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TRIPLE DARE

LEXXIE
COUPER

Two men, one woman, one momentous dare.

A Red Hot Winter Story

Serious and determined, Joseph Hudson isn't Australia's businessman of the year for nothing. So now he's asking himself, how did he get lost on the side of a mountain in the Colorado Rockies—in the middle of winter—with night fast approaching? Three simple words. *I dare you.*

Fear isn't in Rob Thorton's vocabulary. Life is for the taking, and Rob uses both hands. Challenging his best mate to take an impromptu snowboarding trip to the U.S. is just the latest in a lifetime of dares. Besides, he has an ulterior motive for the trip. And a plan...

Park Ranger Anna McCarthy knows what trouble looks like, and it's written all over the two Aussies she first encounters in the ski lodge. Instinct has her following them onto the mountain, and sure enough, they end up needing her winter survival expertise. But not even her skills can stop her body from responding to the sexy muscles she finds beneath their ski suits.

Stuck in a remote cabin until the storm passes, the temperatures rise until all bets are off. And a double dare turns into a triple threat—to their hearts.

Warning: Contains lots of scorching boy on girl on boy action, a heroine who knows what she wants and two sexy-arsed Australian heroes to really work up a sweat over. Oh, and a soul-deep love story with a revelation that may make you cry.

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Samhain Publishing, Ltd.
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Triple Dare
Copyright © 2011 by Lexxie Couper
ISBN: 978-1-60928-322-3
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Cover by Kanaxa

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First Samhain Publishing, Ltd. electronic publication: January 2011
www.samhainpublishing.com

Triple Dare

Lexxie Couper

Dedication

For Jess Dee, even though she can't stand vegemite sandwiches.
And Heidi, who dared me to do it.

Chapter One

Joseph Hudson tossed his snowboard aside, threw his goggles over his shoulder and swung a fist at his best mate.

His knuckles, covered as they were by tri-layer insulated gloves, weren't anywhere near as hard as they would have been if he'd been having this fight back home in Australia. They were, however, still hard enough to produce a satisfying crunch when they hit Robert I-dare-you Thorton's jaw.

"You right bloody wanker," Joseph stormed, watching his life-long friend, business partner and travelling companion stagger backward over the firmly compacted snow. "You told me the helicopter was going to pick us up before sunset."

Robert let out a snorting chuckle, rubbing at his jaw even as he struggled to stay on his feet. That his snowboard was still attached to his left boot wasn't making the job easier. "Yeah, yeah." He laughed, his wide grin almost hidden by his own gloved hand. "Sunset *tomorrow*, Hudo."

Joseph took a step toward him, the urge to kill him was stronger than it had ever been. Stronger than the time Rob had dared him to hijack the principal's mini back in their senior year of high school and leave it atop the barbeque pit at the top of the local lookout point. Stronger than the time Rob had dared him to run buck-naked across the cricket pitch during the regional grand final game with the word "Howzat?" scrawled in bright red lipstick on his backside. How was he to know Mrs. Woodcomb's mini was a rare collectors car on the verge of being bought by a museum for a very, *very* generous price? How was he to know the national manager of the camping-and-outdoor equipment store Joseph worked at was the umpire of the cricket match that day?

Thanks to Robert bloody Thorton, over the twenty-six years spanning their friendship Joseph had been suspended, sacked, jailed, robbed, handcuffed to a stripper pretending to be a cop, handcuffed to a cop who sure as hell *wasn't* a stripper, left stranded on a public beach without a stitch of clothing and almost married to a Russian buy-a-bride at the ripe old age of sixteen. None of those incidents however, could have resulted in Joseph's untimely demise like this one could.

He ground his teeth, removed his bright orange helmet and dragged his fingers through his hair as he did so. "Fuck a duck, Rob," he muttered, shaking his head. "We could die up here tonight. Do you have any idea how bloody cold the Rockies get at night? In the winter? We don't even have a bloody tent!"

"I saw you pitching a tent over that hot little number back in the lodge this morning, Hudo. The same one who caught your eye last night." Rob grinned wide enough to flash the dimple in his right cheek, an

action guaranteed to make any woman forgive him anything. Joseph however, was not a woman. Not even close.

He yanked his gloves from his hands, storming towards his best mate. “Right,” he growled, “that’s it. I’m gonna kill you.”

Rob burst out laughing, holding his still-gloved hands up, palms outward—the closest Joseph would get to an apology. “Uncle, uncle.”

Joseph rolled his eyes and raked his fingers, already starting to tingle from the bitter chill on the winter air, through his hair again. As frustratingly annoying as the tall, lanky professional nuisance could be, Rob knew when he’d pushed too far. Now was one of those times. He’d always been this way. Since day one of kindergarten, Rob had been the instigator, the provoker, challenging Joseph to push himself beyond the boring safety of his conservative, politically correct, cotton-wool, upper-class upbringing. All Rob needed to do was utter the words, “I dare you” and Joseph was a cooked goose. Trouble always followed those words. Trouble and a world of fun.

If it wasn’t for “I dare you”, Joseph never would have started Hudo’s Outdoor Equipment Online at the bright-eyed and bushytailed age of twenty.

If it wasn’t for “I dare you”, he’d never have taken his small online store to the next street-front level.

If it wasn’t for Rob and his “I dare you”, Joseph would probably still be sitting in Hudo’s Outdoor Equipment’s office beside the fridge in his kitchen, wondering where most of his ambition had gone.

“I dare you” had seen them both fly out of Australia to the US to take on the Rockies’ ski slopes without any preparation at all except to pack their snowboards and equipment—and, in Rob’s case, practically a whole backpack of condoms. By the time they’d landed in Colorado, Rob’s blog had received over one hundred comments from women in the US offering to show them the best places to have fun on the snow. Something about those comments told Joseph snowboarding wasn’t exactly the fun they had in mind.

“I dare you” had seen him singing Men At Work’s “Down Under”, the unofficial Australian national anthem, last night in the bar after just two hours in the country, standing atop a not-so-stable table with his Aussie-flag boxers on full and prominent display.

So here you are, Joseph, CEO of Hudo’s Outdoor Equipment, Time Australia’s Businessman of the Year, stuck on the side of a mountain in the Rockies with Hudo’s Marketing Director and all round professional partier and no one back in Australia knows where either of you are. Excellent.

That thought, sarcastic as it was, made Joseph snort. He let out a sigh and looked around for his discarded gloves. “Okay, Thorton,” he threw over his shoulder. “I know you’re not a complete moron. What’s your plan? Where are we staying tonight?”

Rob’s dimple flashed again. “In the hut, Hudo. In the hut.”

Joseph raised his eyebrows. The pristine snow surrounding them, barely marred by tree or rock let alone fellow snowboarders or skiers, didn't lead him to feel any more relieved. He turned back to Rob. "Hut?"

"Hut."

"Okay, I'll give. Where the bloody hell is this hut?"

Rob didn't try to hide his grin as he dropped his gaze to the slim compass embedded in the nose of his snowboard—a new device he was trialing for Hudo's Outdoor Equipment. Joseph may be pissed at him, but he'd stopped at one punch. By Rob's reckoning, that meant Joe had already forgiven him and was about to throw himself into the challenge, albeit begrudgingly, but along for the ride all the same.

Rob studied the small compass, noting the direction it told him was true north. Lifting his head, he gave Joe a wide smirk. "The hut is about forty minutes that way." He pointed northwest. "As long as you stop belly-aching, we should be settled in and knocking back the first beer before sunset."

Joseph cocked an eyebrow. "Belly-aching? Hey, I've got a right to complain. You may enjoy sleeping starkers in the middle of the Rockies, but I left my favorite boxers back at the lodge. And for the record, I still can't believe you're carrying a six-pack in your backpack."

Rob laughed. Joe's favorite boxers—a silk pair with an image of the Incredible Hulk printed on the backside—were tucked safely in amongst Rob's own long johns. "Yeah, yeah," he reached down and released the mechanism on his snowboard's binding harness. "You think I'm going to look at your bony arse?"

"No," Joe shot back. "I'm just worried you're going to go into a steep spiral of depression when you realize my nuts are bigger than yours."

Rob threw back his head and laughed. The sound bounced off the pristine white snow-covered hills around them. "I've seen 'em, remember, mate." He patted the front of his padded ski trousers. "*These* are bigger *and* made of brass." He snatched his snowboard from the ground and hoisted it up onto his shoulder. "C'mon. I'm thirsty and the beer is getting warm."

Joseph snorted. "Of course it is. The fact we're tromping through a bloody fridge doesn't mean anything to you, does it?"

Rob flashed his teeth at his best friend. "You know I like my beer cold."

He set off, the crunch of the untouched snow beneath his feet like music from heaven. Growing up in Australia meant two things to Rob. Surf and snow. He and Joseph had spent their childhood either on the waves or the ski slopes. The trouble was, with the planet increasingly getting hotter every year, the Australian snow fields were fast dwindling to snow patches. He pulled at the backpack slung over his shoulder. There wasn't anything like going on an adventure with his best mate, especially not at the moment.

When the call of the snow had hit him in the belly in the middle of a sweltering Aussie summer day while he and Joseph were in the most boring meeting Rob had ever had the misfortune to be in, he'd dared Joe to jump a 747. Six hours later they were settled into their first-class seats, beers in hand, watching Sydney become a tiny grey smudge thirty-thousand feet below them. Thirty-two hours after that and here they were. In Colorado. On the slopes.

Away from it all.

The hut—a rescuers cabin nestled in the trees at the lowest point of Knife Ridge in Wolf Creek Ski Resort, was the perfect place to force Joe to unwind. And to give him the bad news.

Don't think about that yet, Robbo. Get a few beers into him and then think about it.

Pulling an icy breath, he shot his best mate a quick look. The man was born for this. Not sitting behind a desk, no matter how expensive the desk was. What was going to happen to him when Rob was gone? Who was going to tear his ass from the chair and make him live his life?

Stop it. Not now.

"You sound out of breath, Hudo," he said, raising his eyebrows. "Too many days and nights power networking?"

"Ha ha." Joseph rolled his eyes. "I hear you puffing just as much as me. Too many nights partying, mate?"

Rob grinned at him again. "Yeah, that'd be it. And once again, I draw attention to the sexy thing back at the lodge. She was in the bar last night, sitting all alone after you left. She watched you leave, y'know. You could've been partying as well, if you hadn't needed to send off that email."

"Hey, I didn't break the rule." Joseph adjusted his snowboard under his arm, giving Rob an affronted look. Rob's "rule"—that no one was supposed to know where they were—existed for one reason only—to keep Joseph from working when he should be having fun. "I didn't mention where we were. I did however, approve your latest marketing push for the Chinese market, so shut up or I'll cut your expenses."

"Whoa, hit a man where it hurts, why don't you?"

Joseph shook his head, the corners of his mouth curling. "Where it hurts with you mate, is in your pants."

Rob puffed up his chest. "Can't argue with the truth."

Joseph shook his head again. "Idiot."

"Yep."

They continued farther, Rob checking the compass every few minutes. The undulating hills around them began to grow a little more unpredictable, dropping suddenly here, rising abruptly there. More trees—limbs stooped low under the weight of heavy snow—jutting up from the blinding whiteness, breaking what was otherwise a perfect blanket. He frowned, turning his head a little so Joseph wouldn't see. Okay, at this point he should be able to see the hut—at least the top of the hut's roof—somewhere before him.

But he couldn't. There was nothing. Just trees, snow, rocks and more snow.

"Did I tell you the Japanese consortium made another offer before we left?" Joseph said suddenly, and Rob started before forcing his face into a relaxed smile.

"No. How much this time?"

Joseph let out a sigh. "A stupid amount. Enough to make me think I'm an idiot for saying no."

Rob paused, giving his best mate a serious look. "Why *are* you saying no? How many blokes our age get the chance to say, hey, I don't have to work another day in my life?"

Joseph shook his head, an unreadable tension forming at the edges of his brown eyes. "If I sell up, who is going to keep you under control? Or living the unleashed life you've grown accustom to?"

A sharp stab of something very close to pain sank into Rob's chest, and he turned away and began the trek to the so-far unseen hut. "I'll be right. I'm super hot, super smart, I have a degree from Sydney Uni—with honors—and every marketing idea I come up with makes the company more money than God. Who's going to try and control *that* brilliance?"

"You forgot to add super humble to that list," Joseph pointed out behind him.

"And super thirsty," Rob shouted, trudging faster through the snow. Where the bloody hell was this bloody hut?

The crunching of snow under boots told Rob his friend had started walking again. "Hmm. Well, it's a mute point anyway," Joe said, his voice carrying over the still silence of the mountain. "I'm not selling and you're not going anywhere."

Rob squeezed his eyes shut for a quick second, his fists bunching tight. *God, I wish you were right, mate.*

The dark thought slithered through his head like a snake and he quickened his pace, searching the never-ending whiteness before him for signs of the rescue cabin.

"Where the bloody hell is this hut of yours, Thorton?" Joseph muttered. "Even I'd kill for a beer right now if it didn't mean freezing my nuts off out here."

"Wait your hurry," Rob shot over his shoulder, a knot of unease beginning to form in his gut. "I know you're just impatient to get your gear off."

Something icy cold and rather hard smacked into the back of his head and he turned to see Joseph swipe his snow-dusted hands against the back of his thighs.

"A snowball?" He raised his eyebrows. "Really? I thought I was meant to be the immature one?"

Joseph shrugged, a smirk playing with his lips. "Wasn't me."

With a laugh, Rob turned back to the hutless bloody hills and began walking again, doing his best to ignore the knot of unease twisting tighter in his gut.

Twenty minutes later, he clenched his fists and bit back a curse. Fuck it. He had to do the unthinkable.

He stopped walking, stabbed the nose of his snowboard into the snow beside his boot and gave Joseph a level look. "I think we're lost."

Joseph stared at him, his expression not even flinching. "I coulda told you that fifteen minutes ago."

"Funny bastard." Rob scanned the snow, squinting at the sun and its way-too-fast decline behind the hill to the west. "I'm serious. I think the compass on the snowboard is faulty."

"Guess we better not stock it then."

Joseph's casual reply made Rob bite back another curse. He'd expected another punch. What this laidback attitude from Joseph meant was his best mate was going to make his life a living hell later. When he'd calmed down. "It shouldn't be far," he offered, scanning the area around them again and pointing a little to the left. "Unless the compass is totally fucked up, it should be somewhere in this direction."

"Or it could be on the other side of the ridge."

He gave Joe a sheepish sideward glance. "That would suck, wouldn't it?"

"C'mon." Joseph started walking again, his footfalls like gunshots in the icy air. "There's no way the gods of lunatics would let you perish on a mountain in the US. Who'd they worship if that happened?"

"Ha ha. You really missed your true calling, Hudo. You shoulda been a comedian."

Rob picked up his board and hurried to catch up with his best mate, casting the sinking sun a less-than-impressed look. Night would be on them soon. When that happened, the temperature would plummet. There were other less-appealing ways to die, but being turned into an icicle on the side of a bloody mountain was right up there with the worst. How the hell had he gotten this so wrong?

"Remind me to send an email to the manufacturers of that compass when we get back home," he said to Joseph's back.

The words tasted odd on Rob's tongue. Like chalk dust and stagnant air.

Back home.

You're not planning on going back home, are you?

"Y'know," Joseph called over his shoulder, "I think I might write one as well."

Rob couldn't help himself. He laughed. Joseph may be the kid who needed a push to experience life, but when it came to business, he didn't mess around. An email from Joseph Hudson pretty much spelt the end of any outdoor equipment supplier foolish enough to promote a product not ready for the market. Just like that.

"If it helps, you can have my beer."

"Won't say no."

Rob laughed again. If they survived the night, he'd buy Joe a whole bloody brewery.

Chapter Two

Anna McCarthy lowered her binoculars and shook her head. Australians. What were they thinking?

She returned the glasses to her backpack, adjusted the straps on her stocks and pushed herself forward. The sun would be completely behind the horizon in less than fifteen minutes, which gave her less than ten to get to the two men wandering aimlessly at the base of Knife Ridge Chutes and get them into Wolf Creek rescue cabin number four.

After that, she'd spend a good fifteen minutes giving them a damn good lecture on mountain safety before charging them with reckless endangerment and presenting them with a hefty fine. Tourists, she'd learnt from experience, only learnt their lesson when their hip pockets were injured. And by the look of the equipment these two men were decked out in, the latest and greatest and very most expensive, their hip pockets could afford the pain.

Gliding through the terrain, she kept her stare locked on their dark shapes, each one a tall black streak of stupidity against the stark white snow.

The wind bit at her face, even through her protective gear, and she growled low in her throat. Australians. Thought they knew everything.

She'd noticed them at the bar last night, their accents drawing more than just *her* attention. By the time the tallest one with the sandy-blond hair and hawkish nose had finished his off-key rendition of that song from Kangaroo Jack and left, just about every woman in the bar had been gathered around their table.

