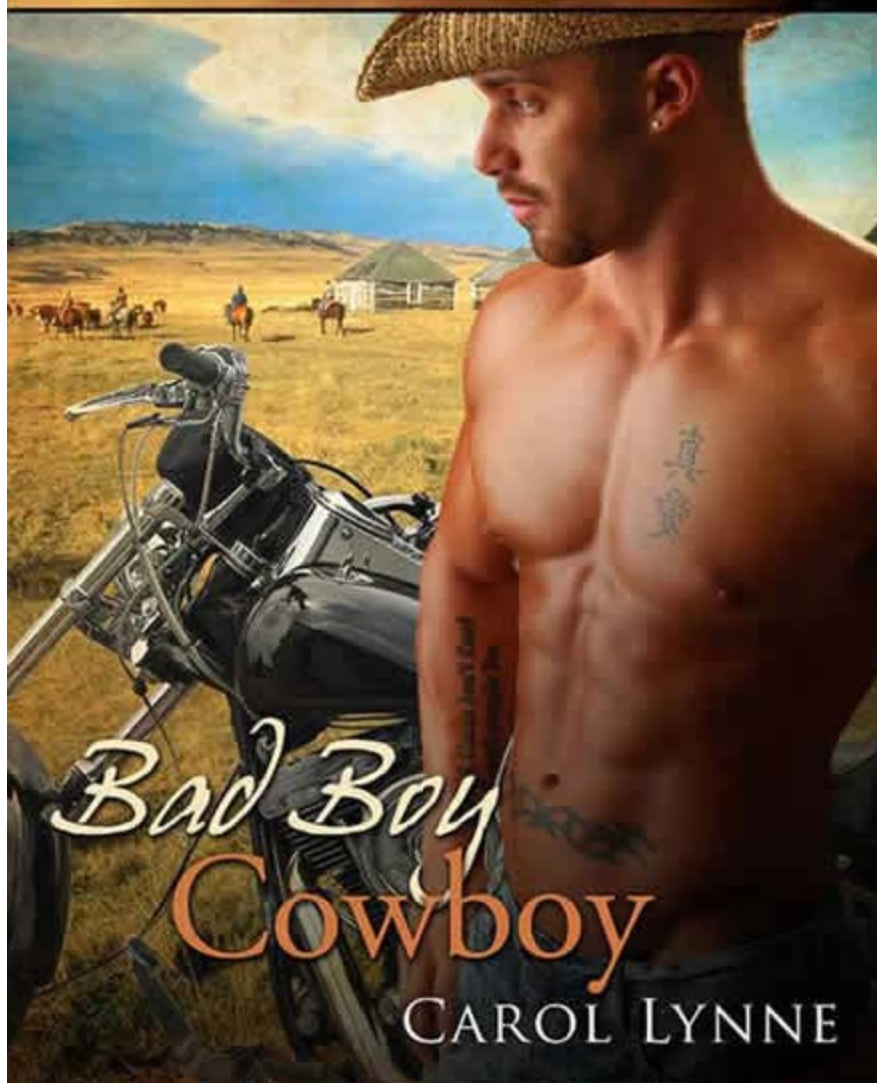




CATTLE VALLEY



Bad Boy Cowboy

CAROL LYNNE

A Total-E-Bound Publication



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Bad Boy Cowboy

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Cattle Valley

BAD BOY COWBOY

Carol Lynne

Dedication

For Michael T. Chamberlain.

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Chapter One

Rounding the corner of the barn, Jax stopped in his tracks. *Shit*. Ten feet away, Logan was bare-chested and showing a good deal of... “Why do you wear those jeans? Every time you bend over, half your ass is on display.”

Logan slowly rose to his full six foot two height and grinned. “Haven’t received any complaints. Until now.”

Flustered, Jax took a step forward. “Who’s gonna complain when you’re givin’ out cheap thrills? It’s not professional. We’ve got buyers and delivery men in and out of here daily.”

