’t anywhere their relationship could go but straight to hell.

She glanced around, looking for a phone, but her attention was caught by the warmth of familiar surroundings. Wooden floors, yellow walls, brown leather sofas and Indian rugs were cozy and inviting, even if the tall, vaulted ceiling and huge iron chandelier hinted at their wealth. The Kinzies didn't act like boys who'd been born with silver spoons in their mouths. They'd been raised to work hard. Something she'd liked about them from the start. Raised by a single mom on a tight budget, she hadn't let her head be turned by their wealth.

"It's nice seein' you here again."

She turned to find Josh right behind her. How had he gotten here so quickly? He was a big man, as tall as his brothers if a little leaner, but he moved with a pantherish grace. "You still like sneakin' up on women, I see."

His lopsided grin made her heart do a flip-flop. The dimple in the center of his chin kept him from being too beautiful, and lent him a roguish appeal. She'd never been able to hold a grudge against him. His boyish charm was infectious and got him out of all sorts of scrapes.

"I didn't sneak up on you. You seemed lost in thought. You remembering us?"

"Remembering what?" she deadpanned.

He arched an eyebrow. "Remember who you're talkin' to, missy. I knew all your secrets."

Including one big fat secret that had spelled the end of all her dreams. "And you blabbed them to your brothers. You shouldn't have told, Josh."

"I am truly sorry about that. It wasn't the time. I know that now."

"There was never a right time for what we did," she whispered harshly. She glanced blindly around, looking for a telephone. "Dammit, I don't want to talk about it. I just want to use your phone."

Josh's gaze slid away, and he rubbed the back of his neck. "Well, there's gonna be a slight problem with that..."

She swung back. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, Ezra removed all the phones from the house."

"What?"

Josh reached behind him and pulled something from his pocket. When he held up a screwdriver, he gave her a sheepish shrug. "I was in charge of disablin' your car."

Her eyes widened, and her heart began to thump hard inside her chest. "And Cade?" she asked, her tightening throat. "What was his part?"

"Oh, Cade was in charge of gettin' the room ready for you."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"We're kidnappin' you, kitten." His grin was wide, joyous even.

She stared at him like he'd grown two heads. "Are you insane?" she shouted. "You'll be arrested!"

"Only if you press charges. We're hopin' you won't."

She shook her head, dumbfounded. Her face was hot, her stomach lurching. Hadn't this been exactly what she'd been afraid of? "I think I'm gonna be sick."

His grin vanished. "Through here," he said, grabbing her hand and pulling her toward the bathroom just off the entrance.

Chrissi accepted the push of his hand at the back of her neck, bending over the bowl to empty her stomach. When she straightened, he handed her a moistened washcloth.

"Not the reaction we expected," he said quietly as she washed her hot face.

"What the hell did you expect?" she said, embarrassed and aiming a deadly glare his way.

Josh shrugged. "A lot of hollerin'."

"Ya think? Take me home."

He drew in a slow breath, all expression draining from his face. In place of his usual, affable smile, his tight features resembled Ezra's more than she would have believed. "I'm afraid I can't do that. We made a pact."

"A pact?" She knew she was echoing him, sounding stupid, but she still couldn't get her head around what was happening to her.

"All or nothin'," he said, nodding.

"All of what?"

"Us."

She didn't need it spelled out. She got his meaning in one hot second. "Then it's nothing," she croaked, her mouth drying instantly.

"We aren't acceptin' your answer. Not until Sunday. So don't even try to talk us out of it."

"You won't get away with this. When I don't show back up at the office—"

"Macy's in on it. She's not callin' the cops. She thinks Ezra's makin' a play to get you back. She thinks it's romantic."

"Macy doesn't have a heart. She'd never think a kidnappin' was romantic."

Josh's lips twitched. "They sent me to sweet-talk her."

"Bastard," she whispered, knowing exactly how Macy must have reacted. When Josh turned on the charm, there wasn't a woman who wouldn't melt. Even hardhearted Macy.

"You always said I had a silver tongue."

"But I bet it was your smile that did her in." She could have bit her lip for admitting that because his eyelids drifted down to give her a smoky glance.

"Does my smile bother you?"

"I'm immune."

"I don't believe you."

Yeah, she was a big, fat liar. She needed a little space to shore up those crumbling walls. “I have to pee.”

He gave her a nod. “There’s a new toothbrush in the drawer for you too. I’ll be outside.”

Listening? Like hell. “You don’t have to hover over me. I’m not gonna throw up again.”

“We aren’t leavin’ you alone this weekend. Not for a minute.”

She shook her head, suddenly weary of thinking and of fighting the inevitable. “Why?”

“Because Ezra seems to think we bother you.”

“Then wouldn’t you want to bother me less?”

“Not that kind of bother. He thinks we still turn you on.”

Chrissi felt ready to scream. Seven years, and they still read her like a book. “Ezra’s an idiot. The only thing you three do is drive me crazy.”

“Oh, I hope so, kitten.”

She slammed the door in his face.

Cade sauntered up to Josh, who leaned against the wall next to the bathroom door. “How’s she?”

“She threw up when I told what we’d done.”

Cade grimaced. “Hell, do you think it’s just food poisonin’?” Or could they really have frightened her so much she’d emptied her stomach? Cade didn’t want to feel sorry for her. They had a plan they’d vowed to stick to no matter how pitiful she acted.

Josh grunted. “Think Ezra’s right? That she makes a big show of avoidin’ us because she never got over what happened?”

Cade glanced away and let out a deep breath. “Ezra knew her best. How about I take over now to reacquaint myself.”

Josh gave him a quick smile. “Sounds like a good idea. She’s a little perturbed with me at the moment. Where’s Ezra?”

“Where do you think?”

“I might join him for a lap or two. Might relax me.”

Cade watched Josh stride away to the pool, then leaned an ear against the door. He heard harsh mutters, a couple “dammits” and a “bastard”. He felt a smile stretch his mouth. She couldn’t be too scared if she was cussing rather than crying. The doorknob turned and he backed away, wiping his expression clear.

She glanced up, giving him a quick once-over before she met his gaze. “You the next shift?”

“I am,” he said agreeably. “Thought I’d ask if you wanted a drink?”

“So you can loosen me up?”

“If you’re afraid that’s possible, I’ll give you a soda.”

Her eyes narrowed. “Only if I get to open the can.”

“Are you afraid I’ll slip something in your drink?” His lips twitched. “I think I’m almost insulted.”

“You kidnapped me. I don’t think there’s much you wouldn’t dare.”

“Only when it comes to you, sugar.”

Chrissi rolled her eyes. “Don’t ‘sugar’ me. You are not gonna wear me down. I don’t want to be here.”

Cade ignored that last statement, taking heart from the fact her grumbling sounded halfhearted. “Would you like a drink? I’m havin’ a beer. It’s hot out there.”

She let out a deep sigh, and he noticed the lines of tension around her lips. She looked tired.

“How about I promise that we won’t make any moves. That we’ll spend the evening just havin’ a nice relaxing time. It’ll be like old times, before...”

“Even if we wanted to, we can’t go back.” Her glance slid away, and her mouth twisted. “I missed us, you know. We were friends.”

Cade barely resisted the urge to slide his hands around her and draw her close. If anyone needed a hug more, he’d never seen it. “You trusted us. We let you down.”

“Yes, you did. But I should have had better sense too.”

“See? We were young and stupid. We don’t have to be enemies.” When her expression eased, he gave her a small, coaxing half-smile. “Want a beer?” He held out his hand, holding his breath until she tentatively slid her palm inside his.

He’d always known he was attracted to her, that he’d yearned for her for years, but he hadn’t really known how much he missed her until that precise moment. Her hand felt just right—small, slender, warm. He tightened his grip and gave her a guarded smile. Not enough to make her worry, he hoped.

He turned and pulled her behind him, like old times, drawing her deeper into the living room to the bar at the far wall. He opened the fridge and grabbed two Shiner Bocks, uncapped them and handed her a bottle. He held his up until she klinked her glass against it.

They both took a long draw from their bottles.

Her sigh when she set it down was louder than his. A faint smile tugged up one corner of her mouth. “It’s been a long day. I needed that.”

“Heard you were up at the Dunstan place,” he said. “How’s Lettie doin’?”

Her smile was tight, but it was a start. “Fine. She’s eager to move in with her sister in town. They plan to go to bingo on Tuesdays and have pedicures every Friday.” She gave a little laugh. “Don’t get me wrong, I know she misses her husband, but she seems ready to move on.”

“She deserves a little fun. Couldn’t have been easy livin’ out there, the two of them, for so long. Gets lonesome.”

“Do you get lonesome?” Her lips pressed together. “Scratch that. It’s none of my concern.”

Cade leaned back against the bar, resting on his elbows, then gave her a waggle of his eyebrows. “Admit it. I’m gettin’ to you.”

She shook her head ruefully. “All three of you are *getting on my nerves*. I want to go home.”

“And you will,” he said, nodding. “Come Sunday—if you still want to.”

Her face grew serious as she eyed him. “I don’t believe you of all people went along with this.”

“Because I’m so boring?”

“No, because you’re the most honorable.”

He remembered the biggest test of that honor—she did too by the shadow that crept across her face. He’d failed her, going along with his brothers. “There’s not a day we don’t regret what went down. The way it happened anyway. It was the wrong place.”

“It was just plain wrong. Every part of it.” She set her beer on the bar.

“I won’t ever believe that.”

“Why don’t you all find some other girl to tag team,” she bit out, an underlying tremor in her voice. “I’m sure there’s a whore or two in town who’d be only too happy to oblige.”

“That’s what you think we made you?”

Her mouth trembled, the corners turning down, and she wrapped her own arms around herself. Giving herself the comfort he wished she’d let him offer.

Hoping to distract her from unpleasant memories, he pushed from the bar. “Day’s nice. Let’s head out to the patio and rest a spell.”

She gave a vague nod, and followed him as he headed toward the French doors and the sounds of water lapping against the sides of the pool. Ezra would know how to reach her. She’d always trusted in his strength. No matter how bad things were now, he had to hope that deep down she knew she could lean on at least one of them.

Chrissi dragged her feet as she followed Cade to the pool. Another of those places that she’d just as soon forget. She remembered the time after Mr. Kinzie’s heart attack, when the boys’ parents had taken a vacation to reaffirm their gratitude to both be alive and together. Ezra had had a tough time, stepping into his dad’s shoes, when the ranch hands and his brothers hadn’t learned to respect an eighteen-year-old, no matter how big and smart he was.

She’d lived for the hours when he’d finished up working for the day. They’d escape to the pool, take a leisurely swim then lay naked in each other’s arms on one of the loungers. It had been an unspoken thing between his brothers and him that those hours were his time, that no one was to interrupt.

She'd savored the attention and loved even better that he'd turned to her for comfort and escape from all his worries. She'd been deeply in love with him for years, but even though she'd been the only girl he dated, she hadn't been sure he returned the feelings, at least not to the degree she felt them.

Cade leaned against the boulder next to the pool, watching his brother skim below the surface, then turned his head to watch her.

Chrissi ignored him, glancing into the pool. Then she couldn't take her gaze from Ezra's honed body. She felt a moment's satisfaction knowing that he was bothered by what had passed between them on the road and inside his truck—that she'd driven him to this. Swimming was his release valve.

She wasn't surprised that he was nude. And right now, despite what she knew he wanted to have happen this weekend, it didn't feel like a gratuitous peep show. His powerful arms and thighs cut through the water, his face breaking the surface now and then for him to gulp for air. At the far end of the pool, he curled like the competitive swimmer he'd been and shot toward the opposite side again.

Chrissi watched him, her skin getting hotter, her belly cramping, not from any nausea but from desire so strong she knew she was past resisting.

She heard a scrape beside her, felt hands cup the notches of her hips and pull.

For all of a second, she resisted, and then she melted against Cade, her breath leaving in a long sigh. She didn't want to be this easy. But what was the point? "Cade?" she whispered, giving a little moan as he kissed her cheek, her temple.

"Yes, baby?" he said, gliding his hands over her belly, then up to cup her breasts through her clothing.

"Go away."

Chapter Three

As soon as Cade withdrew, she swayed, dizzying need swamping her. She caught herself, shivering, and wrapped her arms around herself for comfort as she watched Ezra turn and push off the side of the pool to return.

She couldn't help herself, she stared, her gaze roaming his tall frame, her mouth drying as his arms cut through the water, his powerful shoulders rippling with each slice.

The patio, partially shaded by trees and enclosed by a tall rock wall, had always seemed so cozy and safe. She inhaled the scent of chlorine, felt the slight breeze whispering through the oak trees waft against her hot face, and couldn't maintain her anger beneath the assault on all her senses.

This moment was inevitable. An itch that had to be scratched one last time before she could let go of the disappointment and yearning she'd harbored for all these years.

She slipped off her shoes and tugged her blouse from her trousers. She'd known where the day was leading from the first hiss of her radiator. Hell, she'd known she'd have to face up to this ever since she'd given Ezra the slip when he'd left her in the girls' bathroom after that fateful hook-up. She'd been running scared for a long, long time.

Ezra swam to the steps and stood at the bottom, water sluicing down his body. He wiped more water from his face and held her stare. "Baby, you sure about this? Are you really ready?"

The banked heat in his eyes, the tension revealed in the flex of his arms and chest muscles, set her heart fluttering. "Of course not," she rasped. "But I'm hot and bothered—by you, by your damn brothers. And I've had enough. We end this."

His ice-chip eyes darkened to a stormy gray. "That what you think this weekend is about? Ending it?"

"I don't care what you three think is supposed to happen." Not a lie, because she couldn't think of anything beyond the expanse of bronze skin, the crest of the cock rising from the water. "Right now, all I can think about is how much I ache," she said, her voice hoarse.

Chrissi unbuttoned her blouse and let it slide off her arms to whisper to the flagstones. She reached up and opened the clasp holding up her hair, and shook her head, enjoying the way the heavy fall trailed across the tops of her shoulders. Then she shimmied out of her trousers. When she stood in only her underwear, she stepped down into the pool, wading toward Ezra, whose hot glance raked her body, eliciting shivers that slid in ripples across her skin.

Standing in front of him, water lapping at her waist, she lifted her chin. “I don’t want to make any decisions,” she whispered. “I don’t want to think at all.”

Ezra nodded and slowly lifted a hand to grasp her arm and turn her. With her back to him, she breathed deeply while he unfastened her bra and drew it off, letting it float away in the water. Then his fingers slid beneath the band of elastic at her hips and pulled down her panties.

He walked around her, staring at everything he’d bared, then slowly lifted his glance to lock with hers. “You’re prettier than I remembered.”

“Was I so homely then?” she quipped, although she felt anything but humorous—her body was too tight, her need too strong.

He gave a harsh shake of his head. “You were perfect. No one’s ever measured up.”

“I don’t want to hear that you’ve been with anyone else. It isn’t any of my business. And I don’t really wanna talk.”

“I’m okay with that.” He cupped her face between his large hands and bent his head to capture her mouth.

She didn’t wait for him to come to her, she rose on her toes to meet him, her mouth slamming into his, her arms sliding around his shoulders to clutch at him, because she was afraid he’d hold back and tease her, and she didn’t think she could take that and not fall apart.

Her heartbeats thudded, the tips of her nipples contracted into hard little beads, and she leaned against him to ease the ache, rubbing her breasts on him as his tongue pushed into her mouth.

He devoured her; her ragged breaths intermingled with his. She scraped her fingertips upward, sinking them in his thick, dark hair and pulling because urgency gripped her, coiling in her belly. Faint tremors radiated, rippling through her channel and tightening her pussy. She hiked up a thigh, and he dropped his hands to cup her ass and lift her against him.

She gave a little jump and slid both legs around him, locking her ankles low on his back as he began to rut, flexing his hips forward and back to rub his cock against her mound, all the while kissing her thoroughly, sweetly.

He broke the kiss and slid his cheek alongside hers. “Do you want it?”