Dodging a low-hanging branch, she stabbed her stocks into the snow, hurrying her speed. As far as she could tell, none of the fawning women had gotten lucky, much to their chagrin. The tall one, Joseph, she thought she'd heard his friend call him, hadn't come back to the bar, and his friend had followed only a few hours—and beers and dances with said fawning women—later. Alone.

So is that why you've followed them for most of the day? They didn't pick up anyone last night?

She grunted at the ridiculous notion, swerving a cluster of jagged boulders as she forced herself faster over the snow. No, she'd followed them most of the day because she'd heard the friend—Rob? Bob?—mention to one of his many admirers they were going to heli-jump onto Knife Ridge Chutes and planned to stay overnight in the unused Wolf Creek rescue cabin.

The trouble was he hadn't informed her. And as the local ranger in charge of controlling Wolf Creek's slopes and ski runs, anyone planning on spending the night on the side of Knife Ridge, no matter how gorgeous and well-equipped and obviously daring-do, had to tell her of those plans.

And something about them had told her they were going to get themselves into trouble.

Maybe it was the devilish glint in Rob/Bob's way-too-sexy blue eyes? Or the dimple in his cheek? Or the way Joseph moved his hips on the table dancing to that annoyingly catchy song? Or the way your pussy fluttered and squeezed and got all warm and prickly when Joseph looked at you this morning in the lodge. Or the way you woke up covered in sweat after dreaming about them both undressing you with their teeth while their hands—

She cut the embarrassing thought dead before her face could get any hotter. She hadn't had a wet dream since she was a teenager, and she sure as hell didn't have one last night. She didn't. And no, none of those reasons were why she now followed the Australian men. She'd followed them because her gut had told her they'd need her, and she always listened to her gut. Not her pussy.

Yeah, right.

"Oh, shut up," she muttered with a savage thrust of her stocks. The push flung her past the last of the blanketed trees and, with another quick dig, she propelled herself closer to the two men. Close enough to hear them singing—singing of all things—some weird version of AC/DC's "It's a Long Way to the Top" with the word "top" replaced by "hut".

She ground her teeth and slid to a halt behind them, showering them both in snow, not even remotely interested in hiding her anger. "What the hell do you two morons think you're doing?"

They spun to stare at her, their faces—flushed by the icy chill on the air—registered their shock.

Before they could say anything, she poked a finger at them, her stock dangling from her wrist to bang against her right knee. "Do you have any idea how dangerous what you are doing is? How stupid?"

The tall one—Joseph—gaped at her, his eyes locked on her face. "Err..."

"What my mate means to say—" Rob/Bob began, that evil dimple she'd seen last night flashing into existence on his right cheek.

"Is he's a moron?" Anna snapped, cutting him off. The dimple was doing all sorts of unnerving things to her anger. And all sorts of unnerving things to her sex, damn it.

"Actually, I'm really very smart."

The statement, falling from Joseph's lips in a hurried jumble of accented words, seemed to surprise him. He blinked. And his friend burst out laughing. "Bloody hell, Hudo." Rob/Bob smacked a fist into his friend's shoulder, blue eyes twinkling. "It's a good thing you're loaded."

Anna frowned at them both. She had no idea what Rob/Bob had just said—loaded? Surely Joseph wasn't drunk on the mountain?—but whatever it was, it made Joseph glare at him. "Put a sock in it, Thorton," he growled.

Hudo? Thorton? Singing when they should be scared stiff they were going to freeze to death? Laughing in the face of her anger? Who were these people?

Still chuckling, Rob/Bob turned back to her and fixed her with a direct blue stare. “We kinda fucked up, thanks to a wonky compass. You wouldn’t happen to know where the number four hut is, would you?”

Keeping a tight grip on her anger, Anna fixed him back with her own level glare. “I do. And if you promise not to sing anymore, I’ll take you there.”

Much to her dismay, Joseph started laughing. Much to her horror, her pussy started to flutter. Really quickly. And insistently.

Oh, Anna, don’t go getting turned on by two Australian idiots.

“Any chance we can persuade you to stay overnight with us?” Rob/Bob grinned, dimple still there. “I promise Hudo here won’t sing again.”

“Shut the hell up, Rob,” Joseph growled. “You sing worse than me.”

Anna felt like she was watching a game of tennis. She couldn’t stop moving her stare from one to the other. They couldn’t be for real. She was dreaming this. She’d fallen asleep thinking about how they’d need saving and this is the scenario her psyche had come up with: two gorgeous, sexy-assed Australians asking her to stay overnight in the deserted, unused rescue cabin with them. All three of them locked up together, with nothing to do all night except—

“Shouldn’t we be getting a move on?” Rob’s deep voice, complete with that sinful Australian accent that made her pulse quicken, jerked her out of her confused trance.

She blinked, giving them both another hard stare, hoping like hell her cheeks weren’t as red as she thought they were. “Follow me,” she snarled, snatching at the grips of her stocks and pushing herself away from them. “And try not to get lost.”

For an answer, Rob laughed.

“You’re a fine one to laugh, Thorton,” she heard Joseph say, his accent just as sinful as Rob’s, “you’re the one that got us in this predicament to begin with.”

“And you can thank me later, mate,” Rob replied.

For reasons Anna couldn’t understand, her pulse kicked up a notch. And her sex grew damp.

Oh, Anna. You know where this is leading, don’t you?

She pushed her way through the snow and trees, leading the two men to the rescue cabin on the northwest side of the valley. she had to admit their snowboarding skills were quite impressive. Better than their navigational skills, that was for certain. Much better than their singing skills, even if their accents were sexy as hell. The pit of her belly knotted and she scowled, doing her utmost not to think about staying overnight with them. She didn’t have to stay. None of them did. If she got to the cabin quickly enough, she could contact base and tell them to send up a chopper. They’d be back in the lodge, no doubt singing on tables again, before midnight.

And that's what you're going to do, isn't it? That is, because that's the right thing to do. The sane thing. Not calling the chopper, not going back down the mountain, that's the wrong thing to do. Staying overnight in the hut with them, that's just plain...

"Silly," she muttered, rounding a grove of pine. *The grove of pine. The grove beside which sat—*

"The hut!" Rob cried, his enthusiastic cheer making Anna's nipples pinch into hard little points. "See, Hudo? I wasn't that far off."

Joseph chuckled. "Yeah, you're a regular Saint Bernard."

The warm, happy sound made Anna's nipples pinch harder, and she bit back an exasperated groan. God help her, she wasn't just getting turned on by their accents, she was almost coming thanks to their foolhardy attitude to getting lost.

She tilted her hips, preparing to swing around to face them, when Rob swooshed past, his tall, lean body looking deliciously confident on his snowboard. He cut to a halt at the door of the rescue cabin and flashed his dimple at her again. "So," he said, blue eyes shrouded in shadows cast by the almost sleeping sun, "you going to join us inside?"

Anna narrowed her eyes at him, refusing to acknowledge the eager throb between her thighs. "Do you have any idea how much trouble you two are in? How much this rescue is going to cost you? I can lay charges. I could—"

"Have the best night of your life," Rob finished with a grin.

Behind her, she heard Joseph moan. Low and almost inaudible, but a moan all the same. One filled with...hope?

She turned her head and looked at him over her shoulder, the memory of her dream flooding through her. No, it wasn't just her dream making her body thrum with an inexplicable, hungry urgency. It was the way Joseph had looked singing on the table—like all the happiness in life, all the joy and fun, had somehow been poured into this one man. It was the memory of how her lips had curled into a smile watching him. It was the disappointment she'd felt when he'd left the bar before she could get the chance to muster up the courage to introduce herself. Not to mention the relief she'd experienced when he'd left the bar alone.

His eyes moved to her, their cookie-brown depths asking a question her body knew the answer to, even if her head didn't.

Oh, Anna.

"I dare you." The three words passed Rob's lips with silken devilment, and her pussy contracted in eager want. She stared at him, her heart racing, thumping in her throat with such force she could barely draw breath. Two men, two Australians. Both somehow the embodiment of every fantasy she'd never known. Both dangerously gorgeous, both sinfully sexy. Both capable of making her almost orgasm just by speaking, let alone what they could do with their hands. Two men. One mountain. One momentous dare.

Without saying a thing, she bent down and unlatched her boots, disconnecting them from her skis.

Her blood roaring in her ears, she crossed to the cabin's door and searched for the key to its lock in the top pocket of her jacket. Her fingers brushed her breast through the thermal material of the garment and she hitched in a gasp, the jolts of pleasure darting through her body at the completely un-sensual contact making her head spin.

She withdrew her hand, her fingers gripping the key tightly, her breath stuck in her throat.

You're really doing this, Anna? Really really?

She slipped the key into the lock and, closing her eyes for a split second, pushed the door open.

Joseph watched the woman from the lodge step through the doorway into the hut. He stood frozen, not from the sinking temperature of the winter air, but from sheer, dumbstruck cowardice.

A threesome.

He'd never had one before. Rob had. More than once Rob had ended up in a bed that wasn't his own with two women. Tonight wasn't two women though. Tonight was him, Rob and a woman he'd been attracted to the second he'd seen her in the lodge last night.

He couldn't do it.

He slid his stare to his best mate. Rob leant one shoulder against the doorjamb, studying him. He knew there'd be no contact between them both. Without saying it, there wasn't any doubt about that. They were both strictly hetero, even if they did love each other as only mates could. And he'd been starkers around Rob too many times to be hung up about what his friend thought of him standing so near without any clothes on. But this...

Is it really Rob you're worried about, Hudson?

No, it wasn't. He'd never been one for one-night stands. Sex was too...too—fuck—too personal. It was a connection of more than just body. What if he couldn't...what if it didn't...

A jerking spasm in his pants made him snort out a quick laugh. Okay, that answered that question. He was as hard as ever. His dick strained against the lining of his snow pants with such insistent force he was surprised it didn't tear the material. He'd sported an erection almost as hard this morning in the cafeteria just *watching* the woman now inside the hut. The thought he might actually touch her, hold her, make love to...

He drew in another breath, his lungs burning as icy air streamed into his body. His balls rose high and he knew they were firm and swollen. Ready.

Bloody hell, he wished he was back in Australia. Listening to the company's insurance director drone on again.

No, you don't.

He stared at his best mate, mouth dry.

Rob cocked an eyebrow. “Do I need to say it, Hudo?”

He shook his head. “Don’t.”

For a moment, he could almost see the words “I dare you” forming on his friend’s lips. And then a strange stillness passed over Rob’s face, an unreadable light flickered in his eyes and he nodded. A single, simple nod. “Okay. But don’t do this for me, Joseph,” he said, his voice uncharacteristically serious. “Do it for you.”

Joseph frowned, the words puzzling him. Since when had Robert Thorton ever backed down from laying down a dare? What was going on here? What was going on with Rob?

Before he could say anything, Rob gave him one of his patented grins, dimple creasing into existence on his cheek, and swiveled on his shoulder until he disappeared into the hut.

Joseph studied the doorway, dragging his hands over his face and through his hair. He pulled in a deep, slow breath. “Fuck it,” he muttered. “It’s getting cold out here anyway.”

Two steps into the cabin and he realized something wasn’t going the way he suspected.

“Shit, shit, shit.” The woman—damn, he really needed to get her name—was stamping her foot beside the tall and ancient heater in the centre of the surprisingly large cabin. She swung her foot, the toe of her boot connecting with the steel heater with a solid *thunk*.

He shot Rob a quick look, raising an eyebrow in a silent question.

Rob laughed, obviously enjoying himself. But then again, when *didn’t* Rob enjoy himself. The bloke was a walking advertisement for being high on life. “It seems we can’t get the heat on.” He paused. “Well, not *this* way anyway.”

The woman stopped her baleful glare of the uncooperative heater and turned it on Rob. “I’m about two seconds from radioing Wolf Creek command and having you taken away in cuffs, you know that, don’t you?”

Rob laughed again, zipped up his jacket and tugged his beanie from his pocket. “How ’bout I go get some wood.”

Joseph snorted before he could stop himself, the expression on Rob’s face telling him the wood his mate most eagerly sought had nothing to do with trees.

Bloody hell, Hudson. You got the mind of a teenager at the moment.

He watched his friend leave, the bang of the door closing a sudden and daunting reminder he was alone in the cabin with a woman who made his dick harder than...well, harder than wood. He shuffled his feet, feeling ridiculously stupid. “Err...”

“The emergency gas reserves seem to have evaporated,” she said, flicking her eyes at the heater beside him. “Which means the pilot light won’t ignite.”

He nodded, wishing to hell he could think of something intelligent to say. For Pete's sake, he owned Australia's most successful camping and outdoor equipment and supply business. He should be able to talk about pilot lights and gas heaters until the cows came home.

"Tell me, when *did* you two decide it would be a good idea to come to America to go snowboarding?"

He smiled at the abrupt and almost caustic question. Leaning his board against the wall, he slid his sleeve up his arm and looked at his watch. "About thirty-eight hours ago."

She laughed, the first real joyful sound he'd heard from her since she'd arrived out of nowhere and led them to safety. "Thirty-eight hours."

"Yep. We touched down and checked in last night."

She shook her head, tugged her gloves from her hands and stuffed them into her jacket pocket. "Which tells me one or both of you has lots and lots of money. More money than sense, I'd guess."

Joseph gave her a puzzled frown. "Why do you say that?"

"It's peak ski season. Every room in every accommodation from here to Utah is booked out. Unless you've got serious dollars, there's no way you're getting a room with just thirty-eight hours notice."

"Is it a problem one or both of us is loaded?"

A dawning smile stretched her lips, and his cock, still rigid in the confines of his snow pants, gave a little spasm. Damn, that was a gorgeous smile. The corners of her mouth curled first, creasing the sides of her lips just a little, before her teeth—perfectly white and even—came into view, followed by a tiny little crease just between her eyes. Eyes, he hadn't failed to notice, a very piercing, very sexy shade of grey.

"Ahh," she said, nodding as she moved away from the cold heater toward a bench under the shuttered window on the far wall. "That explains what loaded means." She leant her butt against the bench and folded her arms over her breasts. Joseph felt his cock jerk again. Such a simple action, but it made him horny as a bloody dog. What would it feel like to place his hands on her breasts and cup them? Squeeze them gently?

"So, you're the one with the money."

Her question, delivered in the form of a statement, sent a rush of warmth to his face. He hated talking about his money. True, he had a lot of it, a bloody lot of it, but it didn't define him.

"And Rob is the one without the sense," she finished, the smile on her lips curling wider. She tilted her head to the side, crossing her ankles in front of her. "Yeah, I can see that."

Despite himself, Joseph grinned. His cock lurched again in his trousers, enjoying their tête-à-tête almost as much as he was. He liked her dry wit. And her accent. A drawling caress of vowels and consonants that made him wish she'd say his name.

"I guess I should ask your name," he said, removing his own gloves and shoving them into his back pocket. "I should at least know who to address the thank you card to."

She laughed again, and Joseph decided there and then he could seriously become addicted to the soft, throaty sound. “Anna McCarthy. Your local saver of lost Australian lunatics, yeah, that’s me.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “All Australian lunatics? Do you get many here?”

Her direct grey gaze leveled on his face, a small smile playing with her lips. Lips he wanted to kiss. Soon. Real soon. “No, you’re my first. But depending how it goes tonight, I might have to find some more to save.”

A low growl rumbled in Joseph’s chest at the idea of Anna McCarthy saving any other Australians but himself. “Hmm,” he said, “I think you’ll find saving Aussies is an exhausting, sweaty business.”

She cocked her own eyebrow, the finely arched line of dark blonde hair moving up her forehead with smooth ease. “Is it now? Then perhaps I should take it slow to start with? Saving too hard and too quickly at this altitude could be hazardous to my health, is that what you’re saying?”

Pulse pounding in his ear, dick so hard he thought it was about to explode, he held her gaze with his own. “Too hard and too fast definitely not the way to begin. Slowly, steadily. An exploration of the terrain, followed by a well-executed penetration of the area, that’s the way to begin when saving an Aussie.”

Her lips parted and Joseph could see the ragged way she drew breath into her body. “Then after the beginning it gets hard?”

He unzipped his jacket and shucked it off, placing it on the seat beside him as he took a step closer to her. “It’s already hard. Very hard.”

She swallowed. “Hard is good. I’m always up for a challenge. It’s why I like saving Aussies so much.”

“Glad to hear that,” Rob said, stepping into the cabin and swinging the door shut behind him. He looked at them both over the armful of broken branches and twigs he held against his chest. “Wait. We’re talking about sex, aren’t we?”

Chapter Three

Anna held her breath, trying—in vain, she realized—to slow her heart rate down to something close to normal. Her pussy throbbed and pulsed and generally carried on in the most disturbing of ways, telling her in no uncertain terms she was horny. Damn horny.

She swallowed again, her mouth dry, her throat thick. The sexual tension mounting between her and Joseph Hudson hadn't abated a bit with Rob's unexpected arrival. No, to the contrary, the moment he'd entered the cabin and made his presence known, she'd almost come there and then.

She studied both of them, knowing one of them was going to make the first move.

Joseph.

Her gaze slid to the taller man, her pulse quickening when she looked at him. Damn, he was stunning. He made Brad Pitt look ugly. Not just tall and lean, but broad shouldered and slightly scruffy, the bristles on his jaw and chin adding to the overall charm, the messy tumble of sandy-blond hair falling over his forehead heightening that charm until the crotch of her panties were sodden.

Oh boy, Anna. You got it bad already.

The loud thud of branches hitting the floor made her start, and she blinked, her gaze snapping to Rob just in time to see him remove his gloves and step over the pile of dead wood at his feet to close the distance between them. "Let me begin to show our appreciation for saving us," he said, his fingers skimming her cheek as he cupped her jaw in his hand.

A flutter of disappointment danced in her belly for a brief moment, like a hundred butterflies had suddenly taken flight, but she forgot it as soon as Rob's lips brushed hers.

The kiss was gentle and yet, at the same time electric. His breath mingled with hers, the tip of his tongue touching the inner edge of her bottom lip, a slow caress charting a path deeper into her mouth.

She parted her lips, meeting his tongue with hers, her nipples growing hard, her pulse racing away from her.

Oh...

She'd been kissed before. Many times, in fact. As far as looks go, she knew she'd been generously smiled upon. But there was something about the Australian's kiss...a delicate passion she hadn't expected. Almost sad.

The notion made her heart quicken. She moaned, the sound vibrating softly in her throat only to be swallowed by Rob's kiss.

He slid his hands up into her hair, his fingers tangling in the strands, her ponytail preventing him from doing anything more than hold her head. It didn't matter. At this point, the feel of his lips on hers, his tongue on hers, was enough to make her pussy weep.

"Ah, fuck."

The growled curse scraped at the heated desire rolling through her. She pulled away from Rob's kiss, her gaze moving to Joseph where he still stood at the chair. He stared at them both, his nostrils flaring, his jaw clenched tight.

"Think we need to get some heat happening quickly," Rob murmured, his hands slipping from her face as he turned back to his friend.

Anna nodded, unable to find anything to say. Her body ached for more, set alight by Rob's simple, tender kiss. And yet, it was Joseph's hands she hungered. Joseph's lips she wanted to taste next.

God, woman. You're a—

The sound of Rob unzipping his jacket squashed the unsettling thought and she turned away from both of them, sucking in a long, shaking breath. Resting her hands on the bench, she stared hard at the old maps of Wolf Creek pinned to the wall before her. *Be sure you know where this is going, Anna. Be certain before you commit.*

"Why Wolf Creek?" she asked, needing to hear something apart from the rustling sounds of the two men behind her moving about. She didn't know if they were undressing, rearranging the cabin's meager furniture or preparing to reenact the Battle of Gettysburg, although seeing as they were Australians, that was unlikely. The battle of...of...damn, did Australia even have any battles?

You're babbling in your head. Do you know that?

"There's a Wolf Creek in Australia," Rob answered, his voice calm, relaxed. "Well, a Wolf Creek Crater. Thought we'd see the reverse of ours over here."

"The snowboarding's better here though," Joseph continued, his voice almost a facsimile of Rob's. Almost. "Not as rocky. Or dusty."

Rob laughed. "Or hot."

Hot. Anna touched her hand to her throat at the word, her skin flushed beneath her fingers. Was it hot in here? Or was it just the surreal situation she'd found herself in?

"That oughta do it."

A dull clunk followed Rob's statement and she turned around, surprised to find them both standing beside the heater, stripped of their jackets and holding out their palms to the heater's flue.

She gazed at them, or rather, the lean muscled strength of their torsos revealed by the snug tautness of their thermal T-shirts. Her mouth went dry and it took her a while to realize the air in the cabin was no longer icy cold.

"You got the heater working?"

Joe gave her a lopsided smile, rubbing his palms together in such a way his shoulder and arm muscles rippled. “Yeah. The pilot light just needed a little encouragement.”

She licked her lips, the room’s rising temperature making her skin prickle. Or was that the layers of clothing she wore? Or the sight of Joseph and Rob with less clothing than her?

Damn, they were good looking.

And complete strangers. So why did she feel so safe with them?

Why was she just about to do the unthinkable with them?

Her gaze slipped to Joseph again, knowing he held the answer even if she couldn’t decipher it yet.

“How ’bout we help you with your clothing?”

Rob’s murmur tickled her ear and she started, more than a little stunned to discover he’d somehow moved to stand behind her without her even noticing.

Too busy staring at Joseph?

Warm hands smoothed up her back, over her shoulders. His fingers slid up the sensitive column of her neck, brushing at her nape before skimming back down to the neckline of her jacket. There was a slight tug, and before she knew it, her jacket slipped from her body, falling to her feet in a crumpled heap of fluro-magenta.

She watched Joseph watching her, his nostrils flaring again, the muscles in his jaw bunched.

I want him to kiss me.

Rob’s hands travelled her shoulders, barely touching her. The slight caress of his palms on her arms through the thin material of her thermal sent a shiver up her spine. She pulled in a shaky breath, her nipples once again hard. Oh, God.

“C’mon, Joe,” Rob spoke against her neck, his lips warm on her flushed skin. “Don’t make me say it.”

Say what? Anna wanted to ask, but she couldn’t. The way Rob’s hands moved over her shoulders, her arms, down to her palms and back up to her shoulders again seemed to have stolen her words. It was a gentle caress that somehow still spoke of urgency.

Joseph swallowed once, twice, his Adam’s apple working up and down his throat. And then he was standing right in front of her, so close she could feel his body heat seep into her. “You don’t have to, mate,” he said, holding her gaze with his cookie-brown eyes. “Not at all.”

Joseph lowered his head and brushed his lips over hers. The kiss sang of such sweet hesitation her heart stopped for a still moment, only to burst into fevered flight when he snaked his arms around her waist and yanked her against his body with a growl.

His mouth crushed hers. His tongue plunged past her lips, mating with hers, battling it with possessive hunger.

So, there is an Australian battle after all. And I’m a part of it.

The surreal, absurd thought wafted through Anna's head, and she whimpered, curling her arms around Joseph's neck to press her hips to his. His cock rammed against the flat plane of her belly, a rigid, stiff pole not even remotely hidden by the bulk of his snow pants. Its size and width made her head swim, or perhaps that was the feel of Rob's hands working their way down her waist to the band of her own trousers.

"You have a fucking hot body," Rob told her, his fingers working their way between her and Joseph until they dipped below the elastic band of her pants. "I saw it last night in the bar. Couldn't miss it thanks to the tight jeans you wore." He slipped his fingers closer to the mound of her sex, his other hand holding her hip as he pressed his groin to her ass. "The tighter T-shirt."

Rob pushed his hips forward, his erection—as long and as impressive as Joseph's—nudging the crevice of her ass cheeks through her snow pants. "Still," he whispered against her ear, lips nipping her earlobe as he did so, "I think I'd like to see more of it."

With a gentle but insistent tug, he pulled her back to his hips as his fingers moved to her waistband. He inched it down over her hips. Her thighs.

Joseph broke the kiss and stepped away from her a step to stare at what his friend had revealed. "Jesus Christ," he said, the words choked. "I knew you would look like this."

She stood between them, her torso covered in a thin, shell-pink thermal top, her legs bared to their hungry inspection. Rob stroked the back of her thigh, his thumb tracing a languid line over the curves of her butt cheeks. Her panties—skimpy and black—offered little protection from the slow contact, and she let out a ragged breath, feeling her crotch grow damp.

Joseph's nostrils flared again. "I can smell your desire, Anna." His stare roamed her body, the thin space-age material of her top was so stretched against her nipples it felt like a caress. "I can see it." He raised his hands and took her breasts in each, rolling the pad of his thumbs over her puckered nipples. The contact caused her bra—a silky little thing that was highly unsuitable for skiing and matched her panties perfectly—to scrape against each one. She hitched in another breath and gazed up at him.

"And I want to taste it," Rob said behind her.

Joseph's lips curled into a lopsided grin. "Me too."

He pushed her backward, her surprised shout turning into laughter as Rob scooped her off her feet, carried her over to the old cot in the far corner and dumped her there unceremoniously. "Now don't think you're staying there, Anna." He grinned, dimple flashing. "This is just so I can take your boots off."

With a flourish, he dropped into a crouch. His hands snared her right ankle to lift her leg up, gravity fighting him as it pulled on the awkward weight of her ski boot. Her pulse slammed in her neck as he flipped open the straps, one by one, each sudden release of pressure on her ankle an undeniable announcement of what was about to happen.

Her first ménage.

With two men from Australia, no less.

Well, you do believe in taking life by the balls and living the fuck out of it, don't you?

Her breath shuddered from her in a trembling laugh, the sound becoming a soft groan when Rob at last slipped her boot from her foot. "One down," he muttered, his thumbs kneading the arch of her foot for an agonizingly exquisite second.

"One to go," Joseph murmured from his place beside the heater.

She slid her gaze to his face, the sight of him still standing in the exact spot he'd kissed her was for some reason the sexiest thing she'd seen. He watched her, his arms loosely crossed over his broad chest, his legs splayed slightly. Everything about him spoke of extreme confidence, almost ruthless poise, except his eyes. His eyes spoke of another Joseph. One burning up with want, and yet still tempered by hesitation. Whatever he did to be "loaded", she didn't doubt he did it well. His body language radiated utter control. But his eyes... If it was possible, the uncertainty in his eyes made his composed *sang-froid* so much more desirable. So much more goddamn sexy.

The sensation of her left foot being elevated turned her attention back to Rob, and she held her breath as he released the fasteners on her remaining boot and slid it from her foot. He pressed his thumbs into her arch before smoothing his hands up her now exposed ankles. He smiled at her as he hooked his fingers over the tops of her thick, woolen socks. "I will give you a foot massage later. One so good it'll make you come, but for now..."

He yanked her sock from her foot, the abrupt action dislodging her semi-seated position on the cot.

She dropped backward, the cabin's toasty air kissing her newly bare toes a microsecond before Rob touched his lips to them. For an insane moment, all Anna could think about was how sweaty her feet would be after skiing for so long. And then even that thought was lost as the man snared the waistline of her trousers and removed them as efficiently as he'd removed her left sock.

"Oh, Jesus Christ, you look so good."

It was Joseph who moaned the proclamation. Still from his place by the heater. The raw hunger in his voice flooded her pussy with fresh moisture, turned her clit to a nub of throbbing flesh.

"That she does," Rob agreed, straightening from his crouch enough to kneel between her legs. His hands found her inner thighs and he inched them farther apart, the tips of his fingers teasing her folds through the sodden crotch of her panties. "And she is so very wet for us."

Anna's breath turned shallow. Choppy.

This was a kind of torture. She'd never wanted to come as badly as she did now, and all they'd done—all Rob had done—was remove her boots and trousers. For Pete's sake, she was still wearing her underpants. How could she be so close to coming while still wearing her underpants? While still being essentially untouched by either of them?

"Please," she whimpered, the word surprising her.

Rob chuckled, dimple flashing. "Please what, Anna McCarthy?"

She closed her eyes and arched her back, just enough to draw her crotch closer to his fingers. "Please..."

"I think she wants me to lick her out, Hudo." Rob's breath fanned her inner left thigh, just above her knee. A heartbeat later, his lips brushed the skin a little higher. "What do you think?"

"Fuck," Anna heard Joseph groan. "I think you're right."

"Is that what you want, Anna?" Rob's breath tickled the curve of flesh where her thigh dipped into her groin. His hands pressed gently on her knees, holding her still. "Do you want me to fuck your pussy with my tongue?"

She let out another ragged breath and nodded.

"Say it aloud."

Joseph's raw command made her already rapid heart thump faster. "I want Rob to tongue-fuck me," she said, trying to lift her ass off the cot. "Now."

Before the single syllable fell from her lips, Rob's tongue stoked over her clit through the cotton of her panties.

She cried out, ribbons of pleasure unfurling through her core. Her back arched, and this time Rob let it, his hands taking advantage of her upward thrust to slide beneath her butt and cup her ass cheeks. He stabbed at her shielded clit again, working the little point of flesh through her underpants. The friction of material on her flesh, drenched from her own juices and Rob's tongue, sent new ribbons of pleasure chasing the first, twisting and binding around them until ropes of tension knotted in the pit of her belly. Driving her so quickly toward an orgasm her lips tingled.

"Oh, God," she panted, burying her hands in the Australian's thick black hair, holding his head for fear he'd do something foolish like try and remove his mouth from her pussy.

She heard Joseph moan from his position by the heater, a rustling noise joining the strangled sound. She wanted to look at him, she wanted to see if the noise was what she suspected, she wanted to see the aching want she knew would be blazing in his eyes, but she couldn't. The pleasure of Rob's tongue rolling over and over her still-cotton-covered clit overwhelmed her, and all she could do was lie on the cot and let it consume her. "Oh, God, yes."

And still Rob's tongue worked her sex. No penetration, no skin-to-skin contact, just his tongue stroking her clit through the sodden material of her underpants. Just his hands pressed to her knees, holding her legs spread. Two simple things, and she was going to come. Now.

The first detonation ripped through her sex, her inner muscles clamping down on a cock that wasn't there. She cried out, aching to be filled even as her pussy gushed with cream and her clit throbbed with pleasure.

The second detonation hit her harder, spiking wet electricity into her sex and through her body. She grabbed at the cot's coarse blanket beneath her, fists bunching the wool until her knuckles popped. "Fuck,

yes!” she called, rolling her head from side to side. Rob’s assault on her protected clit was a rhythmic echo of each constricting pulse shuddering through her.

The third, the fourth, the fifth detonation crashed over her, followed by too many to count. It swept her away, pummeling her until all she could do was whimper and beg for him to stop, beg for mercy, beg for more.

With one sudden yank on her sopping underpants, Rob stripped her lower body naked.

Chapter Four

Joseph stood and watched Rob plunge his tongue into Anna's spread sex. Her moans and gasping breaths sank into his ears, driving him almost insane. His cock ached in his pants. No, not just ached. The bloody thing was an agonizing rod of rigid lust. He'd never been so hard, so fucking ready to erupt. He'd never thought watching his best mate give head to a woman could be so arousing, but holy shit, watching Rob go down on Anna...

He shifted his feet, trying to find a better position to take the pressure off his dick.

You know the only thing that will do that is either Anna or your own hand, don't you?

He bit back a low groan at the thought. He'd never wanted to sink his cock into anyone as badly as he wanted to sink it into Anna McCarthy, but at this point, he couldn't move.

Not just because he didn't know how to approach the two people so thoroughly enjoying each other, but because he didn't want to stop watching Rob fuck Anna with his mouth.

Jesus, Hudson, is this what you've been missing all this time?

The twisting knot in his gut and the hot tension in his balls told him the answer was no. He didn't doubt watching Rob in a three-way would turn him on. But watching Rob fuck just anyone? No. It was Anna McCarthy that made his prick so goddamn hard. She'd done so this morning in the lodge, and all he'd done was watch her walk from the cafeteria. Watching her lie stretched on her back, her bare legs spread, her breasts thrusting upward, her nipples stabbing at the material of her thermal...watching his best mate devour her cunt... Christ, there was something in that sight he couldn't turn away from.

Anna.

She was perfect. Slim, athletic. Tiny in a pocket-rocket kind of way. He knew she was a park ranger, but it wasn't her authority that got him off. No, it was the soft kindness in her eyes, the crinkles on her nose when she laughed. The way she moved...

Hell, man, you've only known her for all of about an hour. Probably not even that.

But it didn't matter. He knew the second he saw her in the lodge that he wanted her. Wanted to get to know her. As corny as it was, she spoke to him without uttering a word. And now here he was, watching Rob bury his head between her thighs.

It should have made Joseph angry. It should have made him jealous.

It didn't. It made him fucking hard. And his breath so fucking shallow.

He shifted his feet again, his cock straining at his boxers. He'd removed his trousers, the thick snow pants too restrictive. He'd let them fall to the floor and kicked them aside. He wanted to curl his fingers around his dick and pump it until he came, but he controlled himself. He waited. For what, he didn't know—hell, this was all so new, so unfamiliar to him. He waited until the moment he would know it was time to move. In the same way he did at work, knowing when to make the deal, when to sit back and watch his staff, or his competitors.

Rob was neither. Sure, he worked for him, but he'd never been his staff. And as for now, he wasn't his competitor, even if his mouth was thrusting and lapping at the pussy of the woman Joseph had instantly desired.

Joseph shifted again, his stare moving from Rob's face pressed to Anna's pussy to Anna's face. Her eyes were closed, her lips parted. She grabbed at the blanket beneath her, holding it in two tight fists. The tip of her tongue slipped over her bottom lip, making it glisten in the cabin's low light. He sucked in a breath. It was a powerful sight and he wanted to see it closer.

He needed to see it closer.