She felt him smile against her skin and bit his earlobe. “Dammit, just do it.”

“How bad do you want it, baby?” he rumbled.

How many times had he teased her like this? Making her beg for him to plunge inside her and ease the fever he built.

“Fuck, I ache for you, Ezra,” she said, gasping. “I hurt.”

He groaned and lifted her higher.

Eagerly, she slipped a hand between them, gripped his shaft and centered the tip between her folds. With their foreheads pressed together and their gazes locked, his fingers dug into her buttocks to move her

steadily down his shaft. As he crowded into her, pumping shallowly to work himself inside, her mouth fell open and her head fell back.

She thought she'd remembered how it felt, but this was so much better. His water-cooled dick shocked her, causing sensual convulsions to work their way up and down her hot inner walls. "*Ez-raaaaah.*"

Ezra's teeth nipped her jaw, bringin her back up. Then he rubbed her lips with his.

She gave a throaty groan, and her body vibrated. Her legs stirred, gripping his waist tighter. "Please...fuck me," she gasped. "I need it hard, baby. *Please.*" And she kissed his chin, his cheek, stroked her tongue over his firm lips.

He growled and his mouth opened over hers, suctioning, drawing on hers while he rocked forward and back, his thrusts gaining strength.

Her short, jagged breaths rattled her chest against his. She was quivering hard and whimpering. She jerked her head back to beg him again, but was caught by his expression.

His gaze was hot. His nostrils flared. His skin pulled taut across the sharp blades of his cheeks, making him look wilder, scarier. His movements were controlled, but she felt the tremors shuddering through him. He held back for her, to make the moment perfect, to stoke her desire when she knew all he wanted to do was slam deep inside and pound her like a wild thing.

"You don't have to be careful with me," she whispered.

"Sugar, you're tight. I don't wanna hurt you."

"You won't. I need you to move. Hard. Fast. *Please*, Ezra."

"Chrissi... *Damn*, Chrissi..." Ezra worked her up and down his cock, water churning around them. When a splash filled her mouth, he halted and shook his head. He pulled her against his chest and walked toward the steps, his cock still buried deep inside her body. He took the stairs slowly.

"Afraid if you slip you'll break somethin'?" she teased.

"I'm so damn hard, I'd fuckin' shatter," he growled. His body swayed with his steps, working him deeper. He cupped the back of her head and lowered her to a chaise.

With his face and shoulders above her, the blue sky blotted, she lowered her eyelids halfway, watching him begin the movements again, this time with better leverage to power into her. His strokes were strong, hard...getting faster.

Her breaths gusted at the end of each hard thrust, driven from her lungs and coming so fast she grew dizzy and lost in sensation. "Lord, it's been so damn long, Ezra," she moaned. "I forgot how good this feels."

His movements slowed, and his ice-chip gaze narrowed. "What about Kyle?" he asked, his voice dead even.

“Kyle?” she repeated, not understanding, and then she remembered the boy she’d dated after the incident. Kyle had been steady, reliable, but boring as hell as a lover. Far too careful with her body to satisfy her. “We didn’t stay together long. Only until I left for college.”

Ezra’s movements stopped altogether, although his body shook with the need to thrust. “Who else?”

She undulated her hips to tempt him, to make him stop this line of questioning, but to no avail. “Who else what?” she bit out, beginning to get irritated because she’d almost been *there*.

“Who else did you take to your bed?”

Realizing he was serious, she silently fumed. By the tightness of his face, she knew he wouldn’t relent, wouldn’t give her what they both needed, until she told him. And pinned to the chaise by his heavy body, she had no way to escape his interrogation.

“Well, I didn’t exactly take Kyle to my bed,” she said acidly. “I was still livin’ with my mom. It was more like the back seat of his Corolla.”

His jaw clenched, a muscle popping and rolling along the hard edge.

She couldn’t look away from the evidence of his tension. He was angry. Which nonsensically made her even hotter. “Did I ask for the names of all your lovers?”

“Why are you hedgin’?” he bit out. “Have there been so many you can’t remember their names?”

It was almost funny, except the truth made her look pretty pathetic. She bit her lip and turned her face away.

Ezra growled and thrust his arms under her knees. He pulled her butt off the lounge and crammed himself deeper. Then he stopped again. “Names, Chrissi.” The muscles of his forearms and shoulders bunched.

Maybe she’d pushed him too far. “There wasn’t anyone else,” she said, her voice small. “Not that it’s any of your damn business.”

“What?”

The hoarseness of his voice brought her gaze back. His disbelief was there in the deep scowl that forged a line between his heavy, dark brows.

She couldn’t blame him for thinking she lied. She’d been such a horny little thing around him. She inhaled and fought to keep her mouth from trembling and letting him know just how humiliating this was. “It’s been almost seven years since I’ve been with anyone,” she said hoarsely.

Ezra’s expression didn’t change, but his chest rose and fell faster. His cock stirred inside her, and she couldn’t help the little welcoming flush of liquid that seeped around him. Couldn’t he tell how much she needed him to move? *Right. Fucking. Now.*

“Kyle wasn’t what I wanted,” she blurted. “And I couldn’t think about bein’ with anyone else because I knew it wasn’t gonna work.”

“Did he satisfy you?”

She glared up at him. “What do you think?”

Ezra grunted. “Was he too nice for you? Did he ask you if he could touch you first? Close his eyes when he fucked you?”

Good Lord, how did he know? “It’s none of your goddamn business.”

“He didn’t do it for you. Guess I won’t have to look him up and beat the shit out of him.” Ezra pulled away, his cock sliding almost all the way out, but then he stroked back inside—easy as silk because she was so wet. “He didn’t do it for you, did he, Chrissi? Not like I could.”

“Never. It was never like this,” she said on a choked sob. “Why does it matter?”

“You were mine. You could have been ours.”

“I walked away. And you took lovers.”

He circled his hips, dragging his cock around and around inside her. “Not many—and only when I couldn’t stand it a day longer. I rubbed my fist raw before I sought any of ’em out.”

Shifting her legs to ride higher on his waist, she tilted her pussy, trying to entice him to stop the teasing swirls. “I don’t believe you. Any ole whore would have done.”

His scowl deepened. “Stop it. Don’t say that again.”

“It’s true. You made me this way. Made it so I’m ruined for anyone else.”

“Because I do it for you?”

“Yes. Because you know exactly how to arouse me. Because you piss me off and walk away, and then I have to follow. I don’t like bein’ weak where you’re concerned, but I am.”

Ezra pulled out then slowly slid inward again, so slow a scream was building in her throat.

“What about my brothers?” he asked, his tone deepening. “What do they do for you?”

She shook her head. Not wanting to go there. “I never would have thought about it,” she said past the lump building at the back of her throat. “Never would have looked twice. But you made me look—skinny-dippin’ at the river. You put the idea in my head. Lettin’ them hear us when we made love. Lettin’ them come into the bedroom when we were done, sweaty and spent and still as naked as the day we were born.”

“It made you hot.”

Chrissi snorted. “Hell, yeah. Made me think that maybe you intended somethin’ to happen.”

“I didn’t intend anything to happen, Chrissi. I wanted you to have fun. To love being with me. I wanted you to feel free with me.”

“But I got scared because I thought you were just playin’ with me. What man lets other men, even his own brothers, see his woman like that? So when you sent Josh or Cade to bring me to you, I didn’t think twice about responding to their flirting. It’s natural, you said. A man being aroused around a pretty woman.” She took a shaky breath. She’d already revealed so much. Why not tell him everything? “Well, I was aroused too, and surrounded by Kinzies. I knew exactly what every one of you looked like naked, and

when they got hard in their jeans, I knew what that looked like too. So when they flirted ...I gave it right back.”

Ezra’s jaw eased. The cold blue of his gaze melted. “They thought it was just a game. A little competition to get under my skin, but Josh fell in love with you. Then Cade. They beat the crap out of me when you and I had a fight, because they didn’t think I deserved you. They said any man would be glad to have you.”

“Well, I didn’t have them...not until you dared me into takin’ all three of you.”

How come I’m not enough? Ezra had gritted out all those years ago.

How’s a girl supposed to choose, when one brother’s prettier than the next? Inside, she’d begged silently, *Tell me you love me.*

Chrissi fell back against the cushions, relieved to have everything off her chest, but just as confused as ever about where she stood with this enigmatic man.

“So much time’s passed,” Ezra said, still braced above her, still sunk deep inside her body. “But I still think about us. Still miss havin’ you around.”

She gave up trying to still the tremor of her lips and chin. “I don’t know what you expect from this weekend,” she said, her voice thick from unshed tears.

He leaned down, forcing her knees higher, tilting her pelvis and delving deeper. With his mouth hovering over hers, he said, “I expect more of what you gave us that night. More of what it should have been.”

She licked her lips. “Why? Is this your ultimate fantasy? The three of you sharin’ a woman?”

“We’ve had that. You really think you were the only one?”

“Bastard.”

“We were just practicin’, sweetheart—makin’ sure it was as good as we remembered. Makin’ sure we remembered how.”

“And was it good?”

“She wasn’t you, but it was sweet. When we had her, there wasn’t any tension between us. We functioned like a team. Like brothers.”

“It’s wrong, Ezra.”

“You ready to choose one of us? To say you don’t still desire all three of us? Can you say truthfully that you aren’t dyin’ to know what we have in store for you?”

Chrissi shook her head, but she was lying to herself. As always, Ezra Kinzie had her number. “I hate you...but I’ll do this. I’ll be with you and your brothers. But come Sunday, I’m out of all your lives for good, and you’ll stop stalkin’ me.”

His dark brow arched. “You think we stalked you?”

“You checked up on me. Drivin’ by the house...”

He grunted. "To make sure you were safe."

"Givin' the stink-eye to men when they asked me to dance at Shooters..."

"Because they wanted only one thing from you. You're better than that."

Blood suffused her face, heating it, making her head feel ready to explode. "You only want one thing," she railed, smacking his shoulders with her hands. "I'm a whore. I fucked all of you and gloried in it. Anyone could have seen us, and I'd have been ruined."

Ezra's jaw hardened, and he grabbed her wrists to stop her. "We didn't plan it that way. It just happened. But we were careful to make sure no one knew."

"Bo Crenshaw knew. He kissed me."

"Only because you were still being a smartass, liftin' that chin. You dared me into havin' him do it."

"But you sent him to keep watch. With his back to us. He heard everything."

"He wasn't into you, sweetheart. He's had his eye on another girl since they were kids."

"Would you have let him have me if he had been...into me?"

Ezra's jaw ground shut.

"Did that question confuse you, cowboy? Would you have let him have me too?"

"It wouldn't have mattered," he muttered, letting go of her hands and thrusting his arms under her thighs again.

"Why?" she asked, rising on her elbows. "Because I'm just some who—"

"I told you not to say that word again." He pulled back and lunged his hips forward, harshly, driving the breath from her in a sharp gust. Then he continued to pound fast, building friction, the tension in his body bulking out his shoulders and arms.

Chrissi fell back and gripped the sides of the chaise for dear life. She'd struck a nerve. He was angry. Not that she minded, because now he was mad enough to forget about punishing or interrogating her.

It was all about his dick now, and he wasn't stopping. Not for her, not for anyone.

With her knees drawn high, her chest restricted, she panted like a dog, unable to move. But he was stroking the right spots. Grazing her giddy-up spot, scraping her clit.

Soon, she was thrashing her head, murmuring, pleading—that he not stop, that it was too much...that she was going to explode...

And then she did, her body bucking beneath him as he hammered harder, his face an alarming shade of red, his lips peeled away from his teeth.

God, he looked feral, primitive—everything she'd loved most about fucking him.

"Yes, yes... *Oh fuck!*" She came—lights exploding behind her eyelids, her body racked with shudders, her pussy convulsing, squeezing hard around him.

He slowed. His mouth opened around a deep groan. He moved once, twice more, then pushed himself deep and held. With the first spurt of hot come, he shouted and pounded in short, spasmodic jerks, shoving

the chaise with the strength of his uneven thrusts. Finally, he slowed and collapsed over her, his weight squeezing the breath out of her.

When he slipped his arms from under her knees, she wrapped herself tightly around him and buried her head against his neck.

“You cryin’, sweetheart?”

A silent sob racked her and she nuzzled closer. “I won’t ever cry over you, Ezra Kinzie. Not ever again.”

Chapter Four

Chrissi groaned and slid her legs along Ezra's, resettling her head against his shoulder. He held her against his side, a hand smoothing up and down her upper arm while a breeze licked the sweat off their skin.

They hadn't spoken since she'd broken down. She didn't know what to say. Couldn't say precisely why she'd cried. She was relieved he didn't ask.

Footsteps padded their way. A figure, outlined by the sun lowering in the late afternoon sky, stood over them.

Chrissi blinked.

Wearing only a pair of faded jeans with the snap at the waist opened, Cade extended his hand.

She pressed her cheek against Ezra, closing out the sight of Cade's broad, naked chest. "I don't wanna move."

"I have a bath drawn," Cade said, his voice quiet but firm.

Ezra hugged her close, pressing a kiss against her hair. "Go on."

Embarrassment heated her cheeks, but her nude body wasn't anything Cade hadn't seen before. She wondered if he noticed how she'd changed, whether he liked what he saw.

She lifted her hand and let him pull her up. He held up her hand, turning her slightly as he looked her over.

"That bath?" she said breathlessly. Her nipples were prickling with arousal again. She hoped they'd start moving and he wouldn't notice, but his free hand cupped a breast and his thumb scraped the ripening tip.

"You're even prettier than I remember."

"She is, isn't she?" Ezra said, sitting on the edge of the lounge. "Give her a bath then bring her to us."

Bring her to us.

Fluid seeped down her thighs, and she gasped, remembering that she hadn't given a single thought to protection. She pressed her thighs together. "Ezra? We didn't..."

Ezra's eyes darkened. "We're all safe, Chrissi. I promise you that. And you've already admitted you haven't had sex with a man in years, so I'm assuming you're safe as well."

"But I'm not on the Pill."

“Do you want us to use something?”

He’d always left her with choices. He’d honor her answer.

Chrissi opened her mouth to give an automatic yes, but inside, she hesitated. Again, she didn’t understand herself, why she’d be willing to take the risk, but they’d never used anything, never had anything between their bodies. She remembered the abandon, the freedom, the slick sensory delight.

“I’ll take that as a no,” he said softly, his gaze sharpening as he studied her face. He turned to Cade who wore a slight smile. “I don’t wanna tell you again.”

“Yes, sir,” Cade said, his grin widening.

Just like the old days, Ezra liked to be in charge, liked his brothers to fall in line—if only when it came to sexy pleasures.

His brothers had never seemed to mind, falling in with his plans, whether it was shucking their clothes for a swim, or turning their backs when Ezra screwed her at the far end of the pool.

Cade tugged her hand and wrapped an arm around her shoulder as he led her away. Once inside the house, she glanced around, but found no sign of Josh. She took a deep steadying breath. One at time she could take without becoming a quivering mess.

They passed the stairs to the bedrooms above and walked down a hallway she knew led to the master suite.

“Ezra took it when mom and pops moved to Padre.”

She nodded, but kept silent as they passed through the large darkened room to the bathroom.

When he opened the door for her and stood back, she sucked in a deep breath. The scent of roses, her favorite flower, permeated the air. The bath was filled to the top with fragrant bubbles.

“Go on and get in,” Cade said.

She didn’t look back, happy to sink beneath the bubbles and hide herself from view. Warmth enveloped her, instantly easing muscles she hadn’t used in a long, long time.

Clothing rustled and her gaze swung toward him. Dark brows arched wickedly over dark blue eyes. He stepped out of his jeans and strode toward her. “Make room for me behind you.”

Her breath hitched. Cade was broader across the shoulders than he’d been seven years ago, and his abdomen was deliciously ripped. A light smattering of masculine fur stretched between small brown nipples. His thighs, thick and muscled, flexed as he braced his legs apart while she stared.

His cock caught her attention. Rising from a nest of crisp, almost black curls, it was thick, veined, a ruddy tan along the shaft with a swollen purplish-red crown. “I’m just going to give you a bath.”

“I can manage on my own,” she choked out.

“Scared of me, Chrissi?”

“Course not.”

“Then scootch up and make some room.”

Lord, so this was how it would be, passed from one brother to the next. She should have been horrified, but deep inside heat blossomed again inside her. She wanted this. Needed it.

For closure, she told herself.

She scooted to the center of the large, rounded whirlpool tub.

He flicked a switch, sending the water swirling, then stepped inside, settling behind her.

When his hands cupped her shoulders and pulled her backward to rest against his chest, she fell against him, sighing. His cheek rubbed against hers, and then he bent to press a kiss against the top of her shoulder.

Chrissi accepted it. Not allowing herself to think about what was right or wrong. The scrape of his afternoon beard made her breaths come faster.

Something new. His whiskers had been softer the last time he'd kissed her. Cade was as much a man now as Ezra. Just as tall, just as hung. His cock was upright and snuggled against the seam of her buttocks.

"Why were you cryin'?" he murmured against her hair as his hands flowed over her. "Did Ezra hurt you?"

"He didn't hurt me. He didn't do anything I didn't want."

"Were you scared?"

She shook her head, not wanting to talk about it.

His hands cupped her breasts, his thumbs strumming the tips.

"I like that," she said quietly, lifting her chest, encouraging him to squeeze.

His gentle massage awakened the heat in her belly. She shifted, restless, but hoping he wouldn't notice.

Cade chuckled, his breaths soft, warm gusts against her moist neck. "Am I botherin' you?"

"It's just a bath. Maybe you should use some soap and get it over with."

"Eager for me to touch you elsewhere?" he asked, skimming a hand down her belly until his fingertips combed her pubic hair.

"No," she gasped, closing her legs and pulling her knees toward her chest.

"You know there's not a part of you I'm not gonna touch or kiss, darlin'."

"Why are you still talkin'?" she asked, her voice rising.

His chuckle shook against her back. "I've missed your sassy mouth."

She'd missed the way he always surprised her. She'd always considered him the safe one, until he did something like this. Something sexy and unexpected. He knew how to get to her. Through a back door. Not like Ezra's full frontal assaults. "You're sneakier than Ezra."

"Am I?" Long, thick digits slid through the top of her folds despite how tightly she clenched her legs together. They grazed her clit, sending a jolt of electricity arcing through her belly.

She rolled her head against his chest while his hand squeezed her breast harder. His fingers pinched her nipple while the ones hidden beneath the bubbles went to work on the swelling knot at the top of her folds.

Her knees slowly eased open, giving him room to work. He swirled and swirled while his body hardened against her and his cock twitched between her cheeks.

“If I turned you around, would you slide right down me, sugar?”

“I, ah... Don’t call me Sugar.” Her head lolled and her hips began to curl up and down, following his fingers, her knees falling farther apart. “Cade...?”

“Yes, baby.”

His whisper, warm and husky, made her shiver. “Oh, hell.” She gripped the handholds on the side of the large tub and lifted herself, then got her knees under her and turned with the assistance of his hands.

When her knees were tucked in close to his hips, he guided her forward. She reached into the water and pulled up his cock, aimed it between her folds, then slowly glided downward.

A long, breathless sigh sifted between her lips, and with her hands braced against his slick chest, she started to rock gently, mindful of the water lapping up the sides of the tub.

“Don’t worry about gettin’ the floor wet,” he growled.

She clutched the tops of his shoulders and pushed herself up and down, looking anywhere but into his face, savoring the feeling of his thick cock stretching her. She made shallow thrusts, wanting speed rather than depth because friction was building and she could feel her orgasm coming on.

His fingers dug into her hips, forcing her down his shaft, not relenting until she was snug against his groin.

She whimpered, wanting to move, but he held her. She shot him a glare, then stilled, transfixed by the hardness of his features. He wasn’t her old buddy—the boy she’d gone to talk to whenever she’d needed advice about how to handle Ezra.

Here, shoved deep inside her pussy, was a man, just as beautiful and rugged, just as arousing as his older brother. How had she missed the changes? They weren’t subtle. Weren’t things other women would have missed. She’d turned a blind eye. Stubbornly refusing to see that he was even more desirable than he’d been all those years ago.

Her breath hitched; her fingernails dug deep.

He raised an eyebrow, taunting her. “I’m not a boy anymore. Not your best friend. I won’t pat your shoulder and send you back to Ezra. Not when I want you every bit as much.”

“Cade,” she said shakily, aware her pussy gave him a deep unmistakable caress. “Please let me come.”

“Gonna close your eyes and pretend I’m him?”

“How can I? I want you. Fuck me, Cade. Do it.”

He cupped the back of her head and pulled her hair, wrapping his hand in her length.

She tilted back her head and gave another gasp, her mouth opening around a long, fervent moan.

When he dragged her down, she scooped up his mouth, giving him open-mouthed kisses that pulled at his lips. Her tongue rimmed his teeth and stroked deep to taste.

When he sucked on her tongue and his fingers loosened around her hair, she broke away and began to move again, crashing down, sending the water sloshing over the edge of the tub, but now she didn't care.

Spurred by his husky chuckles and his burning gaze, she fucked him hard, building heat, her moans and grunts growing loud and lewd.

"Cade!" she cried out, her body slowing, consumed by the first wave of her orgasm.

Cade slid his fingers down her belly, and circled the tips over her distended clit, shooting her higher toward the peak. She screamed, her hips shoving forward and back, grinding down to take all of him. "Cade, Cade," she chanted. "Oh..."

She collapsed against his chest, her arms wrapping tightly around his shoulders.

His mouth glided along her shoulder and the side of her neck. He nudged her face upward and kissed her hard, while his body shook with tension against her.

"You didn't come," she gasped, rubbing her cheek like a cat against his.

He nipped her shoulder. "Turn around, sweetheart. Grip the edge of the tub."

She pulled away, letting his cock slip from inside her, then turned away, bending on her knees and gripping the porcelain.

Cade's fingers spread over her ass then delivered a slap.

Shock reverberated through her. The sound was wet, sharp, and she sank her back to raise her pussy. Fingers thrust inside her, swirling, rubbing against her G-spot, then quickly withdrew.

Cade place his cock at her entrance and pushed inside.

Again, she consumed him, an inch at a time, as he pumped, each thrust measured, even, controlled. He slipped a hand around her and touched her clit, rubbing it, then drawing away, then rubbing again—driving her crazy because she was still swollen and ultrasensitive, and he was teasing her into arousal again.

"Bastard," she groaned and pushed back, trying to force him deeper.

"Such a nasty mouth."

"You love my mouth. You'd love to fuck it."

"I would. And I will. But right now, I like this set of lips," he said, giving her a deep stroke. "Do you know how hot you are inside? Are you raw? Am I hurtin' you?"

"I'm hot, but only because you and Ezra don't ever quit."

"And Josh. Don't forget Josh."

"Dear God." That reminder was all it took to make her tremble and moan. They weren't done with her. Not by a long shot. Tender, hard, hot. They'd bring all that. But never respite.

She rolled her hot face against the cool porcelain. “How can you want this? I mean, I know a pussy is a pussy. But how can you want to share me?”

“I’ll share because I won’t go against my brothers. We know what we want, what we’ve missed and couldn’t replace.” His hands smoothed up and down her back then gripped the notches of her hips. “We want you, Chrissi. In our lives. In our beds.”

“At your beck and fucking call?”

He slapped her butt again. “You like it like that. Admit it.”

“Umm...never. I’m not a plaything. This isn’t something we can sustain. It’d get out and people wouldn’t understand.”

“Why are you so worried about what other people think? Your mom’s in Arizona. Who the hell else matters?”

“I have a job. Standing in the community.”

“We’d take care of you.”

“What about children? We aren’t usin’ anything. It could happen. How’s that kid gonna be raised?”

“With three fathers who’ll adore him.”

“You’re insane.”

“We’re not the first. The folks in Two Mule can take it.”

“You’re talkin’ about Dani Cruz and her men. People barely speak to her.”

“I’d kick anyone’s ass who made a sideways comment to you.”

“You can’t ride herd over the whole town.”

His hands smoothed up her sides and down again. “You won’t need anyone but us. We’ll be your lovers, your friends. We’ll cherish you, sweetheart.”

She rolled her head, wanting to argue, but so far gone she didn’t have the strength. “Christ, just finish it. We have this weekend. To get it out of our systems. Come Sunday, I’m goin’ home.”

The bathroom door creaked open. Chrissi chose not to react. What did it matter if another of the Kinzies watched her getting screwed? She leaned her forehead against the top of the tub while Cade continued to hammer her pussy.

The continued silence of whoever had joined them finally drew her attention. She lifted her head, peeking from the corner of her eyes to see Josh enter the room and give Cade a look that asked permission to come inside.

Cade must have said yes. Josh stripped quietly at the door, and then walked toward the tub. When he stood in front of Chrissi’s bent head, he raked his fingers through her hair and pulled to lift her face.

The waggle of his light brown eyebrows nearly made her smile. But she was being reamed from behind, her body rocked with Cade’s forceful thrusts.

When Josh gripped his cock and stroked himself, she realized she'd been here before. Only then, they'd bent her over a low concrete wall, Cade fucking her from behind, getting her so hot she hadn't hesitated for even a second before opening her mouth to swallow down Josh's cock.

The only difference was that Ezra wasn't standing in the shadows, watching, stoking her desire with his hot stare. Seemed she didn't need it to catch fire after all.

Gazing down, his blond hair falling forward, Josh stroked himself again, then squeezed. A bead of precome bubbled up from his slit.

However, she wasn't the same girl, wasn't going to act the insatiable whore and offer him everything he wanted without a little show of resistance.

She pressed her lips together and glared.

Smiling, he bumped her mouth with his smooth, satiny head, smearing ejaculate on her lips.

She resisted the urge to lick it up, but he wasn't done.

With both hands, he calmly cupped her jaw and dug his thumbs into the corners, forcing her to open. Then he hooked a finger over her bottom teeth, fisted his shaft and drove himself toward her throat.

Chapter Five

Ezra stood in the doorway, watching while his brothers broke past every last objection Chrissi could manage—with her mouth full.

He felt a smile stretch one side of his own mouth. They were making a helluva mess. Soapy water rolled over the edge of the tub in waves.

He turned to the linen closet and grabbed towels, ready to mop up the mess once they'd finished.

Although pleurably relaxed after the time he'd spent with Chrissi wrapped around him like a Band-Aid, he wasn't the least bit surprised when his cock refilled with urgent heat. Loving her had always been like that, an insatiable hunger.

Rocked back and forth by the force of Cade's thrusts, Chrissi's whole body was pink with exertion and sexual excitement. Her hair was plastered to her head, whether because it had been wet by the bathwater or sweat, he didn't know. Her eyes were closed, her expression agonized—the sweet kind, so he didn't worry that his two younger brothers were pushing her too hard.

No, she could easily handle them all. That's what they'd discovered long ago. Something that encouraged him when he'd begun to consider what it might be like to share her on a permanent basis.

For their part, his brothers' muscled frames were wired tight. Cade's gaze roamed her naked back and bottom. Josh gripped Chrissi's head and fucked her mouth, his gaze locked on his cock and her suctioning lips, looking as though he'd never done this before, but maybe he just felt that way because it was her.

Ezra knew he hadn't experienced the same intensity of arousal and emotion with any other partner since Chrissi had been his.

"Fuck, Chrissi. *Jesus*, suck it harder," Josh said, his face reddening. His mouth twisted as he blew fast between his lips. With a cry, he pulled away, his fingers wrapping around his shaft to pump, stripes of come erupting, hitting Chrissi in the face.

She didn't mind. Not by the way she tilted back her head and stuck out her tongue to catch the froth.

When Josh gave one last, strangled gasp, she slowly opened her eyes.

Ezra cleared his throat.

Chrissi's eyes widened as she glanced sideways to find him. She licked at the come on her lips, but otherwise didn't bother cleaning up the rest of the creamy stripes clinging to her cheeks and chin.

Good Lord, she looked like a porno star.

Ezra stepped closer, edging Josh out of the way to kneel beside the tub.

Chrissi's wide brown gaze clung to his, slightly unfocused. Her nostrils flared. She was a wild, primal thing. Completely different from the prissy, collected woman who'd stood by the side of the road with her cell phone in the air.

"Any second now," Cade warned, still thrusting hard against her bottom.

"Lean up a bit, baby," Ezra whispered to her.

Holding his gaze, Chrissi swallowed, then pressed down on the edge of the tub to raise her torso. Her arms shook, which made her generous breasts quiver.

Ezra stretched his arm, sliding his palm along her belly until his fingers curved around her mound. Her pussy was stretched tight around Cade. Ezra tucked into the top of her folds and tapped her clit, then rubbed it hard. "Can you come again? For me, baby?"

"What the fuck am I doing back here?" Cade grouched.

"You're the lube job," Ezra said, narrowing his eyes, daring her to take offense.

"Who's got the potty mouth now?" she said, just as quietly.

Their glances locked and she didn't look away, even when her face reddened and her features grew taut.

"Almost there, sweetheart?" he asked, pinching her clit between his thumb and forefinger.

She nodded swiftly, her breaths jagged. A whimper broke and she threw back her head, silently riding the crest.

Ezra aimed a glare at Cade. "Enough."

Cade grunted and thrust twice more, then hissed between his teeth as his hips jerked. He pulled away, sitting back in the water, his arms stretching over the rim of the tub. "Fuck me," he said, breathing deeply. "Fuck."

Ezra gave Josh a sideways glare. "Make yourself useful and mop up the water." Then he picked up a washcloth, wet it in the tub and began to wipe away the streaks on Chrissi's face. "Close your eyes."

She did so, so sweetly obedient, that he couldn't resist kissing her swollen mouth. Then he smoothed the terry cloth over her cheeks. "You have some on your eyelashes," he warned her before wiping over her delicate lids.

When he was done, she kept her eyes closed.

"Are you hiding?"

"If I can't see you, you can't see me," she said, smiling impudently.

He grunted, amused. "Are you hungry?"

Her eyes popped open. "Starved."

Ezra reached for a towel and stood. "Up you go."

Chrissi rose, a little unsteady, but she righted herself and stepped out of the tub to stand in front of him.

With efficient rubs, he dried her hair then her body, spending a little extra time between her legs.

"I think I'm dry now," she said, her tone wry.

"Wanted to make sure." He dropped the towel on the floor.

"Do you have anything I can wear?"

"Didn't I tell you the rules?"

She combed her wet hair back with her fingers. "Rules?"

"For the weekend. No clothes." He turned to leave the bathroom, confident she'd follow.

"You'd have been so fucked if I were on my period," she muttered from right behind him.

Cade and Josh chuckled. Ezra's mouth quirked. "Think I left that to chance?"

She groaned. "Macy?"

"Uh-huh."

"The bitch."

Not stopping as they walked into the bedroom, he glanced back, grinning.

Her head canted as she returned his stare. "You don't do it often enough. Smile, that is."

"How do you know?"

"I've seen you around."

Ezra strode to the dresser and picked up a hairbrush. "I could say the same for you." He didn't have to say a word, just pointed to the edge of the bed.

Chrissi arched an eyebrow, but sat, pressing her thighs together as she gripped the edge of the mattress. "I've been busy getting on with my life. There hasn't been a lot of time for fun."

"There's always time for that." He started at the bottom of her tangled hair, careful not to pull too hard as he slowly brushed her hair.

"Then how come you always look as stern as a hangin' judge?"

"Been busy, sweetheart. Runnin' a ranch and waitin' on you." He paused to see how she reacted to that last bit.

Her dark eyebrows lowered, forming an impressive scowl. "Stop sayin' that. It's not true."

"You think I haven't been haunted too?"

"Not like me," she said, her voice thickening. "You don't have any idea."