Not just see it. He wanted to feel it. Wanted to feel the moisture from her tongue on her lip. Wanted to feel it on his own.

Oh, yes.

He moved, and in two long strides he was standing at the side of the cot.

"She's beautiful, isn't she, mate?"

Rob's low murmur jerked his stare from Anna's lips, and he studied his best mate for a short second.

"Show her how beautiful you think she is."

He didn't need to hear the rest. He didn't even know if Rob was going to say it. He didn't need to be dared. Not at all.

He dropped to his knees and his thick, stiff cock banged on the side of the cot. It should have hurt. It didn't. Nothing hurt except the overwhelming need to kiss Anna's lips.

A soft moan slipped from her and her back arched a little as Rob did something she liked. The move tilted her chin a fraction higher, turning her neck into a smooth, elegant curve, and it was too much. He lowered his head to hers and took possession of her lips.

They were soft, as soft as her moan, and warm. So very warm. She gasped, his presence no doubt surprising her, and her hands came up to his chest, his shoulder. She snaked her arms around his neck and pulled him closer to her, her tongue coming out to meet his before he could penetrate her mouth.

Hot tension shot into his balls. She was kissing him. With far more aggression than he'd imagined. Far more demanding urgency. He liked it. Hell, did he like it.

Her tongue mated with his, fierce and wild. She nipped at his bottom lip, each bite harder than the last. Shards of sharp pain sliced down through his body and he couldn't stop his own moan vibrating low in his chest.

"Bloody hell, Hudo," Rob growled from his left. "I never thought the sight of you kissing a woman would turn me on so much."

Joseph tore his mouth from Anna's lips and shot his friend a quick look. "And I never thought I'd get off watching you tongue-fuck a woman either." He turned back to Anna, gazing down at her. "Especially this one."

"What's so special about this one?" she whispered, her direct grey eyes holding him prisoner. She skimmed her hand down his chest, over his belly, until her fingers brushed the engorged length of his erection trapped by his boxers.

Joseph sucked in a swift breath, black swirls of pleasure blossoming in his vision as fresh blood surged to his cock.

Rob laughed. "You, my fine little American, caught my mate's eye. That never happens. Old Hudo here has always been too busy with work, too controlled and reserved to fall head over heels in lust before."

Anna brushed her fingers over Joseph's cock again and he ground his teeth, fighting the dire urge to grab her hand and make her hold its length in a punishing grip.

"Is that true?"

He nodded, unable to deny it. Hell, he was a workaholic. The only fun he ever had was with Rob. Usually after the words, "I dare you." Until now...

"I wanted you the second I saw you," he said, pushing his hips forward into Anna's teasing fingers.

"The feeling's entirely mutual."

Her whispered confession stabbed into him. At the exact moment she stopped teasing his dick and took his erection in her hand. Raw pleasure washed through his whole body. He shuddered, his balls swelling, his sphincter contracting.

"Fuck a duck, Anna," he ground out. "If you squeeze that too hard, I'm going to come."

She grinned at him, the sides of her mouth curling. "Do you have something else planned?"

He grinned back. "Yes, actually."

Without preamble, he snared the hemline of her thermal shirt and yanked it up over her head.

"Oh, Hudo," Rob laughed behind him, "I knew you'd be good at this."

He let his gaze roam over Anna's newly exposed torso, both infuriated and aroused by the silky sheen of her black bra concealing her breasts. He reached out his hand and traced one fingertip along the ribbon-edged cup of her left breast. "I've always been one to rise to the challenge."

Anna moaned slightly, her skin rippling at the barely there touch of his finger. She stared up at him through half-lidded eyes, her hands resting in loose fists beside her head.

“That you have been, my friend,” Rob agreed. “And one for making bad puns. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a sweet, hot, tight and very wet pussy to eat.”

Joseph’s ass tightened again on Rob’s dirty proclamation. He hooked his fingers under the edge of Anna’s bra and held her gaze with his. “*Bon appétit.*”

He saw Rob move from the corner of his eye, knowing by Anna’s sudden intake of breath exactly when his friend’s tongue touched her folds.

“Oh.” The single word fell from her on a shaky breath and she arched her back, her knees bending as she placed her feet on Rob’s shoulders. “Yes.”

Joseph swallowed, his heart thumping. Hot lust surged through him and he tugged on the edge of her bra, working the soft cup to the side. He pulled it from her breast until her nipple popped free.

It was perfect. A beautiful dusky pink, round and pebbled and just waiting to be sucked. By him. He lowered his head, taking the puckered tip in his mouth.

“Oh, yes,” Anna moaned again, louder this time, her hands finding their way to Joseph’s hair. She tangled her fingers in the cool strands, holding him hard to her breast.

Pleasure threaded through her. Twin ribbons of exquisite pleasure. One unfurling from between her legs where Rob’s tongue darted in and out of her sex and rolled over and over her clit, the other from her breasts, where Joseph’s lips and tongue fondled her nipple, circling it in gentle laps and nipping it in playful bites.

Two ribbons flowing through her body to meet in the very center of her core. They threaded and twisted and knotted together until each ribbon became indefinable, indistinguishable.

“Oh, fuck.” The expletive fell from her lips in a ragged whisper. She rarely used such language, not because it offended her sensibilities, but because she’d never felt a need. But what the two Australians were doing to her now, the absolute...ecstasy they wrought on her body...

“Oh, fuck me.”

She arched her back, knotting her fingers in Joseph’s hair and shoving her pussy harder to Rob’s tongue. The man between her legs chuckled, sending wicked vibrations into her sex. She fisted her hands harder in Joseph’s hair as the thrumming in her center mounted quickly.

Joseph’s tongue flicked at her nipple and she whimpered, the sensations from such a simple caress almost undoing her. God, what would she do when he actually *sucked* her nipple? What would she do when he stopped teasing her and truly began to—

Joseph sucked on her nipple. Hard.

“Oh, oh, fuck!”

She cried out, her breast swelling with indescribable warmth.

Joseph suckled on her breast, his right hand cupping it towards his mouth, his left hand kneading the other. He pinched her nipple, rolling it between his finger tips, his actions echoing those of his mouth.

As if he knew exactly the rhythm his friend set, Rob lapped at her pussy and clit the same way, delving into her folds only to withdraw and lick at her inner thighs.

She rolled her head, holding Joseph to her breast even as she wished them both to stop. She couldn't take this much pleasure. She couldn't. Her body wasn't made for this. Made to be consumed, worshiped, reveled and—

Before the delirious thought could finish, Rob's fingers curled over her hips as he lifted them a little higher and stroked his tongue over the tight hole of her anus.

"Oh, oh!" She bucked, concentrated, forbidden rapture spearing into her.

Joseph lifted his head and smiled down at her through heavily lidded eyes. She almost expected him to say something—anything that would save her from being taken away by the onslaught of sensations his friend's tongue was creating, but he didn't. Instead, he took her mouth with his in a crushing kiss before returning his attention to her breast, the left one this time. He closed his lips over its pebbled nipple and bit at it. Shards of delicious pain detonated in her chest, blossoms of constricting pleasure in her pussy.

"Oh, God," she moaned, her breath so shallow, so rapid her head swam, "please, I can't..."

She couldn't finish. Not when Joseph suckled so greedily on her breast. Not when Rob lapped so hungrily at her ass.

She thrust her hips higher, the ribbons of pleasure knotting in her center. Growing tight. Impossible to unravel. Her orgasm was coming. She couldn't stop it. And still, the two men sucked and licked and bit.

Rob's fingers dug harder into her hips, his tongue not just lapping at her anus, but pushing on it. Pressing at its opening. She bucked, the unexpected shockwaves of sensations stealing her breath.

And scaring her.

She'd never been touched there. Not by finger, tongue or cock.

"No," she panted, shaking her head. Rob paused, his fingers relaxing—a little—on her hips, the tip of his tongue resting on her sphincter. She tugged at Joseph's hair, wanting to look into his face. His eyes. Needing to see his warmth.

He lifted his head and gazed at her again, his nostrils flaring, his eyes ablaze. "Do you want us to stop?"

His question, spoken with such gentle concern, made her heart hammer. She shook her head, combing her fingers through his tousled hair. "No."

"But you need us to slow down?"

The fluttering in Anna's belly intensified. How did he know? How was he so in tune with her already? She closed her eyes for a second and released a shaking sigh. "It's just...I've never..." She faltered over

the confession, looking back up at Joseph. God, how did she say this without sounding so naïve? So...so...virginal?

“And we’ve never rushed anyone,” Rob spoke from between her legs, saving her from doing so. His hands smoothed up her waist, over her stomach and back down to her hips once again, Anna couldn’t believe how quickly the two men knew her. It was intense.

“We’ve never made them do something they don’t want,” he continued. “Well, *I* haven’t. Hudo here has been known to rush a customer or two into signing a contract. And he makes plenty of people do things they don’t want to do. Bloody pushy business mogul that he is.”

Joseph laughed. “Up yours, Thorton. Mr. I Dare You.”

The unexpected moment took Anna by surprise. The apprehension twisting into her core dissipated and she gazed up at Joseph. “I’m sorry.”

He shook his head, tracing small circles around the nipple of her left breast with his fingertips. “Don’t be.” The sides of his mouth curled. “Trust me, I know all about being caught up in Rob’s enthusiasm.”

“And I’m entirely enthusiastic about making Anna come,” Rob stated, and Anna couldn’t stop her small giggle bubbling up the back of her throat. “And I’m going to do it by totally and thoroughly exploring this gorgeous pussy right—” he blew a fine stream of breath on her labia, “—here.”

He dipped his tongue into her folds, and she gasped, the ribbons of pleasure unfurling through her once more.

She tightened her fists in Joseph’s hair, holding him to her. Something told her he was about to move away and she didn’t want him to. Not at all. She looked into his eyes, the pit of her belly flip-flopping at the urgent hunger she saw in their light-brown depths. “Kiss me?”

He grinned, a boyish, roguish grin. “I can do that.”

He took her lips with his, his tongue delving into her mouth as he smoothed one hand over her body. His fingers explored her throat, her shoulder, followed the strap of her bra until they reached its cup. He flicked at her nipple through the straining satin, chuckling against her lips as the nub of flesh instantly puckered into a rock-hard point. She chuckled back, the sound lost in her gasp as Rob sucked her clit into his mouth.

Raw pleasure threaded through her and she pulled Joseph deeper into the kiss, parting her lips to him completely.

Oh, God. Here we go again.

The incredulous thought whispered through her mind. She didn’t think her orgasm would come back to her so quickly after stopping the two men, but it had. And tenfold. She curled her toes, planting her feet harder on Rob’s shoulders.

Here we go...

Rob sucked on her clit, nibbled it, sucked again.

Joseph sucked on her tongue, pinched her nipple and squeezed her breast.

Here we...

Here we...

An orgasm detonated in Anna's core. Wild and hard and fast. She thrust her hips upward, tearing her lips from Joseph's, unable to hold back her cries. "Yes, yes!"

She writhed on the cot, holding Joseph as if he was her life support, refusing to let him go as Rob milked her pussy of its cream.

Chapter Five

“I want to come so fucking much I think my dick’s about to burst.”

Joseph’s choked voice stirred something tight in Rob’s balls. He lapped one last slow, languid stroke of his tongue along Anna’s swollen pussy-lips and then lifted his head and cast his best friend a steady inspection.

Joseph knelt beside Anna’s head, his jaw bunched tight, his chest heaving. There was a protective air about him, as if he’d taken upon himself to guard the woman stretched out on the cot between them. It was typical Hudo behaviour—he may be *Time Australia*’s Businessman of the Year, he may be a ridiculously wealthy, ruthless CEO, but Joseph Hudson was always, *always*, a guardian. Fuck, he’d taken care of Rob so many times, Rob had lost count. And yet, he couldn’t contain the need Anna McCarthy had awakened in him. Rob could see that. Try as hard as he might, Joseph couldn’t be the gentleman here. He wanted Anna too damn bad.

“I can understand that,” Rob said, leaning back from Anna’s most perfectly delicious pussy. He slid his fingertip along the velvet edge of one of her folds, his prick twitching at the sight of her ass constricting at his touch. “I’m pretty bloody hard myself.”

He was. Fucking hard. His cock felt like it was about to burst a seam.

But he knew he had to let Joseph and Anna call the next shot. The urge to flip Anna onto her stomach, shove her legs apart and sink his dick into her sodden sex scorched through him with such potent force he could feel his balls rise up in anticipation. But he held back. Controlled himself. He was always the aggressor in sex, but tonight he needed Joe to take the lead.

He needed to know his best mate could leap at life when he was gone.

Jesus, that’s a morose thought, Thorton.

It was, and he shoved it aside, sliding his hands over the tops of Anna’s thighs and rising to his knees.

“I think I can do something about that,” she said. She shifted on the cot, and Rob’s nuts rose up higher as the smooth, toned length of her inner thighs slid over his shoulders. He watched her as she moved on the cot, her body—no doubt the result of hours and hours of skiing—the stuff of a hot-blooded man’s fantasy. Everything was where it was meant to be, and it was where it was meant to be with bloody sublime perfection.

“Christ,” Hudo groaned as Anna settled herself on her knees before Rob, presenting her most gorgeous derrière to Joseph. Rob grinned, unable to miss the way the tented front of his friend’s boxers danced.

“You have the sexiest arse...” Joseph murmured.

Anna looked at Joseph over her shoulder and shuffled a little closer to him. “I love how you say ass.”

Joseph snorted. “If I say it again, will you let me bite yours? Arse. Arse. Arse.”

Anna laughed and the soft, relaxed sound sent tendrils of tension into Rob’s gut and groin. He liked the sound. A lot.

“I’ve often wondered,” she said, turning back to Rob. “What it would be like to make two men come at the same time.”

Before Rob could think of something witty to say—a first for him, really—she placed her palm against his stomach, just below his navel. “Take your shirt off, Rob. And your trousers.”

Her order, spoken with such authoritarian weight, made his mouth water. He did as she commanded, stumbling sideways as he tugged first his snowboarding boots and then his socks from his feet. She laughed again. Hudo groaned, though whether it was from the sight of Rob’s uncharacteristic clumsiness or the pain in his massive erection, Rob couldn’t tell.

Finally stripped bare, he stood before Anna and held out his arms. His cock poked straight up, long and much thicker and stiffer than it’d ever been. “What happens now, Ranger McCarthy?”

“I’ll tell you,” Joseph suddenly growled, and Rob blinked as his friend crawled onto the cot behind Anna and hauled her back against his body. “I make her come again with my cock, while she makes us both come.”

Anna whimpered, her lips parting and her pupils dilating as Joseph closed his hands over her breasts. She straightened, leaning her back against him as she snaked her arms up around his neck and turned her face to his.

He kissed her, squeezing and cupping her breasts as he did so, lifting and pushing them together.

“Fucking oath,” Rob murmured, closing the distance between him and the cot. “I like that plan.” He ran his hands over Anna’s torso, loving the taut feel of her skin. He lowered his head and placed a kiss first on the subtle line that ran down the middle of her belly, moving down to the dip of her naval and lower. Her trimmed pubic hair tickled his chin, and for a brief moment he contemplated slipping his tongue into her folds again. She tasted so bloody good his mouth filled with saliva at the possibility. Instead, he slid his lips back up her stomach and over her ribcage until they found her breast. Joseph’s hands cupped them together, his friend torturing her nipples with the pad of his thumbs as he continued to kiss her.

“Let me suck her, Hudo,” Rob said, and Joseph removed his thumbs straight away and held her breasts still for him.

Rob took one of her nipples in his mouth, sucking on it hard.

“Oh, God,” Anna burst out, her words muffled by Joseph’s lips. “Wasn’t this meant to be me pleasuring you two?”

“You are, babe,” Rob heard Joseph growl. “Can’t you feel how bloody hard I am for you?”

Rob’s dick jerked and he wrapped one hand around it. He’d been as stiff as a pole now for what felt like a lifetime. If he didn’t come soon...

A fresh wave of respect surged through him for his best mate. Hudo had been harder for longer. He’d been hard for this woman last night, and Rob didn’t doubt he’d been hard since she’d arrived on the slope, right royally pissed at both of them.

Rob dragged his mouth to Anna’s other nipple and sucked on it. Joseph’s thumbs dug into his cheek and he started, surprised at how turned on the innocent contact made him. He’d shared everything with Joe. His Tonka trucks, his skateboard, his lunch, his terror over his first wet dream. When it came to Joseph, Rob didn’t mind sharing. And now, they were sharing a woman, a beautiful, feisty, sweet woman.

There was nothing more he could share.

Nothing more he wanted to.

He pumped his cock, feeling his balls flood hard. He couldn’t hold out much longer. Anna’s breasts were too perfect, her nipples too divine. The way Joe cupped and squeezed them was perfect, an offering of the most delectable meal from the gods.

With a guttural moan, he closed his free hand over Joseph’s right and pushed Anna’s breasts even closer together, flicking one nipple and then the other over and over again.