Ezra sighed and sat next to her. He wrapped an arm around her shoulder and pulled her stiff body against his side. "Then tell me, sweetheart. Make me understand."

Slowly, her body relaxed. She lifted an arm to wrap around his waist and snuggled into his side. "That night," she said, dipping her head to hide her face, "when you left me at the restroom..."

He kissed her hair. "Yeah, I remember," he rumbled. "You ditched me. Left me waitin' there. I didn't know what the hell had happened."

"I wasn't alone. Remember Stacy Holder and Mariana Lopez?"

“Sure. They’re both fat and have a half a dozen kids between ’em now.”

“Well, they were in there. Talking about you and me. Pretendin’ they didn’t see me come in.”

He could feel the tension in her body. Her arm tightened around him. Her breaths slowed. “Baby, what did they say?”

Chrissi huffed a breath. ““Did you see her?”” she said, mimicking Mariana’s high-pitched voice. ““I bet they just did it. Her hair’s all messed up and she stinks.’ And then Stacy started in, ‘Think they did it under the bleachers? Or in his car? I’d let him. He’s so cute. Hell, I’d do them all.’ And then Mariana laughed,” Chrissi said, her voice barely above a whisper. “She called Stacy a slut for just saying it.” She raised her face, her eyes shimmered with tears welling in her soft brown eyes. “But I did it. I did all of you. I was the slut. And I think they knew.”

An ache settled in his chest. He hadn’t known she’d carried this around all this time. No wonder she’d run. “No one knew about us, sweetheart. They might have suspected, but no one saw us. I promise you that.”

“Didn’t matter. I couldn’t face you. I thought, what guy does that with a girl he likes? I dragged the trash can under the window and crawled up on it to climb out.”

“I was worried. I waited a long time, knowin’ I’d handled it wrong. That I shouldn’t have pushed you. All because I was jealous. Because Josh told me you had fantasies—about the three of us. And because I didn’t want to admit that the idea was one that’d been keepin’ me up at night too.”

She blinked, and a tear trickled down her cheek. He caught it with his thumb and licked it away.

Her nostrils flared again, her gaze dipped to his mouth, and that was all the invitation he needed.

Ezra bent to kiss her softly, framing her jaw with his palm, combing back her hair as he pressed his lips against hers and rubbed in slow circles until she followed him, a thready moan seeping into his mouth.

Pulling away nearly killed him, but he and his brothers had an agenda. A bigger goal than slaking the lust they’d hoarded for years. He kissed her forehead and smiled at her expression. “You look like Sleeping Beauty wakin’ up to a kiss.”

“Think you’re a prince?”

“Nah. Just a cowboy.”

“Not ‘just’ about it.” She dropped her arm from around his waist. “You were kiddin’ about the rule, right? I can’t walk around naked all weekend long.”

“Not embarrassed, are you?”

She wrinkled her nose. “No, but I do feel really...vulnerable. How about just a shirt. Anything of yours would fit me like a dress anyway. And please, have Josh and Cade wear some jeans. I can’t hold a conversation when I’m droolin’.”

Ezra smiled at the hint of tart humor, relieved she'd found her footing again. Their intentions were to break her down this weekend, but they wanted to protect her pride as well. "I'll find you somethin' to wear."

Josh flipped a steak on the grill, watched the meat sizzle and then splashed it with the beer he was drinking. "Should be done in a few minutes, guys," he called over his shoulder.

Cade was busy lighting the Tiki torches surrounding the patio and had already plugged in the bug zapper to handle any flying insects.

Ezra and Chrissi were making a salad in the kitchen. The two of them had been glued together since big brother had removed her from the bathroom. Josh wasn't worried though. Chrissi always gravitated to Ezra when she needed to absorb a bit of strength. He and Cade had pushed her hard. Left her shattered.

While they'd cleaned up the bathroom, they'd listened to the quiet conversation and learned why Chrissi had bolted all those years ago. Why she'd ruthlessly cut off their relationship. And while he understood how she'd felt, he couldn't help feeling a little angry with her that she hadn't trusted them enough to talk to them about what bothered her.

Not that he, Josh, had ever been someone she'd turned to for comfort or counsel. They'd been playmates. Teamed up to play practical jokes on the other two. Fussled and prodded and teased each other like crazy, but they'd never confided in each other. Except when it came to their fantasies. He still remembered confiding that he'd had a thing for long, sleek legs, just like hers. How Shanna Davies's legs had always done it for him too. She'd laughed, told him to go for it, then had this odd expression on her face.

"Tell me. I know that look," he'd prodded.

She tucked a lock of hair behind her ears, and her gaze evaded his. "What look?"

"The 'I'm thinkin' something so wicked I'll burn in hell' look. Have to tell. I told you my fantasy."

She shook her head and laughed, but it sounded strained.

"Chrissi?"

"You'll tell."

"Tell Ezra?"

She nodded. "I don't want him mad."

"It'll be our secret."

Her face had screwed up in a grimace. "Sometimes, when I'm in bed and thinkin'...I wonder what it would be like."

"What?" he'd asked, thinking he might already know from the blush coloring her face.

"What it would be like to be with you and Cade and Ezra...together."

His heart had thudded against his chest. His cock had jerked inside his jeans then started to fill. He cleared his throat. "You think about it often?"

She nodded, ducking her head. "I know. Makes me sound like a skanky whore, huh?"

"Nothing wrong with fantasies. I've had the same one."

She'd blinked, then her gaze locked with his for a long moment before she'd broken away and shrugged. "So that was my fantasy. Yours is doable. So why haven't you made a move on Shanna?"

"Cause my best friend, Bo, wouldn't like it much."

And just like that, she'd put the idea in his head. He'd talked to Cade first, who'd warned him not to say a thing to Ezra because he didn't need Ezra getting bent out of shape.

But things had changed. They'd both started watching Chrissi with more than just a male's casual appreciation. They'd begun to think of her as a potential partner. It couldn't be helped, even if they were straying into their brother's territory.

All it had taken to make things blow up was a conversation that exploded into blistering argument in the truck while they drove to the Homecoming game.

"Penny for 'em," came a soft voice, pulling him back into the present. The object of his fantasies stood next to him, her smile shy but her chin lifting to let him know she wasn't gonna let a little thing like a blowjob make her feel less sure of herself.

Warmth crowded into Josh's chest. "I ever tell you how much I love that sassy mouth of yours, sweetheart?"

She laughed, her cheeks turning a lovely rose. "When it's full or when it's dishin' insults?"

"I'm equally impressed. Grab that plate and I'll get these steaks off the grill before they're overdone."

"You made mine—"

"Like shoe leather, yeah, I remember. Not a hint o' pink."

Chrissi picked up the platter and held it while he stacked the thick steaks.

"It's nice havin' you here," he muttered.

"So you all keep sayin'."

"It's true."

"I know that. And I have to admit, it feels kinda natural bein' here again. Like I never left. Makes it harder, I think."

"To say goodbye?"

She nodded, then bit her lip. "I'll take these to the table."

He watched her walk away while he turned off the propane and closed the grill. She'd let her guard down at last. Was talking to them again, enjoying herself. He knew what they had was good. Ezra told them she hadn't had a lot of partners over the years so her sensuality wasn't something she spread around. It belonged to them. How could she even consider cutting off that part of herself? It didn't make sense.

Walking toward the glass table, he watched Cade hold out her chair and her laugh at something he said, ducking her chin then glancing at Ezra as though seeking affirmation that it was okay for her to enjoy his brother's attentions.

And that's when it struck him—what they had to do. Ezra had thought that maybe they should go easy. Make her comfortable, remind her gently how good it was to be among them. Cade had been the one to quietly prepare the playroom, the one Ezra had said she wasn't ready to enjoy.

Josh glanced at Cade who'd seen Chrissi's little "tell". He gave him a nod. The next round, Ezra wouldn't be the one in charge if he wasn't willing to give Chrissi everything she needed to make the right choice come Sunday.

Chapter Six

Cade kept mostly quiet throughout the meal while he studied Chrissi. Her manner was more relaxed than it had been when she first arrived, but there was still a wall that she kept carefully erected between herself and them, or maybe between herself and her desires. Cade knew it was up to him to figure out how to breach it.

Ezra could tempt her, could momentarily push her past her comfort zone. She'd crumbled beneath his full-on seduction. Josh was a buffer. A playmate who could tease a smile from her or gentle her anger with a teasing jibe.

Cade knew he was the dark horse, the one she thought of as a Steady Eddie. But if he was quiet it was only because he liked to suss out a problem, think of all the ways it could be fixed, before he made a move.

The problem with Chrissi wasn't gonna be fixed by fucking her straight through the weekend. Not by trading her off, one brother to the other. They'd only be confirming her fears, tightening her resolve.

Chrissi needed something new. Something to shock her past being able to regroup and reestablish her defenses. He and his brothers had only played with domination with Chrissi in the past. They'd let Ezra be the boss of things, and she'd always blossomed for those brief moments. But Chrissi needed to have a little training. Reinforcement and refinement. She needed to be shown what she really was, what she needed deep in her heart of hearts.

Chrissi was a submissive in need of a strong Dom, maybe a pair of them. Ezra wasn't going to like it. He thought she needed a gentle introduction, that schooling her would be part of a long-term campaign, but Cade was solidly with Josh now.

Ezra sat beside Chrissi, his hand cupped around hers as she sipped her iced tea.

Cade nudged his foot under the table.

His older brother shot him a questioning gaze, then narrowed his eyes, guessing from his expression that something was afoot.

"I'm taking Chrissi to bed," Cade said quietly.

Ezra arched an eyebrow.

Chrissi blushed.

He noted the dark shadows beneath eyes that still managed a hint of sparkle at the thought of another sexy interlude.

"Sweetheart, hate to disappoint you, but you need rest. You look done in." To the guys he said, "Take care of the dishes and see to *the room*."

She didn't appear to hear the special inflection he added, which was a good thing. She'd need rest for what he had planned for her.

Ezra's hand tightened around Chrissi's, but he leaned toward her and kissed her cheek. "Go on with Cade. He'll take care of you."

She gave him a nod then shot Cade a glance that was at once a little hesitant and trusting.

Cade felt a like heel, knowing she'd look at him in an entirely different light come morning.

Chrissi straightened her shoulders. "Hate to rain on your parade, but what's happenin' with my car? I can't let it sit on the side of the road all night."

Josh grinned. "A friend of ours took care of that already. He had it towed to your house."

"A friend?"

"Bo Crenshaw."

Her expression clouded. Reminded again of that long-ago night. Cade hoped like hell that one day she'd forgive them for being thoughtless and crass. That night had colored their past, tainted their friendship and stolen years.

"Any more worries?" he asked, keeping his tone even.

She shook her head. "Guess not."

Cade pushed up from his chair and circled the table to stand beside her. He held out his hand and she slid her delicate one across his palm. With a gentle tug, he pulled her up and slid an arm around her waist. "Promise. Sleep only," he whispered against her ear.

"Thanks. I didn't know until this moment just how tired I am."

Cade nodded to Ezra and Josh and watched the tightening of their faces. They knew he was through waiting. That he'd taken the lead. For now.

Inside Ezra's bedroom, Chrissi stood beside the bed while Cade pulled the oversized shirt over her head and turned down the covers.

"I need to use the facilities," she said quietly, feeling awkward again to be standing naked next to the quiet Kinzie.

Cade might be the quiet one, might be the one she'd always thought of as the most grounded and kind, but there was something different about him now. Something watchful. She didn't know why, but something of his stance and enigmatic expression put her to mind of a wolf, a patient, intelligent predator.

He gave her a nod, his permission to leave, which made her bristle. She didn't need any man's permission to do a damn thing, but here she was allowing him to take charge. Still, she left him to take care of business in the bathroom and brush her teeth.

When she let herself out of the bathroom, she saw his jeans draped over the armchair in the corner, and Cade lying beneath the covers with two pillows wedged behind his shoulders. He patted the bed. "I didn't change my mind. We're just sleepin'. But I'm gonna hold you."

The thought was too delicious, too seductive to a woman who'd slept alone for so many years, for her to even pretend she didn't want it. She slid beneath the covers while he turned off the bedside lamp, then let him turn her to spoon her body against his.

She rested her head on his arm and scooted deeper against him. His cock was semi-aroused and pushing against her butt.

"Can't help that," he whispered, humor in his tone. "Ignore it."

"Easy for you to say," she grumbled, hiding a smile.

"Nothin' easy about having you here in my arms and not doin' a thing about it. But I don't wanna prove you can't trust what I say."

"I never doubted you were an honest man, Cade." She turned inside his arms. His gaze, which glinted in the moonlight, was still shuttered, wary. "Maybe you can make me understand."

He pulled away a lock of hair that clung to the moist corner of her mouth. "What can't you quite grasp?"

"How you of all people can be okay with this. Don't you want a woman of your own?"

"Truth be told, I've never found another you, Chrissi."

"But I wasn't your girl. We weren't intimate before that night. How could you know?"

"Didn't you know the truth? Even before we did it? Why else would you have told Josh what you did?"

She sighed. "I didn't see it as something permanent. Just a fantasy. Like fucking Brad Pitt. Not something I truly aspired to."

"I knew because every time I watched you with Ezra, I burned. I was so eaten up with jealousy, I stayed horny and mad and ready to pull teeth because I wasn't the one you wanted. I didn't like what it made me feel about my brother. I didn't like that my fantasy had to do with stealing you away, fucking you in front of him. Now, I love my brother. I'd die for him. But I'd fight him for the right be with you."

She swallowed hard. The uninflected way he said it, the steadiness of his gaze said he meant every single word. She turned away, but let him pull her snug against him, let him smooth his hands over her body, avoiding her breasts, never straying between her thighs—soothing jumbled thoughts and a worn-out body.

She felt sorry for herself that she didn't feel the same sense of conviction that he did. Couldn't be as selfless about her needs. She might desire all three of them, but she needed peace of mind. Needed self-respect. Needed to know that her future wasn't going to be something sordid and sinful, and ultimately flawed. When she took a mate, she wanted it to be forever. Not just for now.

And she seriously didn't see how this could work in any way, except as a short-termed fling.

"Go to sleep, Chrissi. Stop worryin'. It's gonna be okay."

"You sound like Ezra. You both like bein' in charge. How does that work with him managin' the ranch?"

"He's got the final say, but I'm the foreman. He has to listen to my advice."

"Josh doesn't get a say?"

"He doesn't want the responsibility. He likes bein' a cowboy, ridin' the range, wranglin'. He'd as soon spend his days mendin' fences and pullin' calves from arroyos than figurin' out when to move the herd or send 'em to market."

She stayed silent for a few minutes, thinking about everything he'd said. "You really think this could work?"

"I know it can. You just have to trust that we've got it all worked out among us. That we can truly share. Now sleep, sweetheart. You're gonna need your rest."

She smiled softly at that last bit. There was a warning couched in his quiet command. And while her body warmed to his insistence, her mind was shutting down, drifting. Dreaming about three sexy cowboys who loved her. Who wanted her for always.

Why was she fighting them? They made it sound so easy, so inevitable.

For the first time, she let her dreams follow where her heart led. As she fell asleep, Cade's large capable hands soothing away her stress, she thought maybe she was ready to believe.

As soon as her breathing evened in sleep, Cade pulled away from Chrissi's warm body. The ache in his groin had to be seen to before he sought out the others. He thought maybe he'd gotten through to her, made her reconsider her stubborn stance, but he wasn't going to leave anything to chance.

He headed to the bathroom, started the shower and took himself in hand, working his cock in his fist. The rhythmic motions were steady, punctuated by his deepening breaths, while he thought about everything that had happened that day. Especially about how sweetly she'd surrendered in the tub. How lovely she'd been in all her distress. He ached for her, wished he could think of a way to make her acceptance easier, but Chrissi Page was a complicated woman.

She thought she needed control. Thought she needed the trappings of a traditional marriage to feel complete. She hadn't a clue how wrong she was. How unsuited she was to that kind of life.

Her sensual nature was capable of so much more. Any one man would leave her unsatisfied. She was needier of attention, of physical loving, than any one man could provide.

He'd sensed it all those years ago when Ezra had taken up with her. She'd demurred whenever his big brother had pushed her beyond her natural modesty, but she'd embraced every adventure with her loving, open heart.

His arm tensed, stroking harder. His balls drew up tight against his groin, and he moaned as the first explosion rocked him, sending hot spurts against the tiles. He remembered her face, striped with Josh's come, the pearly white foam clinging to her cheeks, her eyelashes. She'd been beautiful, wanton. So near to perfect, his chest had frozen.

A soft knock sounded on the door. He let go of his shaft and hung his head for a moment to drag soul-cleansing breaths into his lungs before flipping back the curtain to greet Josh.

Josh's eyes danced with amusement. "Heard you all the way into the hallway. Don't know how she slept through that racket."

Cade gave him a stinging glare, which only widened Josh's grin. He reached for the towel hanging from the peg beside the shower and wrapped it around his waist. "You try having that ass snuggled up against your dick."

Josh grunted, then his expression changed, turning sly. "Everything's ready. The room's arranged. I tucked a blindfold under the pillow."

"We'll let her sleep a while."

"Ezra thinks we should all catch some shut-eye."

"Ezra's not wrong. You wanna keep her company? Can you wake without an alarm?"

"I'm always up with the roosters. You don't have to stir until I come for you."

Cade nodded and stepped quietly back into the bedroom. Josh stripped off his jeans and edged under the covers, taking up Cade's former spot.

Chrissi's breathing didn't change as Josh pulled her close and tucked his face into the corner of her neck and breathed. "She smells like heaven," he whispered reverently.

Smiling, Cade tiptoed out of the room. Ezra was finishing up the dishes, a towel draped over his shoulder. He glanced back as Cade walked inside. "She asleep?"

"With Josh. She was out like a light."

Ezra let the water out of the sink and leaned his butt against the counter. "Tomorrow's the make or break day. If she's not ready, she'll bolt."

"How much do you love her, Ezra?"

Ezra's face darkened with anger. "What the fuck kinda question is that?"

"I have to ask. Do you want her for her, or for what you think she'll bring to our lives?"

"There hasn't been a day since I first laid eyes on Chrissi that I haven't wanted her."

“But do you love her? The real her?”

“What are you gettin’ at?”

“Chrissi’s not all surface. She’s beautiful, sassy. But deep inside she’s not that secure.”

“You think you know her better than me?”

“I’ve spent years watching her. My mind’s not clouded with doin’ a whole hell of a lot. She’s soft at the center. You saw some of that when you pushed and she broke down. We can hurt her. Or if we’re careful, we can bring out her strengths, help her embrace the woman she could be.”

Ezra’s lips twisted. “You been reading too much *Cosmo*.”

Cade smiled. “Maybe. But I’m right about this, Ezra. Let’s play tomorrow. But let me be the one to call the shots. We both want the same thing. We want her to be ours. No reservations.”

Ezra crossed his arms over his naked chest. “I need a swim.”

“You do that. But then you get some rest. I don’t need you cranky.”

Ezra turned to lean both hands against the counter and stare out the window at the night sky. “You sure we’re doin’ the right thing?”

“Yeah. More than ever. It’s like breakin’ in a new pair of leather boots. You have to wear ’em, stress ’em a bit, before they really fit.”

Ezra raised a brow. “Did you just compare Chrissi to a pair of cowboy boots?”

Cade shrugged, then pulled a beer from the fridge and popped the top before heading to the playroom at the far side of the house. The room he and his brothers had worked on off and on for months. Not knowing exactly when it would come into use, but hoping.

They’d each had their say in what would be in there. They’d each practiced with similar toys and equipment over the years, learning how to ply a flogger or wrap a rope around delicate skin. But never together.

When they’d accepted Bo Crenshaw’s challenge to give his girl Shanna one memorable night, they’d plied some of what they’d learned, but they hadn’t brought her here. Hadn’t wanted any one woman to experience it with them but Chrissi.

Cade pulled a flogger from a drawer in the hand-built cabinet against one wall, and rifled a finger down across the edges of the suede flanges. Chrissi would love this one. Once she got past the shock.

Chapter Seven

Chrissi woke in stages, swimming through exquisite layers of sensation. At first, she thought she dreamed. Feather-soft touches stroked her skin, eliciting delicate shivers before drifting away again. She slept on...to be enticed again with smooth glides of firm lips. Two pairs. One starting at her toes, the other at her nipples.

She smiled to herself as she dreamily blinked her eyes.

The room was still dark. Not a glint of moonlight coming through the window, not a gleam of artificial light around the edges of any door. She wasn't sure which of the men was nibbling at her toes, but she wondered what he might do if she kicked him. When he slid his tongue between her toes, she curled them, trying to capture the sensation rather than deflect it. She hadn't known her toes were an erogenous zone.

The more obvious delight, the lips latching gently around one hardened nipple, had her clutching at warm thick hair, a shaggy mop she recognized immediately as Josh's. She pulled to bring him closer, to deepen the sucking kisses that didn't satisfy, only teased, but he released her nipple and glided lower, sucking the tender skin at the underside of her breast.

She'd have a trail of bruised love bites if he kept it up, but she didn't really mind. The only ones who'd know would be the three cowboys who had set their minds to her seduction.

Chrissi moaned then breathed deeply, feigning sleep again. They'd have to work a little harder to get her to admit she was fully awake and enjoying the attention.

A calloused fingertip scraped up the back of her calf, tickling behind her knee, and she couldn't help the giggle that escaped.

"I knew it," Cade drawled. "You're playin' possum."

"Was not."

Josh chuckled, warm air gusting against her upper belly.

"Hell, I just closed my eyes," she grumbled. "Thought you guys needed me rested."

"Aren't you?"

Breath blew against the tender skin just above her mound and her thighs tensed in anticipation. "Guess so," she whispered.

"We're gonna play a game," Cade said, his voice deepening.

Again, the roughening texture of his voice hinted at a masculine dominance that had her stirring restlessly on the mattress. “What kind of game?”

“Wouldn’t be as much fun if we told you.”

She huffed. “Fun for who?”

“Think we don’t mean to give you all the pleasure you can stand?” A finger traced through the hair on her mound to the top of her folds and tapped her hooded clit.

Sweet Jesus, was that all it took to get her hot? “Umm... I’m game.”

“Josh...” Cade murmured.

Josh kissed her nipple then withdrew. A whisper slid across the sheets... The glide of a hand? Cade tugged her wrist, bringing her to a sitting position, and Josh’s hot skin moved in to cloak her back. Fabric slithered over her face then tightened around her eyes.

“A blindfold? But it’s dark already.”

“We have someplace to take you,” Cade said, his tone brooking no arguments. “Get on up, Chrissi.”

The bed dipped around her, both her hands were clasped. The brothers led her from the bed, through the hallway, the living room, to somewhere beyond. The old workout room? She didn’t mind the silence or the gentle grips of their strong hands. “Is Ezra already there?”

“Ezra’s waitin’, sweetheart.”

Good Lord, she wasn’t sure what she felt about the sound of this. “Maybe I’d rather see where I’m goin’.”

“Think we’re givin’ you a choice?”

She tried to tug her hands away, but both men tightened their grips.

A door creaked open, and she was swept inside. The sounds inside the room, their footsteps, her excited breaths, seemed muted, like the walls had better insulation here. She turned her head to try to catch the sound of another male inside. “Ezra?”

Hands slid around her waist, sweeping up and down her belly, then cupping her breasts while thumbs rubbed the spiking tips. “Trust us,” he whispered in her ear. He framed her hips with his large hands and propelled her slowly forward. “Stop here.”

Hands guided her, picking up a foot to slide it along something wooden behind her. She stepped onto it. They guided her other foot onto another step. Bands wrapped her ankles. The scratch of Velcro made her jump. Her arms were raised at her sides and her fingers were wrapped around a grip before her wrists were tied as well.

Then all the hands, all the warm support, withdrew. There was a creak, and suddenly the thing she was fastened to tilted back, at an angle, not completely horizontal, but enough that the padded supports under her arms, legs and torso, took her weight.

The supports beneath her legs were opened, spreading her thighs. Something stroked up the inside from below her knee to just beneath her folds then back down again.

Heat closed in at one side of her face. Minty breath gusted over her cheek. “This is how it’s gonna be, sugar,” Cade whispered. “I’m gonna stroke your skin, and here and there, I’m gonna give you a pop. Not enough to leave a mark. Not unless you want me to. You have to be honest. Tell me if I hurt you. Or tell me if you want more.”

“You’re gonna hit me?”

“Stripe you, baby. You’ll see.” She heard him move around to stand between her spread legs.

“You’ve got a pretty pussy. And it’s wet.” A finger burrowed into her, withdrew, then rubbed her mouth with her moisture. “Suck it clean, sweetheart.”

Her pussy made a moist clasping sound, and she tried to draw her knees together, but that was the point of the bindings. Nothing would be hidden. Not a single reaction. Her lips parted, ready to tell him to go straight to hell, but he rubbed her mouth again and her tongue touched him, liked the flavor he shared, and swept out to curl around his finger until he stuck it into her mouth to let her suck. When he pulled it out, she licked her lips, then bit them, because something was snaking up her inner thigh again, something soft and trailing.

It lifted off her skin, then flicked, stinging her inner thigh.

She gasped and pulled against her bindings. Before she could form a protest, the strands were stroking her belly, her breasts. Her nipples reacted, contracting. Her flesh tingled and goose bumps rose. The flanges lifted and struck one breast. “Shit!”

“Too much?” Ezra was beside her ear.

But the flanges were moving again, down her belly, between her legs. Her knees lifted, fighting the bindings at her ankles, but all she could manage was a slight outward turn.

“You like that?” Ezra whispered. “Do you want Cade to flick you there?”

Her body was beginning to shiver. She nodded quickly, and the flick, a divinely sharp, stinging glance, landed on her outer labia. Blood surged south to make them swell.

She was squirming now, her skin heating. “Is it a whip?”

“A flogger,” Ezra said. “Soft suede. Cade knew you’d love it.”

“Jesus,” she breathed.

The flanges lifted from her skin, but didn’t strike. “You’re gettin’ used to knowin’ where it’ll land,” Cade said—like that was a bad thing.

“Shouldn’t I know? To prepare?”

“Then you’d have some control over how you react.” The flogger struck her belly, her mound, her knee, then swirled around and around one breast in delicious, soothing swirls while she struggled to even out her breaths.

The flogger disappeared. Fingers plumped her breast then lips latched around the turgid tip, pulling hard and eliciting a deep groan from her.

“Like that?” Ezra said.

“Yes,” she hissed, wondering who was sucking at her breasts.

Fingers pinched the tip and pulled then released, then repeated the action, squeezing harder.

Liquid oozed from inside her, dribbling from her pussy.

Fingers sank into her and pumped in and out, then withdrew.

“God, you’re killin’ me.”

Laughter, low chuckles sounded all around her. The men were moving, changing places. Something cold closed around the tip of one nipple, tightening, pinching hard.

“Too much?” Josh asked.

She bit her lip, but shook her head. The pain was delightful, causing her womb to clench. The clamp cinched tighter, and she hissed between her teeth, but didn’t complain.

Her other breast was plumped and kissed, the nipple tortured with lips, fingers, then another cold clamp was applied. When both were tight, fingers toggled the tips, rasping over them. “So red,” Josh said. “Beautiful, baby.”

A quiver shook up her spine, and she grew rigid against her supports, arching her back. “Please,” she begged, but she didn’t know what she wanted other than to be filled, for them to ease the ache growing inside her.

“Get her off the cross,” Cade said, his voice deep and hard-edged.

She liked the way it sounded, then liked even better the way the men followed his command. Her body responded with more shivers that racked her belly and inner thighs.

The bindings at her wrists and ankles eased, and the cross was adjusted until it stood upright. A strong arm encircled her waist, and she leaned against a hard chest while she was moved a few feet. Her knees bumped against padded leather. The arm at her back pulled away. A hand pressed between her shoulder blades, and she gasped, afraid she’d fall forward, but her belly landed on leather squabs and an upholstered bench cushioned her knees. The edge was just below her breasts, which left them to sway beneath her. Her nipples tightened and the clamps pinched harder.

Folded over the bench, her bottom raised, she knew what was coming next and hung her head. She couldn’t form a complaint or a question. Waited quietly while hands smoothed over her legs and bound her again to the bench. Fingers thrust through her hair and lifted her head. A mouth closed over hers and kissed her.

So drunk on endorphins rushing through her veins, she couldn’t wonder who kissed her, didn’t really care, only that a tongue mated with hers, suctioning her lips while hands massaged her ass.

Those hands lifted, and she held her breath. A slap rocked her, and she sucked hard on the tongue inside her mouth, her body tightening, jumping with each hard, successive smack.

Her bottom grew hot, her pussy swelled, fluid trickled down one thigh but the slaps continued against one side then the other, and then right between her spread legs, against her pussy.

The shock pushed her into an orgasm that made her whimper and mewl, and the mouth grinding against hers left, leaving her sobbing.

More slaps landed, but her mind was wrapped in a haze. Something soft butted against her mouth and she opened, welcoming a thick musky cock.

Fingers combed through her hair then pulled. “Suck harder, baby,” Ezra said, his voice tight. Tight like it always was just before he blew.

Her lips closed around him. She opened her jaws a little wider and sucked him down, encouraging him to deepen his strokes.

She gurgled and groaned around him, not caring how desperate she sounded, only that she obeyed, that she pleased him. The hands warming her backside smoothed over her buttocks then gripped them hard. A cock nudged her folds, and she screamed around Ezra when it stroked deep, thrusting toward her core in a single drive that pushed the air from her lungs.

Again, her womb tightened, her body writhed, pleasure escalating as the men fucked her mouth, her cunt, stroking in opposing rhythms. When the man behind her began to thrust harder, his belly slapping against the moisture spilling from inside her, Ezra’s strokes shortened, quickened. Come hit her tongue, the back of her throat. She swallowed around him, taking it down.

The man behind her bounced against her ass and a shout sounded, deep, agonized, and the mystery man powered three more times before withdrawing. Hot fluid landed on her ass. The cock stroked over it, spreading the sticky goo.

Both men pulled away, leaving her bent over the bench, all strength gone.

She lay, limp as a dishrag, unmoving, even when fingers traced the crack of her ass. She gasped as they swirled around her tiny hole. Footsteps circled behind her. An ointment was squeezed against her hole, the tip of the tube entered her, and more gel filled her. When it pulled away, she groaned, not sure she was ready for this, but unwilling to voice her unease. A finger eased inside her slowly, and she tensed her thighs, her buttocks.

“You have to relax,” Cade said, his voice soothing now. “Let me in, sweetheart. You’ll like this with me. I promise.”

His finger pulled free. Latex snapped—the first hint of a condom she’d heard or seen. Then he was back, the blunt head of his cock pushing against her. His hands gripped her buttocks, thumbs easing her open, spreading her hole. His cock surged against her, pushing against her tight ring.

She whimpered, but pushed apart her knees, as far as she could and tilted up her ass. Giving her silent acceptance to the invasion.

“Fuck, Chrissi,” he said, his voice strained. He pushed again, and popped through, surging deeper as her muscles eased around him.

She sobbed. She burned. And when he began to pump inside her, she flung back her head and drew sharp, shattered breaths. He was deep, his groin pounding against her cheeks. Something she’d never done before. Never considered sexy, but here she was, with Cade reaming her, and her loving every moment.

She ached, but she was on fire. “Oh please, please.”

“What do you want?” Ezra said beside her ear.

“Rub my clit,” she gritted out.

His chuckle sounded strained, but moistened fingers came up between her legs and swirled on the hard, distended knot.

“Gonna come, baby,” Cade warned.

“Please, please, please,” she chanted.

When he powered harder, sharper, the slaps loud and lewd, a mouth closed over hers. A tongue thrust inside.