“Oh...oh...” Her breath left her in stripped gasps. She writhed in Joseph’s arms, the air heavy with her musk. “Oh, God.”

“Fuck, Rob,” Joe ground out, “I’m going to blow soon. Watching you suck her tits like that...”

Rob tore his mouth from Anna’s nipples and stared up at them both. “If you don’t want to be showered in come, sweetheart,” he growled, “I suggest we think about a change of position. Or some raincoats.”

She laughed. “Raincoats. And a change of position.”

She shoved at Rob’s chest, and before he knew what she was doing, she’d slipped from Joseph’s hands and wrapped her fingers around Rob’s erection, trapping his hand against his own cock. “Position change,” she said with a wiggle of her backside as she dragged his hand down his length and back up again. “Now tell me you were talking about condoms when you said raincoats.”

Rob’s head swam, something very akin to raw rapture rushing through his veins. He was an adrenaline junkie. He’d base jumped from “El Capitan” in Yosemite. He’d swum with the sharks in the Tasmanian Bite. Fuck, he’d friggin’ run with the bulls in Pamplona. But holy shit, nothing compared to this. He was about to get a blowjob from a woman while she was being fucked by his best mate.

He shot Joe a quick look. “Grab my backpack, Hudo.”

Nostrils flaring, Joseph climbed from the cot and crossed the floor, out of Rob's line of sight. He heard his friend unzip the pack he'd thrown on the floor after first entering the cabin, followed by the rustling of its contents.

"Hurry up, mate," he ground out through clenched teeth. That Anna was continuing to make him pump his own dick didn't help his tenuous state. "Don't want to embarrass myself here."

The woman sending him mad with pleasure increased the pressure of his grip, squeezing his erection more firmly. "There's nothing embarrassing about *this*, Mr. Thorton."

"Jesus, Rob," Joseph laughed behind him and Rob ground his teeth together harder. "How'd you get vegemite sandwiches through customs?"

"I didn't, you moron," Rob burst out, his balls so swollen he could barely think. If Anna pumped his cock one more time... "I made them this morning in the lodge's kitchen. While you were jerking off in the shower. Now hurry the fuck up!"

Joseph laughed again, and then he was standing at Anna's side once more, a small gold foil square in his hand.

"Raincoat?" she asked, looking up at him.

He smiled and nodded. "Raincoat."

Anna's own lips curled into a slow smile. "Care to put it on? I've got my hands full."

"And she really means full," Rob rasped. "This fucker's bigger and harder than it's ever been. So if the pair of you could just hurry along?"

Joseph laughed, and even in his pleasure-tortured state, Rob recognized it. Joseph was in love. Just like that.

A momentary shard of pain shot into Rob's chest—loss for something he didn't want to analyze at this moment in time—and he gave his best friend a long, level stare. Christ, he loved him. And if it was at all possible where he was going, he was gonna miss the shit out of him.

"Ready, Mr. Thorton?" Anna's low, husky question jerked his stare back to her face, just in time to watch her part her lips and slide them over the purple head of his cock.

"Oh, *fuck!*"

His groaned roar bounced around the room. If he was a gambling man, he'd put money on it being heard on the top of Knife Ridge peak as well.

Anna's mouth enveloped his length and she sucked, drawing him deeper. Deeper.

Jesus, he was going to come soon.

He let his head lull back, incapable of finding the strength to hold it up, and gazed blankly at the cabin's ceiling, the wooden support beams doing nothing to draw his attention away from the concentrated pleasure of Anna's mouth and teeth and tongue on his dick. She sucked him harder, sliding farther down in length until the dome of his cock pressed the back of her throat.

“Christ, that is so goddamn hot to watch.”

Joseph’s mutter scraped at Rob’s flaying control and he rolled his head to find his friend stripped naked. His body, leaner and far more muscled than a CEO of any business should have, glistened with sweat in the cabin’s muted light. His cock jutted up from between his thighs with stunning insistency.

“Bit horny, mate?” Rob asked on a ragged breath, watching Joseph roll the latex sheath over his erection with shaking hands.

Joseph’s nostril flared, his attention flicking briefly to Anna’s head, his Adam’s apple jerking up and down in his throat as he watched her work Rob’s cock. “You could say that.”

Without further warning, he pressed his face to Anna’s pussy.

She reacted quickly and wildly to the sudden contact, moaning around Rob’s length with such fevered force he felt the vibrations all the way to the base of his spine. It was too much. If he didn’t start drawing images in his head soon of his hairy Aunt Beryl in a bikini, complete with mole and saggy appendix scar, he was going to come before Joe even entered Anna. And he didn’t want that.

He wanted to go at the same time as his best mate. And he wanted them *both* to go just as Anna did.

“I know you’re having fun back there, Hudo,” he muttered, unable to stop the quickening of his thrusts in Anna’s mouth—Christ, her mouth was talented—“But I need you to get with the game plan here, okay.”

For a moment, Joe’s head didn’t leave its place between Anna’s thighs, and by the way she was moaning and sucking harder on Rob’s dick, something told him Joseph wasn’t in any hurry to stop licking her out.

He squeezed his eyes shut, the beginnings of Aunt Beryl forming in his head. God, he didn’t want to do *this* either. He didn’t want Aunt Beryl in his head when he came. He didn’t. It would mess him up for what remained of his life. He didn’t want—

Anna’s teeth dug into the length of his shaft with sharp pressure, her nails sinking into the backs of his thighs as another wild moan thrummed in the back of her throat. Loud enough to make Rob open his eyes. And see Joseph drive his cock deep into her pussy.

Oh, thank fuck!

Joseph had died and gone to heaven. He must have. How else could he explain the pure, concentrated pleasure searing through his body? He thrust his shaft, engorged beyond pain, into Anna’s drenched pussy, the feel of her tight muscles gripping him, sliding over him, almost too much to bear.

The second he’d seen her in the lodge’s bar last night he’d wanted to do this. The moment he saw her in the cafeteria this morning he knew he’d have to. Lust at first sight? He didn’t know. Lust was too dirty, too temporary. This wasn’t lust. With every penetrating stroke into her sex, he knew it. He didn’t know what it was yet, but it wasn’t lust. It was...more.

The thought made his head swim. He ground his teeth, sliding his hands over Anna's gorgeous backside until he gripped her hips with both hands. He lifted his head and watched her suck on Rob's cock.

Damn, he couldn't believe how turned on it made him. And yet, at the same time, how jealous.

He'd never felt like this. He'd had more than his fair share of lovers—not as many as Rob to be sure, and none as adventurous—but Anna fit him unlike any other.

He drove his length deeper into her sex, wanting to fill her completely. Wanting her to feel how fucking unbelievable they felt together.

She moaned and pushed back into his penetrations, spreading her thighs to take him deeper. The slight shift in position made her pussy clench his cock in a gripping pulse and he bit back a groan, digging his fingertips into her hips instead. It wouldn't take long—he'd shoot his load soon. There really wasn't any way to stop it. He'd been thinking of doing this very thing to Anna since he'd seen her in the lodge. He'd sported a semi-hard-on all day. He'd been hard while dropping out of the helicopter and barging down the side of Knife Ridge Chutes. Hell, even when he'd gone ass-over-tit and eaten snow for a good five hundred meters, his dick had never softened.

He leant forward, laying his stomach on Anna's back, her warm flesh branding his as he smoothed his hands around her side to cup her breasts. He held them loosely, their small but perfect shape slapping against his fingers with every thrust he punched into her. "Jesus, Anna." He swallowed, sliding one hand from her breast, over her belly to stroke his fingers through her trimmed pubic hair. "You feel so damn good. This feels so damn good."

"Ain't that the truth."

Rob's hoarse pant made Joseph smile. His friend was on the verge of losing it. Sweat beaded on Rob's forehead, his stomach jerked in a series of little hiccups and the muscles in his jaw were bunched.

Joseph returned his attention to Anna's face, entranced with the vision of Rob's cock pumping in and out of her mouth. Her lips glistened with moisture and a wave of giddy hunger crashed through him at the memory of those lips against his. Ah, Jesus, she had a beautiful mouth. And she moved it so well over Rob's dick. Just as her pussy moved so well over his.

The soles of his feet began to tingle and he tore his stare from the sight of his friend's cock disappearing into Anna's mouth and pressed his lips to the back of her neck. "Gonna come soon, babe. Can't hold on much longer."

"Me either, Anna." Rob's voice sounded strangled. "I'm about to erupt. If you don't want to take it in your mouth you better stop now."

Anna's body shifted under Joseph, and he lifted his head enough to watch her reach out with one hand and close it around Rob's balls, sliding her mouth deeper down his shaft as she did so.

Rob sucked in a swift breath, his belly quivering. "I take it that's a no for stopping?"

In response, Anna tugged on Rob's balls and wriggled her backside, her pussy muscles pulsing around Joseph's driving length. He groaned out a laugh, pinching her nipple in retaliation. "No fair."

Working his fingers over the hood of her sex, he parted her folds until he found her clit. "You're going to come before we do, babe." He rolled one fingertip over its swollen form and watched her closed eyes squeeze tighter. "We're close, but we're not coming first. Not until you do."

He pressed on her clit again, rubbed it with increasing speed as he pumped his cock harder, faster, deeper into her pussy.

She moaned around Rob's cock, her mounting pleasure not just evident in the sound but in the pulsing pressure of her sex on his dick. He stroked into her faster, rolled his finger over her clit harder. Harder.

"Fuck, Anna, your mouth is so fucking..."

Rob's raw growl got lost in a groan. Joseph saw his friend throw back his head, his nostrils flaring. He knew his best mate's pain. He was there with him—the pain of an orgasm about to explode, not just through his balls and cock, but through his entire body.

"Come for me, Anna," he ground out, rubbing her clit. Sinking his length into her sweet, tight pussy again and again and again. "Come for us now."

He pinched her clit, squeezed it once between thumb and forefinger. She bucked beneath him, her hips thrashing into a wild, rhythmless spasm. Her orgasm claimed her, possessing her, making her sex constrict around his cock with such gripping force there was nothing he could do but erupt with her.

"Oh, Jesus, yes!" He slammed into her, head back, spine arched, teeth clenched. Wads of his semen spurt from him, pumping into the condom, coating his own dick as Anna's pussy contracted and squeezed. Milking him of his seed with each pulse.

And still he thrust into her, incapable of stopping, the far-off cries of Rob's climax, his best mate's shouts of "fuck, fuck, yes, oh, yes, of fucking yes" only feeding his pleasure. Pushing him higher, higher, higher until he lost cohesion, all solidity, and fractured into a million pinpricks of rapture.

Chapter Six

“Pass me a sandwich, Hudo.”

Joseph turned his gaze from Anna where she sat at a rather antiquated communications radio in the far corner of the cabin and grinned at Rob. “You got hollow legs tonight, Thorton?”

Rob leant back in his chair—a wobbly wooden construction more suitable for fire tinder than a place to rest your backside. He crossed his ankles on the desk before him, taking, in Joseph’s humble opinion, his life into his hands. “Hey, I’m allowed to be hungry.” He wriggled his toes in his own thick fluorescent-green socks, took a mouthful of the beer he held in his hand and then grinned at Joseph. “I expended a lot of energy today.”

Joseph gave him a snort before digging around in the backpack at his feet for one of the saran-wrapped sandwiches Rob had packed that morning. His fingers closed around a spongy square and he tossed it to his friend. “That’s the last one. You may want to keep a hold of it.”

“What?” Rob raised his eyebrows, the very notion of saving food obviously filling him with mock distaste. “Not eat it now?”

Joseph shook his head and laughed, settling himself more comfortably in his own chair next to Rob. He turned his attention back to Anna and watched her flick a couple of the switches on the radio and turn a dial or two. She’d spent the last fifteen minutes trying to make contact with the Wolf Creek base station, cursing the old radio more than once, even giving it a thump every now and again.

He chuckled silently. At some stage of the game, he’d offer her his satellite phone, or draw her attention to the two-way walkie-talkie he couldn’t help but see poking out the top of her backpack by the door. But not yet. He suspected the fight with the old radio in the corner was a ruse to gather herself after what they’d just done. Some time to herself to think. That he could understand. What they’d just done was...

Awesome?

Amazing?

Profound?

Life-changing?

All four?

“You really like her, don’t you?”

Rob's statement got him to swing his head back to his friend and give him a wry smile. "You could say that."

Rob laughed, placing his beer on the floor beside him before pulling the sandwich in his hand into two uneven pieces. "I could say that? Well, apart from the fact you haven't stopped looking at her for more than two seconds since we...finished...you offered to give her your vegemite sandwich *and* your beer. Gotta be serious when a bloke does that." He smiled at Joseph before taking a bite out of the meal in his right hand. "I know *I've* never given a woman my sandwich and beer before."

Joseph leant forward and snatched the half in Rob's left hand. "Which is why," he said with a wide grin, "you will die a lonely man."

The smile on Rob's face faltered—a split-second twitch Joseph would never have noticed if he didn't know his friend as well as he did. He frowned, a small knot forming in his gut, and gave Rob a level stare. "What's up, mate? Anything you want to tell me?"

A slight tension pulled at the edges of Rob's eyes, almost imperceptible, and then he nodded, leaning farther back in his chair, his snow pants rustling like dry parchment. "Yeah. You owe me half a vegemite sandwich."

"I don't know how you Australians can eat that stuff." Anna walked past the table and dropped into the seat beside Joseph, stopping him from demanding Rob tell him what the hell was up. She reached behind her head, pulled the band from her ponytail, and scruffed up her honey-blond hair until it fell around her face in a golden mess. "It's vile."

Rob pulled an affronted expression, his eyebrows dipping in melodramatic, wounded pain. "Take it easy, love," he said. "You attack vegemite, you attack Australia."

Joseph studied his friend. For the first time since Anna had arrived on the mountainside not ninety-five percent focused on her. The uneasy knot in his gut rolled over on itself. Rob was hiding something. Rob never hid something. Not from him.

So, why's he doing it now? And what is it he's hiding?

"You don't happen to have any Tim Tams in that backpack, do you?" Anna gave the pack at Joseph's feet a hopeful look. "I've heard they're yummy. Especially if you suck hot coffee through them."

"The Tim-Tam Slam." Rob nodded sagely. "A uniquely Australian and truly life-changing experience."

Anna laughed, the relaxed sound easing the knot in Joseph's stomach. Whatever Rob was hiding, it wasn't stopping him being his usual flippant self. Flippant enough for them all to feel completely comfortable in each other's presence despite what they'd shared after such a short space of time. Well, *he* felt comfortable, and seeing as Anna hadn't gone running for her walkie-talkie the second Joseph withdrew his spent dick from her sweet wet sex to radio for help, he kind of figured she was comfortable too.

Actually, comfortable *was* the wrong word, at least to describe his current state. With every second he spent looking at her, he was growing distinctly *uncomfortable*. His cock was growing thicker and longer far too quickly for public decency. His snow pants were far too chaffing to sit still and take it like a man.

He shifted on his chair, lurching a little to the side. “Bloody hell,” he muttered.

A fine, warm hand pressed on his hip, searing his skin through his trousers, and he looked up from the floor to see Anna smiling at him. “Falling for me so quickly, Joe?”

The question, asked no doubt in jest, sent a shard of tension straight to Joseph’s suddenly very hard cock. He stared at her like a dumb-struck teenager, lost for words.

She gazed back at him, the smile on her lips—her full, totally kissable lips—fading.

“I think the answer to that is yes, Anna McCarthy,” Rob offered. “Very much a yes.”

She flicked a glance at Rob, but only a quick one, before her attention fixed on Joseph again.

The cabin fell silent, the only sound the night wind rising outside, streaming over the side of the mountain like an icy river. Joseph looked at Anna, his mouth dry. He wanted to say something, but couldn’t. Jesus, why was he feeling so flustered? He never felt like this in corporate meetings, staring down bank managers and supply executives. Why couldn’t he think of a thing to say now?

Because it’s important now, Joseph. It means something now. What you say next could change the rest of your life.

He swallowed, a numb pressure growing in his chest, his eyes eating her up. How had this happened? How had he fallen so deeply so quickly?

Fallen where? In love?

Can’t be. Not yet. He knew so little about her.

A wild gust of wind slammed against the cabin, shattering the tense silence within with a squealing protest of wood. The windows rattled and Joseph jumped. They *all* jumped. Anna blinked quickly as she jerked in her seat, as if coming out of a trance. Rob burst out into loud, if somewhat nervous laughter.

“So, Ranger McCarthy,” Rob said, his socked feet hitting the floor with a dull thud, “we’re obviously not heading back to Wolf Creek tonight. What do you suggest we do?”

Anna’s cheeks turned pink, a delicate shade that made Joseph want to cup her face in his hands and place his lips on hers.

Deep, Joseph. So deep so damn fast.

She flicked him a quick look, her eyes reflecting something he couldn’t decipher, and then turned to Rob. “Poker?”