Good Lord, they were all three here, all working her. She could see it in her mind, and the picture was beyond dirty. The tight coil of arousal burst, and she gave an agonized groan, her whole body going rigid as wave after wave of shivering convulsions swept through her.

She barely noted Cade’s shout. Didn’t demur when the fingers between her legs left her. Josh kissed her mouth, her cheeks, and she lifted her face to accept his blessing and murmured praise.

A warm wet cloth cleaned between her legs and buttocks. The fastenings melted away. She was urged to the ground on her knees. Her hands were pulled behind her and made to wrap one around the other. Her head was pushed down.

“Like this sweetheart. We want you to wait like this,” Cade said, kissing her shoulder then moving away.

The blindfold fell away and she blinked, keeping her head down and pulling in deep ragged breaths.

Three sets of large feet were lined up in front of her, and she couldn’t help the tired grin that stretched her swollen mouth.

“She’s smiling,” Josh said.

One of them grunted. Had to be Ezra.

A hand cupped her chin and lifted her face. Cade was bent over her, his gaze studying her expression.

“Are you quiet because you’re tired?”

Her lips parted. She was tired. That was true. She shook her head.

His smile was slow and eased up one side of his mouth. "This is what we want from you. Here in this room. Obedience."

She licked her lips and nodded, beyond exhausted, completely sated.

"You can speak."

"When we're not in here...?" she asked, her voice croaking.

"We expect sass. Lots of it. Get it out of your system before you come inside."

Her lips trembled. "How'd you know I'd like this? I sure as hell didn't."

Cade's grin widened. "Because we wanted it. And you're made for us, Chrissi."

Chrissi thought about that for a moment, then felt moisture well in her eyes. She felt as though a weight had lifted from her chest, as though the fear and shame she'd carried around for so long had simply floated away. "I was made for you," she repeated slowly.

Cade dropped his hand and held it out. She slipped hers inside and let him pull her to her feet. She swayed, and Josh stepped forward to slide an arm around her back. He lifted her in his arms and held her against his chest, a huge smile stretching across his face.

She glanced across at Ezra, the man she'd loved first. His expression was stoic. Her heart thudded dully against her chest. "You haven't said anything," she said softly, hoping with all her heart that he hadn't gotten a glimpse of their future and decided he'd made a mistake.

Ezra stepped closer, and his gaze trailed from her face, along her body, then swept slowly back. He cleared his throat. "I'm the one marryin' you. We decided."

"Were you gonna ask?" she said drily, her heart stuttering and quickening again.

"You don't get a say. Not in here."

She narrowed her eyes. "Josh?"

"Yeah, baby."

"Take me outside."

Cade and Josh both chuckled, but Ezra's jaw strained. His eyelids fell to a scary squint.

She wasn't scared. Those last few feet to the door, she leaned up and wiggled her calves. "You can let me down."

Josh set her on her feet at the door, and she stepped across the threshold, straightened her shoulders and stalked away.

"Where's she off to now?" Josh said.

"She's mine," Ezra ground out.

She heard his feet slap the wooden floor behind her, but she pretended she wasn't intimidated. She headed through the living room straight to the master bedroom. Before she made it to the hallway, her arm was grabbed, and she was turned and folded over Ezra's broad shoulder. Her clamped nipples hit his back.

Her breath left her, but she didn't fight his hold. She was exactly where she wanted to be, being manhandled by the one man who could go caveman on her ass any time he wanted because she loved how primal he got with her, how desperate he got when he couldn't find the right words to tell her how he felt.

He dumped her onto the bed, then climbed right over her, his hands snagging her wrists to push them above her head, his knees digging between her legs to make her spread them.

When he settled, his big frame pressing her into the mattress so hard she could barely draw a breath, only then did the tension in his face ease.

Chrissi didn't wait for him to say a word, she lifted her head and kissed him. Words weren't what they both needed now. Right now, they both needed reassurance they were doing the right thing.

When she fell back, his eyes gleamed. "You can fight me now."

She scoffed. "You have me pinned to the bed. How'm I gonna do that?"

"You can tell me all the reasons why this won't work. You can talk and talk, and I'll listen. But you'll wear down. Eventually. And when you run out of reasons why it won't work, I'll show you again all the reasons why it will."

"Show me?"

His hips ground crudely against hers. "Again. And again. As many times as it takes."

"You're gonna fuck me into submission."

"I'll do whatever it takes."

She shook her head, then pressed her lips together. But the shaking of her body gave her away.

"Are you laughing at me?"

"If I am?"

"Chrissi, I'm dead serious."

"I know, she said, snickering. "That's what makes this so damn hysterical."

Chapter Eight

Ezra glared down at Chrissi. Didn't she know how close to the edge he was? "You think this is funny?"

"Yes!" Chrissi's laughter bubbled over. Her whole body vibrated with it.

Pulling back his hips, he centered his cock between her folds and drove straight up her sweet, tight cunt.

Her laughter faded, but her smile didn't. She wagged her eyebrows. "Did you think I was mockin' your manhood or something?"

"We have to talk," he ground out.

"I'd rather you did something with the tree trunk you just shoved up inside me." She wriggled beneath him, but he lowered his body, crushing her beneath him.

"Dammit, I have to know." He clenched his jaws, and waited for her to settle down.

Chrissi fell back, eyeing him with a hint of wariness, at last. "You said I had until Sunday—which is tomorrow."

He gave her another hard stroke. Masculine satisfaction eased over him as her mouth rounded and she gasped. "I'm not gonna sleep a wink until you give me an answer."

"You never asked a question, cowboy," she said breathlessly.

"Are you gonna stay?"

"How long do you see this lastin'?"

"All our lives."

"Doesn't seem like enough to me."

He stroked to a standstill. "You want more men?"

A wicked gleam entered her gaze. "Would you give that to me? The freedom to have anyone I want?"

This was not going the way he'd expected, and her stubborn chin was tightening, jutting out at him.

"Chrissi, are you serious?"

She snorted. "Course not. When I said it didn't seem enough, I meant, a lifetime didn't seem enough. I'm a greedy, horny woman. I don't want just a lifetime, I want forever."

Ezra blew out a deep breath and felt his whole body relax. "You'll stay?"

She arched an eyebrow and strummed her fingers across his shoulder. "I do have a house to sell."

"We'll pack up everything you want to bring."

Another strum and that damned arch curved higher. “I have a job.”

“You can quit—” He paused when he saw both brows shoot straight up. “Or not. I’ll make space for you in my office so you can work from home, if you like.”

She shook her head. “I don’t think I’ll have enough energy to work outside the home. You’re gonna have to support me.”

Ezra felt his mouth twitch. “I thought you were bein’ a little ambitious. We’re a lusty bunch.”

Her smile slid across her face again, softer this time. “You’re gonna have to be my whole world. You know that, right? People won’t be so accepting of me once they get wind of how we live.”

“You’ll have friends.”

“Gonna find some for me?”

“You already have three. Right here in this house.”

She tilted her head. “I do, don’t I? I missed that, Ezra. I missed you all so much.”

He released her wrists and came up on his elbows.

Her breath billowed out of her chest. “Wasn’t gonna say it, but you’ve gained some weight.” She wriggled beneath him again, but this time it was to free her legs and wrap them around his hips. “You can move anytime.”

“Maybe I don’t want it to end just yet. I like where I am.”

Her fingers pinched his chest. “I’ll let you sleep like this, your dick snuggled up inside me, but you have to move now.”

“I do?”

“Yeah. And I want you to do it like you mean it.”

“Don’t I always?” he drawled, liking how her desperation was rising.

“No holdin’ back. No tryin’ to make it perfect. I want you there with me.”

“I’m right here,” he said, flexing his ass to pull out, then stroking deep again. “You get bossy when you’re horny.”

“I know what I want. At last.”

“You’ve known all along or you would have found someone else, sweetheart.”

Her eyes grew misty. But her smile didn’t dim.

As he began to rock against her, he gave her everything he had, his passion and his heart. With her brown eyes watching him come unraveled, he felt like a much more powerful man. Complete. Chrissi Page belonged to them at last.

Late afternoon on Sunday, a door slammed in the distance. Chrissi stirred in the chaise where she’d been lying in the shade nude, a margarita on the table beside her and a man painting her toenails.

Josh glanced up and grinned. "Looks like we've got company."

She lifted her foot to admire her pedicure. "You missed your callin'."

"Always liked red toenails."

"As long as you paint 'em, it'll be my favorite color too."

Setting aside the bottle, he stood and stretched, then reached for the terry cloth robe beside her.

"Maybe I should get dressed," she said, beginning to worry about being caught like this—naked in the middle of the day.

"Maybe you should remember who's in charge," he growled.

She gave a snort. "It isn't you. Besides, I can't greet anyone in my birthday suit."

"Bet they wouldn't mind a bit," he said under his breath, but held out the robe for her to slide into it.

She belted the waist and pulled her hair from under the collar, then headed into the house in a hurry, or as fast as she could hobble walking on her heels to protect her toenail polish. She was determined to slide into the bedroom before whoever came inside.

But she was only three steps inside the living room when the door was flung open. Bo Crenshaw stepped inside.

Her back stiffened. Her toes dropped to the floor. Lord, would she ever be able to look at him and not feel ashamed?

Bo's glance narrowed on her, sweeping briefly from her hair to her red toenails. He gave her a swift nod. "Afternoon, Chrissi."

She returned the nod. "Bo."

Ezra and Cade came in behind him, their chests rising and falling swiftly. They'd run from the barn where they'd been mucking out stalls.

Ezra fisted his hands on his hips. "Bo, thought I told you I'd pick up the keys from you later."

Bo's gaze didn't leave her. He tucked his fingers into the front pocket of his Wranglers and pulled out her key ring. "A girl has a right to a choice, Ezra. Even if it's a bad one." He stepped closer and held them out. "If you like, I'll give you a ride back to town."

Chrissi couldn't let go of what he'd said. That she had a right to a choice, even a bad one. He was talking about that night. Her cheeks burned with the memory of what he'd witnessed. She wrapped her fingers tightly around the keys, at a loss for what to say when he was staring so intently.

A throat cleared. A surprisingly feminine sound. Chrissi peered around Bo's shoulder. A small hand shoved at Ezra's arm to push him aside. Shanna Davies stepped up beside Bo.

He glanced down, giving her a frown. "I thought I told you to wait in the truck."

"Four against one," she said to him, while she stared Chrissi up and down. "I don't think so."

Chrissi raised a brow. "You think he's gonna have to fight his way out of here?"

Shanna rolled her eyes. “No, I mean four cowboys full of testosterone. Hardly seemed fair to let you face them all alone.”

Chrissi sighed. “Is there anyone in Two Mule who doesn’t know what went down this weekend?” Even though she complained, for the first time, she didn’t feel the horrible shame she would have just a couple of days ago. Had she changed that much? Bo’s dogged willingness to be her champion, if she needed one, took the bite right out of that particular bone.

Shanna gave a little chuckle. “Bo doesn’t keep secrets from me. We’re engaged, you know. Thanks in no small part to your three beaus.”

Chrissi’s gaze snapped to Ezra. “Your little practice session?” she bit out.

Shanna’s mouth dropped, then snapped shut. “You don’t have to worry. Or be jealous. I’m crazy about Bo. We’re gettin’ married in a month.”

Chrissi gave her deadly glare. “Josh always thought you had killer legs.”

Shanna blushed. “Well, I guess he should know.”

Chrissi stepped closer and raised her hand to wrap her fingers around Shanna’s wrist. “You boys have your little talk. Shanna and I are gonna get to know each other.” She turned and goose-stepped Shanna toward the doors leading out onto the patio. She stifled a tight grin when she heard Ezra cuss softly behind her.

Ezra turned on Bo. “What the hell were you thinkin’?

“That Chrissi might need rescuin’.”

“Did she look like she was unhappy? Did she look like we’ve abused her?”

Bo shrugged, his expression neutral. “I didn’t do right by her all those years ago. I should have said something to stop the three of you. If I’d known how things would turn out—”

“They’ve turned out just fine,” Cade ground out. “She was comin’ around.”

“Well, maybe she should have some space. I don’t imagine the three of you have left her time to think since Friday, have you?”

Ezra raked a hand through his hair, and pulled away a piece of hay. Damn, he didn’t need this. Not now. “We don’t need your interference, Bo. Chrissi’s stayin’. Said so last night.”

“Well, I’ll want to hear it from her. Without you hoverin’ over her.”

“I didn’t know Chrissi could be so jealous,” Josh drawled, as though there wasn’t enough tension in the room to pressure cook a stew. “It’s kinda sexy.”

Cade gave him a baleful glare. “I don’t think it’s a good idea to leave those two alone too long. Chrissi’s got a twenty-five pound advantage.”

Ezra stepped around Bo and stalked toward the French doors, the other three on his heels.

When he stepped out on the patio, his gaze swept it, then slammed into a sight that made him stumble. Josh barreled into his back. “What...? Oh, hell.”

Ezra felt the corners of his mouth twitch into a grin. The girls were seated at the edge of the pool. Their backs to the door. Their very naked backs.

Ezra noted the differences. One slender as a reed. The other curved. The dimples riding the upper curves of Shanna’s ass were deep as her bare bottom hugged the concrete.

Chrissi glanced over her shoulder. “Didn’t seem fair, you know. The fact you’ve had her. That she’s had all four of you, and I don’t even know what Bo looks like nekkid.”

“Thought you were fine with just the three of us?” Ezra groused, although he wasn’t really that perturbed with her. Chrissi was being Chrissi. Smart-mouthed. Savagely witty. Her eyes sparked with challenge. Lord, he’d missed that look.

“It’s natural, you know,” she said, her voice filled with lazy amusement. “Skinny-dippin’ with friends.”

She emphasized the last word, and Ezra’s gaze cut to Shanna who gave him a winsome smile. “It was all her idea.”

“I never doubted it, Shanna.” Ezra walked to a chaise and sat on the edge, then bent to tug off his dusty boots. “I hope you know,” he said, giving Chrissi a glare, “I’m gonna paddle that sweet ass of yours later.”

“I’m countin’ on it, cowboy.”

“Just how far are you willin’ to let this go?”

Chrissi rolled her eyes. “As you’ve told me repeatedly, I don’t get to make those decisions.”

Shanna groaned. “Bo, what’s keepin’ you, honey?”

Bo’s chuckle was low and dirty. Then Josh’s joined in. And Cade’s.

Ezra held Chrissi’s gaze while he stripped off the rest of his clothes. He shoved up off the lounge and strode to the pool, not the least embarrassed that his cock was hard and bouncing between his legs.

“Mmm-mm,” Shanna said, turning to Chrissi. “You do know how lucky you are, right?”

“I do indeed.”

“Most of the women in Two Mule are gonna hate your guts,” Shanna said grinning wickedly.

“I figured that would happen.” But Chrissi didn’t sound like she cared.

“They’ll all be jealous as hell.”

“You won’t be?”

Shanna grinned. “I had ’em. It was a present from Bo. Best present I ever had.”

“What about that ring I gave you?” Bo asked, his voice deepening with displeasure.

Shanna giggled and held up her hand. “Ever see anything that pretty?”

The ring caught the sunlight and sparkled. Ezra eyed the large stone, then arched a brow at Bo.

“So it’ll set me back a bit,” Bo said. “She deserves to be spoiled.”

Chrissi held Shanna’s hand and oohed over the sparkling gem. Ezra gave Cade and Josh a pointed glance. Tomorrow, they’d head to San Angelo to rectify that little oversight.

Ezra dove into the water and swam beneath the surface to the far end, made a quick turn and returned. When he reached Chrissi’s dangling feet, he wrapped his hands around her ankles and pulled.

She toppled into the water and sputtered when she came up for air. But a wide smile curved her lush mouth.

He bent and kissed her, snuggling his dick against her belly. Her appreciative groan was everything he could have asked. He broke the kiss. “You don’t wanna watch, you’d better get the hell out of here,” he said, not looking up to see how his warning was received.

Chrissi gripped the tops of his shoulders and gave a little jump. His hands cupped her butt while she wrapped her long, sleek legs around his waist.

“Shanna and I are gonna be real good friends,” Chrissi said slyly. “We’ve decided.”

He gave her a hard kiss. “How good?”

Chrissi lifted her chin, pointing to the side of the pool. A naked Bo was sliding into the water next to his girl and holding out his arms. Shanna laughed and reached for him, her legs closing quickly around his waist.

“Damn, seems a little crowded,” Josh complained.

“Never stopped you before,” Chrissi said, a wicked glint in her eyes.

Josh tore at his clothes. Cade laughed and settled onto a lounge, his gaze taking in the scene as he leaned back.

When Josh surfaced behind Chrissi, Ezra didn’t feel the least bit crowded or annoyed at the intrusion. The light of happiness glowing in Chrissi’s eyes was everything he’d ever hoped for. He kissed her mouth. Josh cupped her shoulders and glided his lips along the top curve.

“Slide down my cock, Chrissi,” Ezra said.

“You tellin’ or askin’.”

“Which do you prefer?”

“I love it when you make me, cowboy.”

He growled again and gripped her ass hard, centered his cock between her folds and shoved her all the way down.

Her eyelids fluttered, then slowly closed. “Oh my,” she breathed.

Ezra caught Shanna’s glance from the corner of his eye. She was peering over Bo’s shoulder. Shanna’s eyes glittered with delight, then she gave a wink. But it wasn’t directed at him. He looked down to catch Chrissi’s sly wink before she looked up and shrugged.

“We didn’t leave you two alone that long. What did you two hatch up between you?”

Chrissi gave him a look that was all innocence. “I told her as how it didn’t seem fair that she’d had all of you.”

“Uh huh?”

“And we decided, seeing as how we’re all gonna be such close friends, that we’d better even things up, just so I wouldn’t feel so awkward around Bo. There’s something about watchin’ a man come that levels the field.”

“That what she said?”

“I might have said that.”

“That all you two have planned?”

“I’m never gonna tell.”

Shanna laughed, then squealed until Bo pushed her head beneath the water.

“Serves me right,” Bo grouched. “I shoulda left her at home.”

“Like I was gonna let you,” Shanna said, coughing. “Most excitin’ thing to happen in Two Mule—”

“I thought Dani Cruz’s marriage was that.”

“Guess there’s more happenin’ in our little town than I ever knew.”

“Still happy you decided to stay?” Ezra asked Shanna, trying to keep his mind on the conversation, just to aggravate Chrissi, whose legs were tightening and whose fingers were twisting in his chest hair.

“I can’t imagine a life now without Bo in it.”

Bo’s expression was taut, his eyes darkening with pleasure.

Ezra smiled. He knew the feeling. He turned his attention back to the woman who was rubbing her back like a cat against Josh’s chest.

Chrissi wrinkled her nose at him. “Well, you weren’t payin’ me any attention.”

“You need to learn a little discipline.”

“You can teach me some—after you let me come.”

Ezra lifted his chin to Josh. “Think we can take the starch out of her tone?”

“If you’re not squeamish.”

Ezra grunted. Then he wrapped his arms tight around Chrissi to hold her still.

Chrissi kept her gaze locked with his, but her mouth dropped open.

Ezra felt the nudge of Josh’s cock. He raised Chrissi enough so that only the crown of his remained inside her.

Josh’s cock aligned with his, and he pushed. Together they crammed upward.

“Sweet Jesus,” Chrissi said, her eyes widening in alarm. “That’s not gonna work.”

“Have a little faith,” Josh murmured beside her ear. “Relax, sweetheart. You owe me for those pretty red toes.”

Ezra held still and let Josh take her hips and move her in short, grinding pulses up and down.

Chrissi reached one hand behind her and sank her fingers in Josh's hair.

Ezra palmed a breast and squeezed the nipple hard between his thumb and forefinger.

Her face screwed up in sexy anguish, a slow mewling whimper broke. "Move! Move now."

Water churned as he and Josh began to stroke, bouncing her on their cocks in short strokes. Chrissi flung back her head and screamed.

"Damn."

Breathing hard, Ezra turned his head, to find Shanna's avid stare trained on them.

"Wondered what it looked like. Damn."

But he couldn't have cared less that they were the center of attention. His balls were cramping, ready to burst.

Josh let out a deep groan, pumped her twice more up and down their cocks, then sank his face into the corner of her shoulder.

Ezra gave him a few moments to recoup. When Josh pulled away, Ezra walked to the steps with Chrissi held tightly against his chest. At the first chaise, he laid her back, braced his arms on either side of her and began to thrust—hard strokes, gliding faster, and faster. Her legs crept up, and he paused to settle them over his shoulders and then he hammered her again. When her eyes squeezed shut and her body bucked against his, he let go.

When he came back down, it was to Chrissi's hands smoothing over his chest, his shoulders. Her mouth peppering his face with kisses. He slumped over her, then crawled fully onto the lounge and didn't move.

The sexy convulsions caressing his shaft waned. Chrissi sighed beneath him, and snuggled her face against his neck. "I like this part too," she whispered.

"You're not goin' back to town tonight."

"No. I'm stayin' right where I belong."

Ezra kissed her, putting all of himself into the kiss—all his hopes and desires.

When he pulled back, she gave him a sleepy smile. "I can't believe I'm here. That I'm this happy."

"You won't want for a thing, darlin'. Not ever."

"I believe you. And I'm sorry."

He shook his head. "Don't be. Took us a while to get here is all."

His cock slid from inside her, and he rolled to his side, coming up on an elbow to look around the patio. Bo finally had Shanna's full attention. And by the froth the two were stirring in the water, they'd be done in just a few moments. Josh lay on his belly on a towel beside the pool, his head cradled on his arms. Cade met his glance when he finally got to him.

Cade gave him a little satisfied nod. "Not too shabby, bro."

Whether it was praise for his performance or for the fact they'd really done it, lassoed Chrissi for good, he didn't know. But he smiled. He didn't doubt there'd still be adjustments to be made. Trying to figure out the sleeping arrangements, how they'd share her, but he had no doubts they'd work it out.

If Cade and Josh felt even a fraction of the joy that he did, they'd make it.

Chrissi stirred, turning to spoon against him. "Think we could have sleepovers?"

Cade's laughter rang out, and Ezra grinned, then lifted a hand to smack Chrissi's thigh. "Only if you're very, very good."

Chrissi smiled across at Cade, sharing her pleasure. Cade's gaze warmed, his mouth eased into a one-sided grin. He hadn't been part of the shenangigans in the pool, but he'd liked watching. She could tell. She'd have to dream up more opportunities to take care of that proclivity. Maybe she could cajole Shanna into something wicked another time.

For now, he'd have to be content knowing he'd have her complete attention later when he took her to *the room*.

With Ezra cupping a breast, his skin and the sun warming her through and through, she couldn't imagine a more perfect day. What had been dirty and sordid had been repainted with all the colors of her passions. And deep inside, she didn't harbor a single doubt that this would work for all of them. That feeling of inevitability was stronger than ever.

"Happy?" Ezra murmured in her ear.

"Yes." She didn't need to say anything more.

His hand squeezed her again, then smoothed over her hip. "I love you. We all love you."

"I know."

He pinched her nipple and she grinned over at Cade. "I love you all too. But you already knew that."

Cade gave her a waggle of his eyebrows. "How those boots fittin' now, Ezra?"

Ezra grunted behind her. "Those boots are feelin' just fine."

Chrissi shook her head, wondering what the heck Cade thought was so damn funny, but she let them have their little joke. Probably at her expense. "Think Macy will be surprised?"

"Not a bit. Josh told her you wouldn't be comin' back."

Chrissi huffed. "You were sure of yourselves."

"You can't fight somethin' this strong."

"Don't think I'll always be this easy."

"Baby, told you before. I like you sassy."

"Better hold on tight. Because I have years of sass stored up just for you."

His hand smoothed down her belly and slid between her thighs. The caress he gave her made her moan. “So do we, babe. So do we.”

About the Author

Until recently, award-winning erotica and romance author Delilah Devlin lived in South Texas at the intersection of two dry creeks, surrounded by sexy cowboys in Wranglers. These days, she's missing the wide-open skies and starry nights but loving her dark forest in Central Arkansas, with its eccentric characters and isolation—the better to feed her hungry muse! For Delilah, the greatest sin is driving between the lines, because it's comfortable and safe. Her personal journey has taken her through one war and many countries, cultures, jobs, and relationships to bring her to the place where she is now—writing sexy adventures that hold more than a kernel of autobiography and often share a common thread of self-discovery and transformation.

To learn more about Delilah Devlin, please visit www.delilahdevlin.com. Send an email to delilah@delilahdevlin.com or join her Yahoo! group to enter in the fun with other readers as well as Delilah: DelilahsDiary@yahoogroups.com

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Cowboy Fever
True Heart

There's a wild child trapped inside her, and they're hell-bent on unleashing it...

Four Sworn

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Lone Star Lovers, Book 3

As the pretty daughter of the town whore, Shanna Davies has always tried hard to toe the line. But she just can't help it. Her boyfriend, Bo Crenshaw, has lured her untamed spirit out to play once too often. It's time to get the hell out of Dodge and make a new start where no one knows her past. After she fulfills one last, wicked fantasy.

Shanna is Bo's first everything. First kiss, first sexual playmate, first love. Yet he's never managed to convince her that he accepts her—good girl and bad—just as she is. So, she wants a memorable send off? No problem. He'll give her one that'll make her think twice about leaving.

On the appointed night, Shanna expects nerves. Yet once she crosses the threshold, the prospect of surrendering to a night of unrestrained passion with Bo *and* the three Kinzie brothers makes her mouth water—and her courage dry up.

But she asked for it, and now she's not about to blink first in this game of sexual chicken...

Warning: Four lusty cowboys prove a little domination goes a long way in breaking a stubborn woman to saddle. Lots of spanking, binding, flogging, and double-dipping can keep a girl on her toes, her back, her belly, her knees...

Enjoy the following excerpt for Four Sworn:

Shanna reached up and kissed him then dropped her head back.

Bo was so handsome it broke her heart to look at him. Brown hair, green eyes, a lean, muscled frame were only the start of what she liked about him. His sharp-edged face, square jaw and the way he looked right into her eyes when he talked to her, never failed to make her melt.

He was the best friend she'd ever had. Knew every one of her dirty little secrets, but he'd never judged her. Never looked down on her. And she knew he'd be more than willing to take on all her problems on a permanent basis because he thought he was in love with her.

But she couldn't do it to him. He deserved better than getting smeared with the likes of Camilla Davies' daughter. Which was why she'd never let him park his truck outside the tidy little house her grandma had left to her when she moved to the retirement home.

"Blood will out." Or so Gran had always said, shaking her head mournfully whenever Shanna colored outside the lines. And hadn't the old woman been right, after all? Just look at what she'd asked Bo to do for her.

A coyote howled in the distance, bringing her back. The ridges in the truck bed were digging into her spine, but she didn't want to be the first to push away. She wiggled her butt to realign with the ridges.

Bo lifted his head from her shoulder. "I'm crushin' you."

"No you aren't," she said, but she lowered her legs from his waist and let him slide to the side of her body. Shanna stuck an arm under her head and gazed at the stars glittering against the dark sky. "This was a great idea," she said softly. "You always know the perfect place."

Bo rolled to his back. "It's the middle of the football field. Better hope we don't get caught. There won't be any hidin' the tire tracks in the grass." Bo laughed. "At least it's better than the high school janitor's closet."

She shoved her elbow in his side. "No one found us."

"We both smelled like bleach after we spilled the supply shelf."

"Good thing we were naked then because our clothes didn't get ruined."

Smiling, Bo rubbed a lazy hand across his belly. "Have to say I was surprised you sought me out tonight."

"Just needed a partner to get out on the dance floor."

"That's not what I meant. I've hardly seen you around town. Gran said you've been job-hunting, interviewing in Austin and Houston. You didn't tell me. Thought you were avoidin' me."

"I've been lookin' for a job. Not that I have tons of options. Shoulda finished college when I had the chance."

"You hated school. Only reason you went to SMU in the first place was to get away from Two Mule. That why you've been job-huntin' so far from home?"

"Yeah. Thought it was about time to start the rest of my life. I can't stay here forever."

He stayed silent so long, she wondered if he'd fallen asleep. She glanced over at him, only to discover his head was propped on his arm while he studied her face.

"Don't look at me like that," she said, pushing out her bottom lip.

His eyebrows rose. "Like what?"

"I don't know. Like you think I'm a coward."

His eyebrows dropped. "I don't think that at all."

Shanna scowled. "I'm not like you. I don't come from a good family. Everywhere I go in Two Mule, someone whispers behind my back. They all wonder when I'll prove I'm just like my mom."

"Your mom wasn't a bad person. I liked her."

"Men liked her because most of 'em knew her in the biblical sense."

"That's an exaggeration."

She wrinkled her nose. "She was a whore, Bo, with a string of sugar daddies."

Bo nodded, his expression thoughtful. "She had some issues, but she wasn't a bad person. And you aren't her."

"People won't let me be someone other than Camilla Davies' daughter. And look at me. Look at what I want. What does that say about me?"

He rolled to his side and settled his head on his hand. "It just means you're sexually curious. So am I. Does that make me a whore? Bet I've had more lovers than you."

Shanna met his gaze, hyper-aware of his broad chest and missing his weight pinning her to the truck bed. She wished she could cuddle against him and draw on his inner core of strength. "Why haven't you settled down? You could find yourself a good woman."

His fingertip traced the length of her nose then tapped the end. "Because there's only one you," he said, smiling softly.

She hoped that wasn't true. She loved him. She knew he cared about her. But he shouldn't be *in* love with her.

She sat up and rubbed her arms. "I'm gettin' a little cold."

"Coward. You brought the subject up."

"I'm not afraid of the 'M' word. But I'm a realist. I really, really can't think of having a relationship until I'm far away from here."

His large hand cupped her thigh. "So you want me to arrange the ultimate farewell party?"

She shot him a quick glance, worried about what he thought of her now. "Am I being wicked?"

"Oh yeah." He pushed up on his arms, then leaned over and kissed her cheek. "But I like your wicked, dirty little mind."

Her lips twitched and stretched into a smile, and she was glad that the darkness hid the heat creeping into her cheeks.

Bo kissed her then backed away, keeping that talented mouth of his an inch from hers. "I'll get you what you want, sweetheart. My gift to you. Think of it as a goin'-away present."

Love takes courage. Loving two men takes twice as much.

The Boys Next Door

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At seventeen, Tommy Ambinder was Annie Parsons' first love, the center of her world. Almost. There was a secret spot reserved for Judah, Tommy's elder brother. On the day she discovered Judah wanted her, as well, the aftermath drove Annie out of town—and a wedge between the men she loved.

Now, haunted by guilt, Annie has returned to Melgrove, Montana with one hope in her heart—that twenty years has overcome the rift between the Ambinder boys. If they've mended fences, maybe she can repair her own life too.

Tommy's missed Annie all these years, but he never realized how much until one glimpse reignites the passion that time hasn't quenched. Something else hasn't changed, either—half of her heart still belongs to Judah.

Now, with Annie poised to run again, history is threatening to repeat itself—unless one of them has the courage to break free of the pattern and blaze a new trail that's wide enough for all three.

Warning: This book contains all the volcanic intensity of first love, searing-hot sex scenes, and two brothers sharing the one woman they love!

Enjoy the following excerpt for The Boys Next Door:

Judah froze in shock as Annie buried her face against his chest, her arms wrapped around him so tight he could feel her heart thudding. "Oh God, Judah!" Tears were streaming down her face as she babbled, "I thought you were gone, I didn't know what happened, the house was all empty and I didn't know where you were!"

She looked up at him finally, a frantic sort of happiness shining in her eyes. "How are you? How's Tommy? Is he okay? God, I've missed you!"