Rob lifted an eyebrow. “Strip poker?”

Joseph’s cock—rapidly growing harder than semi-hard—pulsed in approval, and he bit back a low groan.

Anna gave Rob an enigmatic little smile. “Strip poker? Isn’t it too cold for strip poker?”

Rob leant forward in his seat, the wood creaking beneath him, a grin playing with the corners of his mouth as he ran a deliberately suggestive inspection over her upper body. "I'm game. Are you?"

She flicked Joseph another look, and he couldn't miss the way her nipples pinched into rigid points. Nor the way her tongue flicked out to wet her bottom lip. "I'm good at poker."

Joseph *wasn't* good at poker. And he was wearing nothing more than a pair of snow pants, socks and his thermal. Which meant he'd be buck-naked in about three hands.

Or sooner if you throw the cards away and do exactly what you want to do instead.

His cock jerked in his pants, in total, eager agreement. What he wanted to do...

Well, do it, Hudo.

His ass clenched as thick desire poured through his groin.

Do it.

He snapped to his feet, his plastic seat jolting away from the back of his thighs to tumble over. In two strides, he rounded the table and stopped directly in front of Anna to give her a level stare. "I don't want to play poker." He leant forward a little, combed his fingers into the golden strands of her hair at her nape and held her head still. "I want to make love to you. I want to bury myself in your sweet wet pussy and fuck you until you scream my name."

He lowered his face closer to hers. "And I want to do it while Rob fucks you at the same time."

Anna's eyes widened, her lips parting.

"Bloody hell, Hudo." Rob shifted in his chair, his voice tight. "When you decide to go for it, you don't hold back."

Joseph raised his head a fraction, gave his best mate a direct look and then returned his gaze to Anna. "Come on," he said on a low whisper. "I dare you."

Anna's pulse didn't just pound in her neck, it hammered. *I dare you.* She licked her lips, her pussy already squeezing in damp anticipation.

I dare you.

There was so much in those three words: a challenge of sexual contact beyond any she'd experienced before. A challenge to release herself to the fantasy she'd harbored the moment she'd set eyes on the two Australians. A challenge to deny the apprehension of their earlier threesome. But there was more, so much more in his eyes. In his eyes, those cookie-brown eyes she'd been drawn to from the start, she saw his desire. Not just sexual, but emotional. It made no sense. They hardly knew each other, but this man, with his sexy-as-sin accent, his caring eyes and warm wit, made her just plain gooey inside in the most wonderful way imaginable.

Her heart leapt faster and her mouth went dry.

Love at first sight? Who would have thought you were a romantic, Ranger McCarthy?

She tilted her face up to Joseph's, letting a slow smile curl her lips. "I accept your dare, Joseph Hudson."

"God, you have no idea how much I wanted to hear you say that," Rob murmured, his breath warm on her neck. He ran his hands over her hips, up the flat plane of her belly, the curve of her ribcage, until his fingers found her breasts. Her sex pooled with liquid pleasure and she swayed toward Joseph, eager for him to join in.

"Anna?" A male voice crackled from Anna's backpack. *"This is Bartowski. What's your situation with the Australians? Over."*

"Fuck," Rob swore.

Anna's pulse rate tripled. "It's Wolf Creek base." She placed her palm on Joseph's chest and gave him an apologetic look, the moisture between her legs growing at the impatient gleam of hunger in his eyes. "I better let them know what's going on."

Rob laughed, sliding one hand down her stomach to delve his fingers into the junction of her thighs. "You think they might want to join?"

She twisted in his embrace and punched her fist against his shoulder in a soft rebuke. "You wish."

Disengaging herself, she hurried over to her backpack, withdrew her handheld transceiver and rammed her thumb against the PTT button. "This is Anna. I've located the Australians and have escorted them to number four cabin. We'll be staying put tonight. Will report back at—" she shot her watch a quick glance, "—twenty-two hundred. Over."

She released the press-to-talk button, the feel of Joseph's and Rob's impatient, hungry gazes roaming over her back almost making her squirm.

"*You sure?*" Bartowski asked, his uncertainty scratched with static. *"If I send out the chopper now, Hal can get to you in under an hour. Over."*

"Negative," Anna almost snapped, aware her own voice sounded curt. "Too risky. The winds kicking the mountain's ass up here. I've got it under control anyway. The heater's fired up, the Australians are safe and they very thoughtfully packed sandwiches before getting their asses lost. Over."

"*If you say so. Over.*" Bartowski sounded hesitant. What she was suggesting wasn't protocol, but she was also the boss. He knew better than to question her too much.

She flattened the press-to-talk button. "I do," she said into the microphone. "Don't worry about me. They're Australian city boys with more money than sense. I'm making them regret their stupidity, trust me. Over."

Rob burst out laughing behind her as she released the PTT button and swung about to fix him with a steady gaze. Her heart began to thump harder. "Now," she said, tossing her walkie-talkie onto the crumbled top of her backpack, "where were we?"

Joseph crossed the cabin floor in three strides and scooped her off her feet before she could utter a squeal of shocked delight. He held her against his chest, his arms under her knees and back, his nostrils flaring, his stare holding hers captive. "Right about here."

He kissed her. Hard. Brutal. His tongue lashing at her lips, her teeth, with a ravenous aggression she reveled in.

"And here," Rob stated as he fisted a hand in her hair and tore her lips from Joseph's, crushing her mouth with his.

His kiss was equally forceful but far more playful, and her head spun at the contradiction of one barely contained with power, the other almost teasing. Both however, made her pussy weep with moisture. She whimpered and curled her arms around Joseph's neck as his lips began to scorch a line up the column of her neck.

"You are so fucking beautiful," he ground out in her ear.

"Beautiful," Rob echoed, pulling his lips from hers to taste her chin, her jaw.

Joseph kissed her again, nipping at her bottom lip with a series of bites that grew harder and more uncontrolled with each one. He plunged his tongue into her mouth, exploring its well with increasing fever.

"There's no bed big enough for this," Rob spoke, skimming a hand down her back and over the curve of her ass. His fingers stopped at the folds of her pussy, exposed to his touch by her position in Joseph's arms, "and the floor's a might cold, so we're going to have to worship your body standing up."

His statement sent a shard of wanton excitement into Anna's sex and she felt her juices wet Rob's fingers. Fingers he slowly, deliberately slid into her folds. Two at once, wriggling them until he couldn't penetrate her any deeper.

She sucked in a breath through her nose, the scent of her pleasure filling her body, driving her faster to an unexpected orgasm.

Oh, God!

Her pussy clamped shut on Rob's fingers, constricting on them, squeezing them in fast, powerful pulses.

"Oh, yes," Rob scissored his fingers inside her sex, plunged them in and out and wriggled them some more, "that's my girl. Come for me. I want you so fucking wet I could drown in your cream."

Joseph growled against Anna's lips at his friend's words, hauling her closer to his chest as he sucked her tongue into his mouth.

"She's so wet for us, Hudo." Rob continued to fuck her pussy with his fingers. "So very, very wet."

Joseph broke the kiss and stared into her face. "I want her wetter."

Rob chuckled, a low, dirty laugh. "No worries, mate."

He slapped her ass. A swift, sharp slap that made her cry out in surprise.

Stinging heat branded her ass cheek, but before the pain could register in Anna's mind, Joseph pressed his lips to her temple. "Do you want him to kiss it better?"

She nodded, her breath hitching in her throat.

She sensed Rob move beside her, his hand sliding over her butt, caressing the spot he'd smacked until it wasn't his palm on her skin but his lips.

And then, his lips weren't on her ass cheek but on her folds, his tongue flicking at her clit, his fingers delving into her slit.

"Does that feel good?" Joseph whispered, his stare holding her still in his arms.

"Yes," she panted. "Yes."

"I want you so wet there'll be very little pain when Rob enters your arse."

Her heart slammed into her throat, her rock-hard nipples aching. She gazed into his eyes, knowing she should feel something other than absolute trust and blissful rapture. She didn't.

Rob's tongue rolled over her clit, already swollen from her last orgasm, and she hissed in a gasp.

"I can't hold on much longer, Anna." Raw tension wrought Joseph's statement into a strangled groan. "My dick is so hard and I want to sink it into your pussy so much."

"Then do it," she rasped. "Do it. Please."

He shook his head. "Not yet. Not until you are ready for both of us."

As if Rob knew exactly what Joseph wanted, he placed his hands on her ass cheeks and spread them apart, dragging his tongue from her pussy to her anus. Smearing her hole with his saliva and her cream.

She clung to Joseph, a distant part of her mind in awe of his physical strength—he'd held her for what must be a lifetime now—a more elemental part of her mind more aroused than ever by it. "Oh, Joseph."

It was the first time she'd called his name during their sexual contact and he let out a shaking groan, his eyes clouding with desire. His arms tightened around her and he slanted his lips over her mouth.

Rob laved her anus with his saliva, dipping his thumb into her pussy as he did so. She thrust her hips upward, her inner muscles constricting, another climax mounting. Fast.

It hit her. An explosive tension shuddering through her body.

Bringing with it fresh moisture from her sodden sex.

"Hmmm," Rob hummed against her ass. "You taste so good. My face is so wet with your come."

He lapped at her ass, stabbed at it with the point of his tongue, fucking her pussy with his fingers. Smearing her juices to her anus.

"I think she's ready for us, Joe."

The statement uttered against her backside made Anna's ass squeeze tight with a wanton thrill she'd never experienced before. Her heart quickened faster still and she wrapped her arms around Joseph's neck with desperate need.

She was ready. More than ready.

Without a word, Joseph removed his arm from beneath her knees and her feet hit the floor with a soft thud.

Rob was there immediately. From the time it took to remove his mouth from her ass and straighten to his feet, he'd stripped himself of his snow pants and shirt. She heard a condom packet tear and then he pressed his naked body to her back, smoothing his hands under her thermal. She drew in a shallow breath, the feel of his warm skin on hers almost as wonderful as the feel of his rigid erection nudging the crevice of her ass. He skimmed his palms over her belly, her ribs and breasts, a taunting journey that made her knees wobble before he embraced her in a firm hold and tugged her backward.

The tips of her toes brushed the floorboards a split second before Joseph stepped in front of her—now gloriously, proudly naked, his thick erection stretching the condom he wore—and gathered up her legs, draping her knees over his bent arms. Hooking them in the inside of his elbows.

He met her gaze, a small smile on his lips. "To the hilt," he whispered.

He moved. Raising her knees higher and leaning into her body with fluid grace. His massive cock first pressed and then parted her folds, separating her sex until, with a groan and a clenching of his jaw, he sank his length into her very core.

"Oh, yes!" She threw back her head, the surreal sensation of being suspended on Joseph's arms while being impaled on his cock almost driving her mad. She'd never felt anything like it, like she was connected to the world even as she hung above it.

Joseph sucked in a sharp breath, and another, his hips thrusting up, driving him deeper inside her.

"Damn, Hudo," Rob growled, his lips against Anna's throat. For a dizzying moment she realized she'd forgotten he was there.

How could you forget? The man has made you come four times in the space of two hours.

"If I don't..." Rob didn't finish.

His lips on her neck turned hungry, each kiss growing more wild.

"Touch me, Anna."

She did as he asked, reaching down between their two bodies to close her fingers around his straining cock.

"That's it," he murmured. "Feel how hard I am for you. Feel how thick and long."

She gripped his length a little firmer, all the while drowning in the thrusting strokes of Joseph's dick in her pussy.

"I'm going to take you soon, Anna," Rob continued, sliding one hand down her body until he wrapped his fingers over hers. He held his cock with her hand, pumped it once, twice. "Here."

With a slight shift in the position of his hips, he aligned the domed head of his cock with her sodden, puckered anus. The beads of pre-come anointing his shaft's tip slicked over her hole, adding to the natural lubrication he'd so thoroughly painted her with.

In response, Anna's ass squeezed closed. A wicked thrill shot into the pit of her belly, and with it came the undeniable realization she didn't just *want* him to, she *needed* him to.

She lifted her free arm above her head and tangled her fingers in his hair. The musky aroma of her essence was potent on the air. "Now," she begged through clenched teeth. "Please."

He groaned, the guttural sound echoed by Joseph.

"This will hurt," Rob panted, each word as gentle and controlled as she knew he could be, "but only for a moment."

He pushed his hips upward. Slowly.

Anna's cry rose in her throat and she stiffened, fear lacing her ecstasy.

"Shhh," Rob hushed in her ear, just as Joseph leant into her body, his length burying deeper into her sex, and placed his lips on hers.

"Tell us to stop, Anna, and we will. If you need us to stop..."

She shook her head, the burning sting in her ass radiating through her lower body. It hurt, but underneath the pain, like a blazing sun behind dispersing thunderclouds, was unbelievable pleasure. Intense. Unfathomable.

Rob released his grip on her hand and his cock, smoothing it up over her stomach to cup her right breast. "Take a breath for me, sweetheart."

She did as he told her, and drew the undeniable scent of Joseph into her lungs.

"That's it," Rob's voice left him on a ragged breath. "I'm going deeper."

A wave of concentrated, delicious sensations rolled out from Anna's stretched ass and she tightened her fist in Rob's hair. "Oh...oh..."

"Fuck a duck, Thorton," Joseph groaned, stroking his cock in and out of Anna's sex. "Holy shit, this feel so good." The muscles in his arms quivered, and for a moment the steady rhythm of his penetrations turned erratic.

The awe-struck claim sent a spear of liquid electricity into Anna's core. She moaned, any lingering apprehension destroyed by the image of Rob and Joseph together. She drew her knees closer to her body, wanting Joseph to bury himself to the hilt just as he promised.

Wanting Rob to do the same.

"God, I want..." She couldn't finish the demand. She didn't need to.

Without uttering a word, the two men drove their cocks into her body, simultaneously filling her, stretching her. Possessing her utterly and completely.

"More," she ground out the single request, awash in pure rapture.

Both Joseph and Rob obeyed, their thrusts alternating, their cocks rubbing against each other through the wall of her sex. "I'm not going to last much longer," Rob panted.

Anna fisted her hand tighter in his hair and stared into Joseph's eyes. She saw his own pleasure, as molten as hers, smoldering in their brown depths. "Harder, Joseph," she begged. "I'm almost there already."

He thrust into her, each stroke growing faster, each pushing her higher, higher. Closer to the edge.

Closer to exquisite release.

She gazed into his eyes and ground her pussy down onto his cock. "Harder. Fuck me harder. Please. Harder."

He did. Rob did. Their rhythm in perfect harmony with each other, their grunts and moans a chorus sweeter than a choir of angels.

"I'm going to come soon," Rob burst out. "Christ, I'm gonna..."

He closed his fingers around her breast just as Joseph leant forward and crushed her lips with his, plunging his tongue into her mouth, and it was all that was needed to push her over.

Her first contracting pulse rocked through her, a great shudder so forceful blossoms of blinding color filled her vision. The second pulse followed immediately after, more powerful.

She rode each constricting peak as she rode the two men's cocks, and just when she thought she couldn't take any more, when her orgasm had drained her, scoured her away, Rob let out a roar and came in her ass. It plunged her over another edge she didn't know she balanced on. As she fell, Joseph called out her name and slammed into her with one final thrust, his cock pumping inside her, and she came again, calling out his name in return.

She gripped him with her sex as her heart thumped into her throat, from her body.

Lost to her forever. The property of the Australian with the caring brown eyes. The one buried to the hilt inside her.

Chapter Seven

Joseph studied the snow-covered mountainside looming over him, the sun bouncing off it in blinding sheets of golden-white light. He rubbed at the crink in the back of his neck, his warm skin almost hot against his ungloved hand. They'd all three fallen asleep on the old cot last night, squished together on the narrow space only to wake a little while later and do the whole thing over again. This time lying on the blanket and clothes-covered floor admittedly, with Rob beneath Anna claiming her pussy and Joseph claiming her from behind, filling her tight ass. Joseph was strong, but he didn't think his arms and shoulders could take another standing-up session.

The pleasure of their coupling was just as explosive in that position, with Anna sandwiched between them. A far better, more delicious, more addictive culinary experience than vegemite sandwiches could ever hope to be.

He snorted a light chuckle and rubbed his neck again.

At some stage of the night, they'd fallen asleep again, after talking about favorite movies and food and pastimes into the wee hours of the morning, Anna's cheek pressed against Joseph's chest, her legs entangled with his, Rob holding her from behind, one long arm and leg draped over them all.

When Joseph had opened his eyes this morning to the pale winter sun streaming through the cabin's windows, he'd found Anna still asleep in his arms and Rob stretched out in the plastic folding chair, head back, mouth open, his snores almost soft.

Joseph laughed again, kneading his fingers into his neck. He had a sore neck, but he bet Rob was going to wake up with one just as sore.

He let his gaze roam over the steep mountainside towering to the heavens in front of him.

Knife Ridge Chutes, Wolf Creek. The place everything in his life changed.

Well, not everything. Rob was a constant.

And now he wanted Anna to be as well.

His stomach knotted at what he was planning to do next. Jesus, for a bloke who rarely took life by the balls unless dared to by his best mate, he was grabbing a handful right now.

He shoved his hands under his armpits, the chill in his fingers beginning to get nasty. Gloves. He really needed to pull on his gloves. Otherwise he'd have a hard time feeling Anna's beautiful body when he went back inside and woke her—

“So, big fella,” Rob’s hand—gloved, he couldn’t help but notice—slammed down on Joseph’s shoulder. “Another dare successfully accomplished. What’s next? How ’bout base jumping off the—”

“Oh no.” Joseph shook his head with a wide grin. “That’s it for me for a while. I think you’ve pretty much reached your dare-me limit for a few months.”

Rob laughed. “No such thing as dare-you limits, Hudo. Who else is going to drag you kicking and screaming into all the fun stuff?”

The question was typical Rob, and yet this time it made Joseph’s chest constrict, not with nervous anticipation—the kind felt on a rollercoaster with suspicious-looking harnesses—but a warm feeling of...

Happiness?

“I think,” he said slowly, the notion behind his words still far too new and daunting to rush, “I’m going to hang around here with Anna for a while.” He shot Rob a sideward glance. “If that’s okay with you?”

Rob cocked an eyebrow. “What? Here in the cabin? Won’t you two freeze your nuts off? Well, won’t you freeze *your* nuts off? Anna, as we both know doesn’t have nuts.” He pulled a contemplative face. “I guess she could freeze her—”

“Funny bastard, aren’t you.” Joseph gave him a shove, rolling his eyes at him. “No, here in the US.”

Rob raised both eyebrows at him this time. “Really? Mr Workaholic is thinking of staying put for a bit?”

Joseph shrugged, watching a bird—an eagle by the size of it—soar effortlessly through the sky above them. “It’s that or ask her to come back to Australia with me.”

“Just you?”

Joseph swung his stare onto his best friend. There was no challenge in Rob’s blue eyes, nor aggression in his body language. Despite the explosive passion of the last twelve hours, Joseph bore no delusions Rob had designs on Anna. For his mate, the sex had been just that—sex. Mind-blowing, amazing, unbelievable sex. For Joseph however, mind-blowing, amazing and unbelievable didn’t even cut it. “Yeah,” he nodded. “Me. I like her a lot, Rob. A lot.” He narrowed his eyes at his friend. “Besides, something tells me you’ve got your own agenda.”

An unreadable expression flittered across Rob’s face before he turned his attention to the mountain. “It’s beautiful, isn’t it. Dangerous and magnificent all at once.” He studied it for a long moment and Joseph felt the knot in his gut—the one twisting there since last night when he’d laughingly told Rob he was going to die a lonely man—twist again. “We faced it together, my friend. Laughed at death in the face and came away with something wonderful.” He let out a sigh and returned his gaze to Joseph’s face. “Yeah,” he said, “I’ve got my own agenda.”

The knot in Joseph’s gut rolled over on itself. “And what’s that, mate?”

Rob dragged his hands over his face, and for some reason the whisper-quiet sound of neoprene acrylic scraping against his skin made Joseph's hair stand on end. Or was it the look in Rob's eyes. A look he'd never seen there before—regret? Sorrow?

Grief?

"Fuck, I've rehearsed this speech I don't know how many times in the last week," Rob muttered, shaking his head, "and now I have to do it, I haven't got a bloody clue how."

Joseph's gut rolled again, churning into a heavy ball. "What's going on, mate?"

"I've got brain cancer, Hudo," Rob stated, the words even and hideously calm. "The doc diagnosed it last week, and the oncologist confirmed two days before I convinced you to fly out here."

Joseph stared at his best friend, the man he'd grown up with. The man who knew him better than he knew himself. "You've got fucking what?"

"Brain cancer. Specifically, anaplastic astrocytoma."

"Anaplastic astrowhat?" Joseph shook his head, the words making no sense. Especially not when attached to Rob.

"Anaplastic astrocytoma. It's inoperable and advanced."

Inoperable. Advanced. Joseph blinked, a weight beginning to form on his chest. Jesus, Rob said those words like he was talking about a bit of a head cold. "No," he said. "No, you don't." The weight on his chest grew heavy, so heavy he could barely draw a breath. He couldn't believe what Rob was saying. He couldn't. Rob and cancer didn't go together. They didn't. "Stop being a dickhead and tell me what's really going on."

Rob smiled, a wry grin that made Joseph's chest ache. "I wish I could, mate. But this is it. I suspected something was up for a while. Remember the headaches I've been having the last few months? You said they were from too many nights partying. I said they were from too many days working. Well, turns out they were from too many cells in my head doing both."

Joseph shook his head again.

Rob couldn't die. No way. Rob personified life. Death and Rob did not, just did not connect. They couldn't. Because if they did it would mean Rob was going to die. Rob wouldn't be around.

Joseph blinked again, a numb sensation tearing through him, making his heart cold. If Rob and death connected, it meant Rob wouldn't be part of his life anymore. He shook his head. Not fucking possible. "No, Rob," he snarled. "They're wrong. The doctors are wrong."

"They're not, mate. It's all good though. Think of it this way, you won't have to clean up any of my messes with the insurance manager or human resources again."

Rob's jest sent a shard of anger into Joseph's gut. "This is not the time to joke, Rob."

Rob looked at him. "Yeah, it is, Joe. What better time? We've just had the best night of our lives. You're on the verge of starting the next phase of yours. What better time to laugh at the unavoidable?" He

smiled again, placing his hand back on Joseph's shoulder. "It's okay, Joseph. It really is. I've come to terms with it. Honest."

"Well I haven't fucking come to terms with it." Joseph glared at him, his blood roaring in his ears, making him feel like he was about to scream. He wanted to scream. He stood motionless, driving his nails into his palms. Sucking in breath after icy breath through his nose.

Anaplastic astrocytoma. Inoperable. Advanced.

He shook his head, grinding his teeth and giving his friend a flat stare. He'd never felt more angry. Never felt more like punching the shit out of his best friend and telling him to grow up. "How can you stand here in the snow on the other side of the bloody world and tell me you've got cancer with a smile on your face." He pushed at Rob's chest, shoving him back a step. "Is this another sick dare? 'C'mon, Hudo, I dare you to die before I do'? Jesus, Thorton, you've pulled some low stunts but this..." He trailed off, the sickened rage in his gut stealing his words.

Rob waited, not saying a thing. Joseph wanted to smash his fist against his jaw.

How dare he do this?

Who else would, Joseph?

"What about surgery?" he asked. "Chemo? Shit, I've got more money than I'll ever know what to do with. We'll call the best specialists, the best doctors. For Christ sake, we're in the States, I'll call the freaking Surgeon General. There's got to be something you can do, we can do—"

Rob shook his head, his grin growing lopsided. "It's inoperable, Hudo. That means they found it too late. Besides, do you seriously think I'm going to let some bloke who probably drives around in a Porsche and drinks lattes cut into my head? And I look atrocious bald. Remember the time we both shaved our heads the day before senior photos?" He laughed. "Damn, my girlfriend—what was her name? Alice? Ally? Amy?"

"Andy," Joseph murmured, the world buzzing. Cancer. Jesus, cancer.

"Andy!" Rob slapped him on the chest, grin stretching wide again. "Damn, she gave good head. Andy wouldn't speak to me for a week."

Joseph felt the knot in his stomach clench, even as the memory of Andy Tellerman's incensed fury at Rob's new do drew a shaking laugh from his shocked disbelief. She'd ranted and raved and carried on as if Rob had cut off *her* hair, growing more enraged when Rob wouldn't say sorry. Or wear a hat until his hair grew back.

Joseph frowned at his friend, refusing to let the warm memory temper his stunned anger. Not yet. It was still too raw to let Rob fool him into laughing.

He's never going to fool you into laughing again, Joseph. Not anymore.

The devastating thought sank into his anger.

Never again.

His eyes stung with prickling heat and he blinked, turning his head away from the sight of his best friend.

He didn't want to talk to him.

"Hudo?"

Joseph squeezed his eyes shut, denying the stinging pressure behind them. He swallowed, the thick lump in his throat almost suffocating him.

Rob remained silent for a long moment, letting the reality of his news sink in.

Joseph didn't want it to sink in, damn it. He drove his nails harder into his palms, waiting for the pain of his nails in his flesh to register in his brain. It didn't. All he felt was the pain in his heart. He sucked in a shuddering breath, his chest not just aching but burning.

Oh, fuck, Rob. No...

A sob escaped him, ripped from the center of his soul and he scrunched up his face. He'd only cried once in his adult life—when the Sydney Swans beat the West Coast Eagles in the 2005 AFL Grand Final—and he sure as shit wasn't going to cry now over Rob's revelation. He wasn't.

Yeah, sure. That's what you're doing now, isn't it? Not crying. That wet stuff on your cheeks is you not crying.

"It's okay, Joe," Rob placed his hand high on Joseph's back and Joseph swiped at his face, his stomach churning at the hot moisture scalding his skin. "And it'll be okay. Honest."

"How will it be okay?" he muttered.

"It just will be." Rob's answer, spoken with such acceptance, ripped another sob from Joseph's chest. "It's gotta be, right?"

"Why didn't you tell me before now?"

Rob chuckled. "Because I knew this is how you'd react, trying to fix something that can't be fixed." He shook his head. "No. I wanted my last few days spent doing what I've always wanted to do, what I've always loved doing."

"Snowboarding down a bloody mountain?" Joseph knew he was being irrational, but he didn't care. Cancer. Fucking brain cancer. It wasn't right. It wasn't fair.

Rob laughed, the sound rising above them, its undeniable happiness clear in the pristine air. "No," he said, giving Joseph's shoulder a thump with his fist. "Pushing you to live."

Joseph glared at him. "I live."

"Yeah, when I dare you to. Otherwise you'd spend every day in that office of yours. Remember what my dad used to always say? We should work to live, not live to work? If I'd let you, you'd have lived to work my friend. But I've lived more with you than I ever would have by myself." Rob grinned at him. "You know that, don't you? And now it's time for me to finish off that life."

Joseph shook his head. "No, it's not."

“Ah, Hudo.” Rob squeezed his shoulder, the cheeky grin on his face belayed by the sadness in his eyes. “This is why I love you, mate. You’re a bloody stubborn pain in the arse.” He paused, his smile faltering for a second before returning wider and far more...Robbish...than ever. “I’m going to live more in my last few weeks than anyone else could live in a lifetime.” He flicked the cabin a sideward glance. “Well, anyone apart from you. Something tells me Ranger McCarthy’s going to help you live your life the way it was meant to be lived. Keep giving you those kicks up the backside you usually get from me.”

Joseph felt—of all things at this stupidly dark, surreal nightmarish point in time—his heart fill with a wholly unexpected heat at the thought of Anna.

Rob laughed as if he could see into Joseph’s soul and the burgeoning happiness there. He slapped his biceps with his hands and blew out a breath. “Now, let’s get inside. It’s fucking freezing out here and I’m sure Anna’s awake by now. Probably radioing Wolf Creek base as we speak, telling them the moron Australians are lost again.”

Before Joseph could say otherwise, Rob turned and shuffled back to the cabin, his snowboard boots crunching the new snow, his black hair dancing in the mountainside’s icy breeze.

Joseph stood and watched him disappear into the hut, numb. Not from the cold, but from...

He swallowed, a lump the size of the mountain before him suddenly making itself at home in his throat. Cancer.

He tried to imagine a life without Rob. Tried to see his future without his best friend. He couldn’t. He just couldn’t. It was impossible.

Cancer.

His eyes stung. Jesus, he didn’t want to cry. At least not now. It would hurt too much. *At least let me get back home to Sydney. Then the waterworks can—*

“You okay?”

Joseph started. The soft sound of Anna’s voice, plus the gentle feel of her hands smoothing around his waist made him blink.

He turned his head to her and lifted his arm a fraction. She ducked under it and pressed her body to his in a loose hug.

“Yeah.” He frowned, wrapping his arms around her back. He rested his chin on the top of her head for a moment, staring at the mountainside. “No.”

His stomach—no, his soul ached. An agonizing emptiness he doubted he’d ever truly lose. He pressed his lips to her hair, the cool silk not a balm to his grief, but an affirmation that some things happened for a reason. He knew why Rob had told him he was dying this morning. Rob knew—as only Rob could—what was going on in Joseph’s heart.

Did Rob plan this? Getting lost up here? Did he do this for you, Joseph?

He closed his eyes, staying the tears threatening to undo him. It was the kind of thing Rob Thorton would do. Piss you off so much you didn't realize how alive he made you feel until after the anger—the grief—had passed.

Anna pulled away from him a little and he tightened his arms around her, needing to feel her warmth and softness against him.

"Can I help?" she asked, her voice kind, her eyes searching his. That she didn't ask what the problem was only made him love her even more.

How is that possible? To have your heart ripped out and find it all in one morning?

He didn't know. But if he had to blame someone, it would be Rob. Bloody bastard was always messing with his life.

He chuckled, the sound very close to a sob, and shook his head. He lowered his head to brush his lips over Anna's in a kiss as gentle as the desire he saw in her clear, direct eyes.

She smoothed her hands up his back to his shoulders and tugged him closer still. "I'm here if you need me."

He let his lips move over hers again, tasting her. Knowing he wanted to do so forever.

Take life by the balls, Hudo. He heard Rob laugh in his head, as roguish and irrepressible as ever. Go on. I dare you.

With a steady breath, he raised his head and gazed down into her eyes. "Come back to Australia with me?"

She stared at him, not saying anything. Not moving. Not even blinking.

And then a small smile curled the corners of her mouth and she pressed her body closer to his. "Okay," she said. "As long as you don't make me vegemite sandwiches every day for lunch."

Joseph laughed, resting his forehead on hers. "Never for lunch." He snatched a quick kiss. "But maybe on toast for breakfast..."

She pushed at him, laughing, her eyes twinkling, and he kissed her again, this one not so quick.

Her tongue moved against his, promising a life of wicked fantasies realized, of romantic dreams fulfilled. She kissed him back and soothed his pain.

"C'mon," he murmured against her lips, sliding his arm down her back and tucking her into his side. "Be buggered if I'm going to let Rob get the jump on us. He'll be back in the lodge scoffing all the beer if we hang around here too long."

Anna tilted her head at an angle and gave him a searing look. "Or we could stay just a little bit longer. Y'know...see what comes up?"

Her hand smoothed down his back, under the waistline of his snow pants, until her fingers skimmed the cheeks of his ass. "C'mon," she nudged his hip with hers, "I dare you."

Epilogue

Eight months later.

Joseph closed his eyes, the hammering rhythm of his heart stealing any capacity to think. Jesus, how had he gotten himself into this predicament?

How had he let her—

Warm hands slid up his stomach, fingers charting a path over the quivering muscles of his abs and up to his chest. His nipples, already twin points of aching need, puckered harder. He swallowed a groan, knowing he'd lose if he made a sound.

If he lost, Anna had control for the rest of the day. When Anna had control, they could easily end up in Peru for a dirty weekend. Not that he had a problem with spending a dirty weekend in Peru with Anna, but he had other things planned. Like a dirty weekend in Paris. They hadn't done Paris yet. They hadn't—

“If I suck on your nipple will you moan for me?”

Anna's lips brushed Joseph's right nipple, the tip of her tongue flicking over its distended shape in a teasing little caress that almost sent him mad.

“Just a little moan?”

Fuck a duck, with the scent of her juices still lingering on his face and her tight, wet sex gripping and sliding over his shaft as she rode it with slow, steady movements, how the hell wasn't he going to make a sound?

He opened his eyes to gaze up at her and bit back a curse, wishing he hadn't. The sight of her tousled blonde hair, heavy-lidded eyes and parted lips—swollen from the crushing kiss he'd delivered not a few minutes earlier—was almost too much. That she was gloriously naked and her breasts dangled but an inch from his chest didn't help.

Jesus, why had he agreed to this challenge? If she could make him utter a sound before either of them came she got to decide the rest of the day's events. He should have known he'd lose. As soon as Anna touched him he was one big, turned-on six-foot bag of man groans. When they made love...

The incredulous realization he had no one else to blame but himself for his situation ran through Joseph's pleasure-fogged mind, just as Anna dipped her head closer to his chest.

She traced the puckered circle of his areola with her tongue and Joseph ground his teeth, his ass clenching, his cock jerking inside her at the wicked sensations the action set off in his body. Damn her, she wasn't playing fair.

When did she ever?

“Just a little moan,” she whispered, squeezing her pussy muscles around his dick in a series of quick, mind-blowing pulses and then taking his nipple between her teeth and giving it a soft bite. “A little one.”

Liquid heat flooded his balls and his heart pounded faster. Right, that was it. He wasn’t going to let her win. He wanted to go to bloody Paris this weekend.

With abrupt force, he flipped Anna onto her back and drove his cock deeper into her sex. He snatched at her wrists, capturing them in a fierce grip as he captured her delighted squeal with his mouth.