He wanted to shake her. He wanted to hit her, almost. For twenty years she'd been gone, vanished off the face of the earth, and now here she was smiling at him, telling him she'd missed him?

How in twenty years could she have changed so little? She was still as impulsive, still as heedless of consequences, blissfully unaware of how her actions affected others.

He wanted to kiss her so badly he almost couldn't breathe.

He held himself rigid, not returning her embrace. Uncertainty bloomed like a shadow in the hazel depths of her eyes, and she dropped her arms, looking away.

Judah felt his heart lurch back into motion as her gaze released him, the sudden rush of blood making his head spin.

Annie Parsons. If she'd changed at all in twenty years, he couldn't see it. Oh sure, there were a few wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, and the lustrous brown hair which her mother had always kept neatly trimmed now hung in a careless shag cut he wasn't sure he liked. Unthinkingly, he started to reach out and brush the dust from her hair—then Judah stopped himself, fisting his hand at his side.

What in hell did he think he was doing?

Gritting his jaw, he jerked his chin at the hillside. "Came over to see what spooked the livestock. What are you doing here, Annie?"

She gave him a quick, almost guilty sidelong glance, then shrugged, her gaze tracing the low, weathered hills. "I just...wanted to see how you were, I guess. I'm sorry I panicked. When I saw the house..."

He nodded to himself. He knew that panic. It had flared in his own gut the day she'd disappeared, making him push past her crying mother and storm up the stairs, determined to see for himself.

Her abandoned room, her empty closet, had hit him like a hard punch straight to the stomach. Even now, the memory could still rock him if he wasn't careful.

"It just got to be too much to keep up, after Dad died." His terse explanation didn't begin to carry the weight of grief of those days, the way everything had seemed to fall apart all at once. Even her parents had moved away shortly thereafter.

But Annie must've caught an echo of his emotion anyway—she looked at him, soft concern showing in her hazel eyes. "When did it happen?"

It was his turn to shrug, looking out over the pastures. "Fifteen years ago." *Five years after you left. Where did you go, Annie?* He kicked at a clump of dried leaves clotting the porch, making them rustle. "It's amazing how quick things go to pieces out here."

She was still watching him, her gaze seeming to cut straight through the wall he was trying so hard to keep between them. The warm compassion in her eyes stroked him in a way that both angered and soothed him.

Damn it, Annie, stop looking at me like that.

"I'm sorry, Judah."

"Yeah, well..." He nodded briefly, pushing away her sympathy. "Ma's doing all right. She's sixty-three now, can you believe it? Sixty-three and still gets up at five a.m. to feed the chickens."

"And Tommy? How is he?"

Judah froze at the question. Annie's eyes were wide, direct, the concern shading their hazel depths not only for him now. Her voice was so gentle, damn it, asking about Tommy. As if she still loved him. As if she still cared.

Anger flared inside him, along with the old, twisted jealousy. If she'd ever truly loved Tommy, if she'd cared about him at all, she would never have let Judah kiss her beneath the bleachers. Never would have let him touch her as he'd dreamed of doing. Never would have run to his arms in the night...

Judah cleared his throat. Against his will, his gaze flicked downward, tracing the line of her thighs through her faded jeans. "He's all right. He's in Washington these days. Bought a farm there. He's married now." He watched Annie closely, wanting to see her reaction.

If his words surprised her, she hid it well. "That's great. When was this?"

"Seven, eight years ago. Something like that. He's got kids," Judah elaborated. "Two boys and a girl."

Something flickered briefly in her eyes, but she only smiled. "That makes you an uncle. Congratulations."

"Yeah, I guess it does." He cleared his throat again.

"And you?" she asked. "How about you?"

Her eyes were too soft. Too warm. Too lovely. Judah shifted uncomfortably and pushed back his Stetson. "Me? I'll never leave Montana." He snorted. "You know me."

"Do I?"

Two words, one little question, and suddenly it seemed like there wasn't enough air for his lungs. Never mind the vast blue sky above them, or the miles of open, rolling hills all around. Judah moved closer, his voice dropping half an octave. "I'll always be here, Annie. You know that."

Her gaze rose to meet his, full of shadows. Maybe longing. Something thrummed in the air between them, and Judah stepped away quickly.

Christ, what was he *doing*?

"So, how long you in town for?" He leaned against the porch railing, absently noting the flaking paint. *Ought to do something about that*, he thought, then: *Why bother? It's not like it matters.*

But it still broke his heart.

Annie shrugged. "Just overnight, really. I booked a room at the boarding house."

He nodded. "You drive out here?"

"Yeah. I parked up on the ridge. I...I didn't want anyone to see me."

Which was probably smart, Judah admitted. Even thoughtful. Maybe Annie had changed, if only a little.

Suddenly, he wasn't so happy with the idea.

Then he pictured her sliding pell-mell down the slope, sending dirt flying and scaring the cattle half to pieces. He had to fight to suppress a smile. Yeah, that was the Annie he remembered, all right.

"Well, come on," he said, straightening. "I'll give you a lift."

She was silent as he drove down the long, dusty ranch road, hopping out without his asking to open the livestock gate at the far end. Her hair hung in her face, and in the afternoon light she looked as slim and

nimble as she had at seventeen. She grinned at him as she climbed back into the truck. “Thought I forgot that, didn’t you?”

Judah merely grunted and turned onto Route 32.

But as they rattled up the dirt track running up to the ridge, he heard himself saying, “If you’re bored tonight, go on down to the pool hall. They put in a dance floor,” he added awkwardly. *Shut up, Judah!*

“Are you going to be there?”

“Dunno. I doubt it.”

Hell no, Judah, and what in hell are you thinking?

“Well, maybe I’ll think about it, then,” she answered. “Thanks for the lift. And say hi to your mom for me. I miss her.” Opening the door, she hesitated. “It’s good to see you, Judah.”

He didn’t answer, and after a moment she climbed out. He waited as she walked to what looked like a brand-new Buick, started it up and backed it around. Her eyes met his once through the windshield, and she waved as she drove past.

He didn’t wave back.

Judah watched in the rearview mirror until the Buick was out of sight. He wasn’t going to the pool hall. It had taken too many years for the hole in his chest to stop aching constantly. Too many sleepless nights wondering where she was, how she was. Wondering if she was all right.

She was fine, and that was enough. He didn’t need to know more than that. He didn’t *want* to know more.

And he sure as hell didn’t want her getting anywhere near Tommy.

The decadence of Bourbon Street is beckoning...

French Quarter

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Hot in the City, Book 1

When prim, proper Liz Marsh suspects her fiancé is cheating on her, she's almost too embarrassed to hire a P.I. to prove it. And when she gathers her courage and walks into Jack Wade's office, she has no idea he'll be the sexiest man she's ever encountered, nor that his light Cajun accent will make her tingle in all the wrong—or is that right?—places.

After Jack brings her questionable yet undeniably arousing evidence, the only solution is for Liz to get a closer look with her own eyes. And Jack is more than happy to show her everything she's been missing. One night in the French Quarter's entrancing red light district, and Liz finds herself caught up in the provocative allure of an erotic new atmosphere and the sudden, urgent need to experience it for herself—with Jack.

Jack's normally a keep-it-casual guy, but as nights with Liz get hotter, so do Jack's feelings for the seductive woman in his arms. Bourbon Street decadence beckons and Liz embarks on a sizzling journey of sexual awakening that has her more willing to shed her inhibitions minute by carnal minute. But someone else has noticed her insatiable appetite for sensual adventure, someone who's just beginning to realize what he's lost—and who's determined to tear Jack and Liz apart...

Warning: Contains sizzling hot sex any way she wants it—and a man (or two) more than willing to show her the ropes. Let the good times roll, baby!

Enjoy the following excerpt for French Quarter:

"Tell me about a lap dance," she said to Jack. Suddenly, she no longer cared if she didn't appear experienced. Perhaps, she thought, because she also suddenly wanted to change all that, wanted to *get* experienced.

"What do you want to know?"

"How much does it cost? How does it work? Is there touching involved?"

He looked taken aback, aroused, before explaining. "You have to ask the stripper how much it costs—usually twenty dollars or so. You pay the girl, then she straddles you and dances. You can't touch, but *she* can touch *you*. They generally *don't*, but they can."

Jack pointed to a nearby table where a young guy was getting a lap dance from a pretty girl with round, sexy breasts and long brown hair—she looked particularly impassioned by her work.

Together, she and Jack watched and Liz could have sworn her body temperature was steadily rising. The gorgeous stripper leaned down over the guy, teasing him, her beaded pink nipples so close to his

mouth that Liz wondered how he kept himself from nibbling on them. The stripper's hips ground into the guy's crotch, making the spot between Liz's thighs tingle hotly.

"Have you had them before?" she asked, still studying the intimate act.

Jack stopped watching the lap dance to look at her. She pulled her gaze from the stripper and met his eyes. "Yeah," he said on a heated breath. "Why?"

"Just curious." She took a sip of her drink and looked back at him, feeling daring, wanting—for once in her life—to just do something she felt like doing without weighing it, questioning it, or worrying about it. "Do women ever get them?"

His gaze remained steady. "I've seen women get 'em on occasion."

"I want one," she said, her voice low.

She could tell she'd surprised him once more; herself, too.

"Really?"

She nodded. Before now, she'd never desired another woman, but sitting here watching them had excited her, made her wonder what it felt like to touch or be touched by another girl, as Lynda had. Of course, Jack had just told her *she* couldn't touch them, but she simply wanted to do as Lynda had suggested and follow her urges, and her urge at the moment was to have a woman's curves hovering over and around her. More than that, her urge was to have Jack watch.

Jack's voice came even lower and huskier. "Did you have a particular girl in mind?"

"Her," Liz said, pointing to the same brunette they'd been watching give a dance at the next table. She looked at him. "Can you arrange it?"

He nodded.

Jack couldn't believe Liz wanted a lap dance. Her voice was so breathy asking him about it, her full lips so pouty and kissable, her eyes so wild with curious passion. As he rose to approach the same hot brunette he'd been aroused by the other night, his cock stood so stiff it was almost painful.

As the stripper finished working over the younger guy, rising off him and accepting her tip, she turned to where Jack stood waiting. "How much?" he asked.

"Is it for you?" she inquired and her eyes told him she wanted him to say yes.

"Afraid not." He pointed toward Liz, gaze focused on the main stage now, where a stripper circled her pole in a Britney Spears schoolgirl outfit. "It's for my...girlfriend."

The brunette offered a small smile that made him think she wasn't disappointed, after all, and that she liked doing women as well as men. "Twenty."

He handed her the money and added, "By the way, she's kind of...a virgin at this."

The stripper flicked pretty deep brown eyes from Liz to him. "Your idea or hers?"

"Hers."

Her smile widened. "Good."

Together, they returned to the booth where Liz waited. Before taking a seat beside her, Jack pulled the small round table back so the dancer could reach Liz.

The stripper looked at Liz like Liz usually looked at him—her eyes brimming with desire. “Hi, my name’s Felicia.” Her voice was as smooth as silk.

Liz’s eyes dripped with sensuality and a hint of uncertainty. “Hi.” Her nipples jutted hot and pretty through the slick fabric of her dress.

A new song began, and without further ado, Felicia placed one knee on the seat of the plush burgundy booth next to Liz’s hip before straddling her completely. “Just relax and enjoy,” she said to Liz, who sank a little deeper into her seat as Felicia began to move.

Wearing only her requisite flesh-colored g-string and another sexy pair of fuck-me heels, she began to grind her pussy in hot, tight circles just an inch or so away from Liz’s. She caressed her big, beautiful breasts while Jack and Liz both watched. She tweaked her nipples and swayed them over Liz until they brushed against her chest. Liz let out a small gasp of pleasure and it was all Jack could do not to take his cock in his hand. Like most guys, nothing aroused him quite like the sight of two girls getting it on, and he thought he’d never seen anything so lush and sensual as the dance taking place next to him.

Felicia wore a dirty little smile, clearly pleased she was having the desired effect on both of them. Jiggling her bare breasts against Liz’s once more, the stripper lowered her pussy directly onto Liz’s and began to grind. Oh yeah, he’d been right—Felicia liked doing girls. Her gyrations were hot and slow and sexy as hell, and Liz was beginning to grind back. While they rubbed themselves together, Liz’s eyes roamed Felicia—from her face to her breasts to the bit of fabric stretched over her cunt where it pressed into Liz’s crotch. He barely noticed when other guys in the vicinity began to watch, too—he couldn’t have torn his eyes from the two women if his life had depended on it.

The grinding of pussies through fabric continued and Felicia now rubbed her tits flush against Liz’s, all while simulating a dance. Liz looked drunk with passion, and when Felicia rose to a full sitting position—their crotches still pressed tight together—and began to squeeze and caress her bare breasts, Liz murmured, “Mmm, yes.” That’s when Felicia lowered her hands to Liz’s lovely globes, kneading them as she swayed and moved. Liz let out a ragged sigh and looked down, watching Felicia mold her soft flesh through the dress. Jack could have sworn her nipples popped out a little more and that she worked her hips harder against the stripper’s.

But then Felicia began to cool things down, gradually, and Jack recognized the end of the song approaching and knew Liz’s pleasure was about to come to an end. Felicia ceased touching Liz’s pretty breasts through that creamy dress and resumed kneading her own. Her grinding motions against Liz’s pussy lightened, lightened, until finally she lifted herself up, disconnecting their crotches, finishing the dance that way.

When the song ended, Felicia lowered a soft kiss to Liz's cheek then slowly got to her feet. The guys at the next table gave a few low whistles and catcalls, and Jack tried to catch his breath as he tucked another twenty into the string of elastic at the stripper's hip. "Thanks, babe, that was fun," she said to him, then sauntered away across the room.

Jack slowly lowered his gaze back to Liz, who was sitting up straighter now, her breath coming heavy. He thought in one way this felt like the calm after a storm, as if Felicia had somehow just rained thick lust down upon his sexy, *jolie* Liz and then vanished quick as a summer downpour. Only he didn't feel very calm and he suspected Liz didn't, either.

He wasn't going to mince words. "*Chere*, that was the hottest damn thing I've ever seen."

Her cheeks flooded with color. She looked tense, excited, intoxicated. "You liked watching?"

"Oh yeah." He nodded.

Her eyes lit with heat and Jack took it as an invitation. "I liked *knowing* you were watching," she said.

The very words made him want to groan, made the skin around his cock tighten even more. He'd intended to wait 'til her case was done before making a move on her, and as far as he was concerned, it had reached its conclusion a little while ago. Good thing, because nothing could have stopped him from being drawn into the sexual web he felt spinning tight around him. He lowered his voice, leaned in closer to her. "Did you like rubbin' against her breasts? Her pussy?"

The color in her cheeks deepened, but she didn't shy away from the question, keeping her gaze intense upon him. "Mmm, yes. It was...incredible."

"What do you want to do now?" he asked, praying she'd ask him to fuck her.

"I could use a drink," she said. "It's hot in here."

Despite himself, he smiled. It wasn't hot in there at all—unless you were getting a lap dance, he supposed. He flagged over another waitress in a gold bikini and ordered more drinks as he slid his arm warmly back around Liz's shoulder. Just the mere feel of her breast against his side added to the fire coursing through him. He turned and whispered in her ear. "Do you have any fuckin' idea how hot you've got me?"

She pulled back just enough to smile at him. "Mmm-hmm."

He lowered his chin. "Did she make you come?"

Her smile softened into something more provocative. "No."

"Were you close?"

She bit her lip, nodded.

A little more blood rushed to his cock. "You want me to finish the job, *chere*?"

She gave a coquettish look. "Not yet."

Merde. Was this woman trying to drive him out of his mind with frustration? "Why?"

She paused, thought. “Because this is the most freedom I’ve ever felt in my life. I don’t want to rush the night. I want to stretch it out. I want to feel *everything* tonight. I want to make it last.”

He grinned. “Just because I get you off don’t mean the night’s over, darlin’. I’d be happy to make you come again and again.”



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