He plunged his tongue into her mouth, kissing her with brutal hunger, dominating her mouth. Fucking it with his tongue just the way he knew she liked it. Taking his pleasure from her whimpers.

He thrust harder, faster into her pussy, slamming the root of his shaft against her clit over and over again, mirroring his penetrations of her sex with his tongue.

She arched beneath him, her legs coming up and wrapping around his hips, locking him to her as she rode his pounding rhythm. Until she tore her mouth from his and cried out, every muscle in her body quivering, her sex constricting around his cock, her climax detonating his own.

“I win,” he moaned, after what felt like rivers of come spurted from his dick and hours of exquisite, scalding pleasure throbbled through his body.

“Yeah,” Anna laughed, the sound breathless and ragged. “You win. I so lost that challenge.”

He chuckled at her quip and slumped onto her for a moment before rolling to her side. His cock slid from her pussy, the sensation making his head giddy. Damn, he’d never get sick of making love to her. Eight months of rarely stepping foot outside his apartment, of doing little except getting to know each other in every way imaginable...

As it did every time Joseph marveled at his new life—retired at the age of thirty-one with more money than the Prime Minister, free to do pretty much whatever he wanted with the woman he loved more than life—he heard his best friend’s voice in his head.

Something tells me Ranger McCarthy’s going to help you live your life the way it was meant to be lived.

He let out a sigh, his lips curling into a slow smile. Ranger McCarthy was two interviews and a ceremony outside the Sydney Opera House away from becoming Nationalized Australian McCarthy. All thanks to Rob and a faulty compass.

Joseph snorted. He never did send the manufacturers that email. Come to think of it, he wondered if Rob had forgotten as well.

Doesn’t matter now, does it, Hudo?

The soft chime of the doorbell floating from the front of his apartment made him scowl. Who the hell was that?

“I’ll get it.” Anna bounced off their bed, snatching up his polo shirt discarded earlier in a jumble of arms and legs.

Joseph threaded his fingers behind his head and stared up at the bone-white ceiling of their bedroom. Eight months. Who would have thought eight months without a single doubt or regret.

Eight months—

“You got a parcel.” Anna jumped onto the bed and squirmed about until she settled into a relaxed position beside him, legs crossed, a wide grin on her face.

He rolled onto his side and leant on one elbow as he watched her rip into the large rectangle package. Its wrapping was beaten and worse for wear, the outside covered in more colored stickers and customs labels than he’d ever seen. Which meant it probably came from...

The pit of his stomach tightened.

With one final flourish, Anna freed the parcel within of its confines. She burst out laughing and held up the most hideous powder-blue tuxedo jacket ever created.

A small square of paper slipped from the jacket’s collar and Joseph caught it before it could come to rest on Anna’s bare, bent knee.

““Guess who’ll be coming home for your wedding, guys?”,” he read aloud, the familiar scrawl of Rob’s handwriting on the paper note making his stomach flutter. ““Yep. Your best man’s in remission, boys and girls. Gotta love the doctors here at the Centro de Medicinas Alternativas. When you lay down a challenge they really know how to pick it up and run with it. Particularly one doctor. She really knows how to handle a challenge. And I mean really really.

““Oh, and Joe, the suit’s for you. I’ve already got mine packed and ready to go. I dare you to wear it on your wedding day. Go on. I dare you.”

About the Author

Lexxie's not a deviant. She just has a deviant's imagination and a desire to entertain readers with her words. Add the two together and you get darkly erotic romances with a twist of horror, sci-fi and the paranormal.

When she's not submerged in the worlds she creates, Lexxie's life revolves around her family, a husband who thinks she's insane, a cat determined to rule the house, two yabbies hell-bent on destroying their tank and her daughters, who both utterly captured her heart and changed her life forever.

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Look for these titles by Lexxie Couper

Now Available:

Death, The Vamp and his Brother
The Sun Sword

Savage Australia
Savage Retribution
Savage Transformation

Coming Soon:

Dare Me

Two men plus one woman equals three bodies on fire...

True Heart

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A Red Hot Winter Story

True Wyatt's hands are going to be full enough keeping the herd alive through the dead of winter. The last thing he needs to hear is that his brother Lonny has rented out their isolated hunting cabin to a reclusive writer—especially a sassy, disaster-prone brunette. Who has time to babysit a city girl until spring?

With a deadline looming, erotica writer Honey Cahill is looking forward to six distraction-free weeks to finish her next book. However, between Lonny's flirty sensuality and True's hard-edged intensity, the Wyatt brothers set the stage of her imagination for a winter of wicked delights.

The fire that destroys the cabin, though, is as real as it gets. Forced to seek a bed under True and Lonny's roof, the temptation to experiment—all in the name of research, of course—is overpowering. One night in their arms doesn't feel like enough; it feels like more. Particularly with one cowboy who fires all her cylinders...

Warning: It's a Devlin ménage—expect men with stamina and not an ounce of mercy to behave like sex gods, and the lucky woman to love every minute of it. A little domination goes a long, long way...

Enjoy the following excerpt for True Heart:

Honey sat huddled under a blanket on the couch Lonny had moved nearer the fire. He'd found a pair of insulated leggings for her to wear that fit her well enough. Her ass kept them from falling off. The sweater was large, and fell off whichever shoulder she shrugged, but beggars couldn't be choosers. Her own clothing was salvageable and was in the laundry, but she'd save them for her trip off the mountain once the snowplows cleared the road.

Lonny had checked with the department of transportation and said it might be several days before she could leave. And she was determined to do just that—despite his assurances that she could stay and complete the work she'd come to do.

However, that seemed pointless. She'd saved the thumb drive, but she didn't have the heart to finish the new story. She was supposed to write something sexy and flirty, but all she had the urge to create was a tragedy.

She knew she was feeling sorry for herself, and she should pull up her big-girl panties and get on with it. But she didn't have any panties on.

"I have soup."

She jumped at True's quiet words. The man could creep up on a ghost. And was that all he had to say? *Seriously?*

Honey bit back a retort, recognizing that what she really wanted was to start a fight—with him. She held out her hand and waited while he turned the mug to present her the handle.

A small gesture, but one that fucked with her head. Why be gentle? Why pretend to care whether she burned her fingers? She'd burned down his entire cabin—his quaint little hunting cabin that his father had built years ago. Why wasn't he furious?

She gulped down a sip of chicken soup and blinked.

"Couldn't you tell it was hot?"

She blinked away pain-filled tears and aimed a blistering glare his way.

True's jaw clenched. "I'll leave you to finish." He began to turn away.

She bent to set the cup on the floor. "Why are you avoiding me?" If she could have bit her own tongue and swallowed it whole, she would have.

True hesitated. "You've been through enough."

"Don't give me that crock of—" She glanced away. She wasn't going to cuss at the man. Wasn't going to make herself look any more pathetic than she already was.

"I'm guessing now's not a good time to check on our girl."

Both Honey and True turned to glare at Lonny whose mouth moved like he was biting his lip. Was he laughing at them?

"Don't disappear," True said. "I can't seem to get anything right."

"No kidding," Honey muttered.

Lonny walked deeper into the room, glancing from Honey to True. "I take it you're feeling more yourself, Honey?"

"I've never been less myself," she snarled.

"I don't know about that," he said amiably. "The color's back in your cheeks."

Honey hit her thigh with her fist. "I don't shout at men. I don't ever want to shout at men. But he—" She glared at True. "He manages to push every last one of my buttons."

"And that's a bad thing?" Lonny asked softly. He took a seat beside her. "Quit hovering, True. Take a seat."

True looked reluctant but took up the space on her left side. Wedged between the two brothers, Honey blew out a deep breath. The temperature in the room had skyrocketed. She flipped back her blanket.

True reached for the edge and shoved it over her shoulder.

"I'm warm enough," she muttered.

"You'll get sick."

"And that would be a huge inconvenience on top of the hundred other inconveniences I've caused, wouldn't it?"

True nodded, but her searing glance had him buttoning his lip and glancing away. “I should head out to check on the horses in the barn.”

“They’ll wait,” Lonny said flatly.

Honey flung up her hands. “I can assure both of you that I’m fine. No need for you to worry. If you’ll just show me where I can sleep...”

Lonny laid a hand on her knee and leaned toward her. “That’s part of what we’re going to talk about, sweetheart.”

She narrowed her eyes to give him a mean glare even though inside her heart was thumping loudly in her chest. “Oh, yeah?”

“True mentioned what you’re writing.”

True muttered a curse under his breath.

Honey’s cheeks burned. “Anyone ever tell you that you two are big fat gossips?”

“Not ever. Don’t change the subject. A ménage, right?”

“I changed my mind,” she said, folding her arms over her chest. “I’ve decided to scrap the book. Now I’m going to write a post-apocalyptic story—lots of blood and guts. I’m feeling pretty violent at the moment.”

“I think you need to do the right research.”

“Oh, really?” She wouldn’t admit it even on her dying bed, but just the thought of doing a little *research* made her heart flutter madly.

“You can count me out,” True said forcefully.

“Not to your taste, I know,” Lonny said, so cheerfully he made Honey want to scream. “You mentioned that before.”

Honey kept her gaze on Lonny because she was way too chicken to look at True. “You two talked about doing a ménage with me? Is anything sacred?”

“Don’t get your panties in a twist.”

“You know damn well I’m not wearing any.”

“Dammit.”

That did it. Honey swung toward True. “Do you know any other cuss words?”

“His vocabulary’s limited,” Lonny quipped.

She lifted her chin when True’s gaze narrowed. “So I noticed,” she said, keeping her tone even.

“Be nice,” Lonny chided.

She grunted and faced forward again. “Sorry.”

“Back to the ménage...”

True stirred beside her, and she felt his thighs tense like he was going to rise. Without looking at him, Honey laid her hand on his thigh and pressed down.

“There ought to be a few rules,” Lonny continued. “Things each one of us won’t do.”

“Like swords never crossing,” she quipped.

“For fuck sake,” True ground out. “Did either of you hear what I said? *Not interested.*”

“If I believed that for a minute, I’d lay off.” All humor was gone from Lonny’s voice.

Honey held her breath, waiting...

True stayed tense beneath her hand. His breaths deepened.

“Personally, I’d just as soon not ‘cross swords’ as Honey suggested,” Lonny said slowly.

Honey drew in a deep breath. “I’d just as soon not be tied down.”

Both men pinned her with a glance.

She shrugged. “I like to touch.”

True jerked but didn’t try to rise.

Guilty pleasures can heat the coldest winter night...

Winter Fire

© 2010 Jess Dee

A Red Hot Winter Story

There's never been any question in Rachel Ashberg's mind. Jackson Brooks is *the one*, and they both know it. The problem? Thanks to his unbreakable rule—never date his twin sister's friends—he's completely off-limits. Even if they can't imagine being with anyone else.

It's been over two years since their last encounter, when they gave in—just once—to their passion. Now, as the Brooks twins' milestone birthday approaches, Rachel and Jackson are about to meet again at a gorgeously mountain resort. Needing something to take the edge off the desire that has never faded, she indulges in a fling with sexy stranger Garreth Halt. He even makes her forget Jackson for a while. Or...maybe not.

When she mentions Jackson's name in passing, Garreth picks up on all the hidden undertones in her voice. And he brings Jackson into their bed, if only in a fantasy they play out together. Funny thing about Garreth's fantasies, though. Even the most improbable, *impossible* ones have a way of becoming reality... Warning: Warning: Enough heat is contained within these pages that you won't even notice the winter cold. You might fall in love with Jackson—the real-life hero, determined to protect his sister from further pain—but it's the handsome stranger, Garreth, who'll take your breath away.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Winter Fire:

"It's good to escape from the city for a while though. Isn't it beautiful here?"

He grinned at her. "Let's just say the mountains became a whole lot more interesting in the last few minutes..."

She laughed out loud. "You really are flirting, aren't you?" And was she ever responding. A tingling awareness flowed through her, an open recognition of the energy that crackled between them.

"Is it working?" he drawled earnestly.

She pretended to think about her answer. No need for him to know just yet that her belly was already quivering in anticipation. "I'm not sure. Maybe you should try a little harder."

"You know, we could skip the flirting part altogether and head straight into heated kisses beside a roaring fire."

Damned if her heart didn't miss a beat. "We could." But she couldn't be that easy. Could she? She and Paul had only split up six weeks ago. "Or I could read my book and pretend you're not really here."

"You could." He nodded. "But heated kisses beside a roaring fire would be a lot more entertaining for both of us."

Entertaining? Hell, forget the fireplace, the two of them would probably ignite flames of their own together. “For all the other hotel guests too. I bet they’d get a kick out of watching.”

Humor sparkled in his eyes, and something else. Desire? Hunger? Or maybe raw lust?

Nah, the raw lust was radiating from her, not him.

He lowered his voice. “If it’s privacy you’re wanting, there’s a fireplace in my chalet.”

Heated kisses beside a roaring fire in the privacy of his hotel room? With a Canadian she’d never see again? A man she could spend her passion with and move on. Damn, there was very little that appealed more.

Okay, so maybe there was something that appealed more. Jackson.

Yeah, didn’t matter how much Jackson appealed, nothing else could ever happen between them. Not without causing Jackson’s sister untold heartache.

“If I’d wanted privacy, I’d never have invited you to sit here,” she pointed out logically.

“Tell me you’re not regretting the invitation?”

She nibbled on her lower lip. “Well, you do talk a lot...”

He shot her a purely wicked look. “Not when I’m in the middle of a heated kiss.”

“You talk a lot about kissing.” She didn’t mind one bit.

He nodded. “I’ve been thinking about it a lot. Since I first spied you in the lobby earlier.”

“You saw me earlier?” How could she not have noticed him?

“While I was checking in. You were on your way out. Dressed for a blizzard I might add.”

He’d noticed her attire? “I went for a walk. It was so cold there may as well have been a blizzard brewing.”

He shook his head. “You Australians have no idea about cold and blizzards.”

She let her gaze slide away from his face and down to his chest and shoulders. “We have no idea? Mate, you’re wearing a T-shirt.” A T-shirt he filled out beautifully. It hugged his broad shoulders and ended halfway down his upper arms, showcasing muscled biceps and golden flesh. “It’s three degrees Celsius out there, the mercury’s plummeting, and you’re wearing a T-shirt.”

“We’re indoors. There’s a fire. It’s warm.”

Was he nuts? “It’s warm here and now. But the sun’s going down. Soon as it sets, the temperature will drop below freezing.”

“Not a prob. I have a sweater for when I go out.”

“A sweater?” One sweater? She had two jackets, an assortment of jumpers, three sweaters and a cardigan—and those were just for a three-day trip.

“It’s enough.”

“You’re crazy.” Gorgeous, ridiculously sexy and crazy.

“You’re cold?”

"I'm always cold in winter." God, she missed the sun-drenched days of summer.

"You know, in Canada we have a brilliant system for keeping warm."

"Ducted heating. I know."

"Actually, I was talking about sex."

His answer was so unexpected she laughed out loud. "Sex, huh?" Dear Lord, she wanted to keep warm with Garreth, Canadian style. For sure it would take her mind off Jackson's imminent arrival—and their checkered past. "Nope, sorry. We don't have sex in Australia."

He looked aghast. "Not even in the Blue Mountains?"

"Especially not in the Blue Mountains."

He nodded gravely. "Ah. That's a damn pity."

"Don't let it worry you. You're going back to Toronto in a couple of weeks. I'm sure you'll have plenty of sex then—even if it is summer and there won't be any need to keep warm."

"Maybe, but I was hoping to have sex with you, here in the Blue Mountains."

Again she laughed, enjoying his witty repartee. Enjoying it almost as much as she enjoyed the tantalizing sparks that flickered between them. "Would you settle for a drink by the fireplace?"

He considered her question. "Depends which fireplace."

"This one, right here."

"How about the one in my room?"

She shook her head. "Nah. Too risky. I might have to fend off your heated kisses." Yeah, right. If anything, he'd be the one fending her off. The longer they chatted, the more appetizing his lips became.

He grinned devilishly. "No might about it. Another red wine?" He motioned to her empty glass before signaling to a waiter.

She nodded and he ordered wine for her and a scotch for himself. "So, Rachel," he said as soon as the waiter had left, "what is it you do when you're not seducing men into kissing you beside roaring fires?"

For a couple of seconds she hesitated to tell him. If he knew about her job, she'd lose some of her anonymity. And if she were to entertain ideas about kissing Garreth beside the fire, she knew she'd have to maintain that sense of them being strangers. A fling appealed no end. A brief affair with a stranger to take the edge off before Jackson arrived. A little something to distract her from her obsessions about the man she could never have.

A one-night stand.

Garreth was the perfect stranger. Gorgeous, charming and sexy to boot. He'd be a perfect distraction. Exactly what she needed.

But then she forged ahead. She'd never see Garreth again after tonight. He lived on another continent. What could it hurt to tell him a few things about herself?



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