One of Logan’s brows rose. “Professional?” He looked around. “This is a damn cattle ranch. I don’t see any professionals here. We’re a bunch of cowboys.”

“I’ve never seen a cowboy wear low-rise jeans that show half their damn groin, have you? Why don’t you concentrate on doing your job instead of trying to go around looking like a piece of man candy.”

Logan took several steps, coming within an inch of pressing himself against Jax. “This is me. It’s who I am, and how I dress. I work damn hard, but if you want to fire me for showing off what God gave me, do it.” Logan ran a hand over the sexy as fuck tattoos on his chest. “Maybe you just don’t want others looking at what you want in your bed.”

Furious, Jax pushed against Logan’s sweaty chest. “Watch yourself. I may’ve hired you as a favour to my little brother, but I’ll fire you in a heartbeat if you overstep your position.”

Flashing that amazing bad boy smile, Logan took a step back and held up his hands. “You’re the boss, Boss.” He walked back to the horse he had been working on and picked up the hoof pick once again.

Jax couldn't keep his eyes off Logan's ass as he bent over. *Fucking tease.* Turning on his heels, he walked back around the corner of the barn and straight to his office. He fell into his chair and looked around the room. He really needed to clean the place. A layer of dust covered everything and he noticed cobwebs hanging in the corners. Not surprising really, since the office was in the front corner of the barn, but he knew he'd been lax in keeping it clean. His mind had been on too many other things to worry about dust and spiders.

Jax dug out the work schedule. At least if someone walked in they'd think he was doing his job. His mind wandered back to the first day Logan Miller had driven up on his black and grey Harley.

"We'll need to start on the hay next week. Make sure the bailer's in good condition," Jax told Neil.

"Will do."

The sound of a motorcycle coming down the ranch road at high speed drew their attention. "What the...?" Jax opened his office door as a Harley pulled up next to the barn. He recognised the face right away, but that body? That sure as hell didn't belong to the eighteen-year old he'd known back in Montana.

Jax felt his cock harden just looking at Logan.

Getting off his bike, Logan grinned and walked right up to Jax. "Good to see a familiar face," he said.

Logan caught Jax off guard when he pulled him into a hug. Jax's arms automatically went around his new hire, surprised by the muscles playing under his hands. He almost swallowed his tongue when Logan's cock brushed against Jax's stomach. Was he hard, too?

Jax stepped back and looked up. He'd always thought himself of average height at five-ten, but Logan made him feel like a child. "When the hell did you grow?" Most people stopped before they turned eighteen, but evidently Logan was a late bloomer. He had to have grown at least three inches since the last time he'd seen him.

Logan flashed that bad boy smile again, as he opened his black leather jacket. With nothing but a thin white muscle shirt under it, the man's incredible body was on display. "Like it? I've matured a bit since you were last home."

"No shit," Jax said, before he could stop himself. His eyes wandered down to the sexiest pair of jeans he'd ever seen. *Shit. Five minutes and I'm already getting myself into trouble.* Jax turned to Neil, who stood staring open mouthed at Logan. "Neil, show Logan his room in the bunkhouse. You're in luck. We've only got four hands including you, so you'll get your own room."

Logan nodded and unstrapped the large duffle from the back of his bike. "I shipped some of my tools. They should be here within a couple of days."

Jax nodded. "In the meantime, we've probably got what you need. Come to the office once you get settled in." Jax pointed to the door at the corner of the barn.

Logan tipped his worn, straw hat. "Will do."

After Neil and Logan walked off, Jax retreated to his office. He pressed the heel of his hand against the hard ridge in his jeans. He'd let his cock lead him into a disastrous affair in the past, one that had lasted two years too long. Jax had known the asshole was no good, but damn the man fucked like a dream. He was still trying to heal from the shame the affair had brought him. No way would he let his dick dictate his love life. *Logan's an employee and Jakey's best friend,* he reminded himself. He knew he'd have to make that his mantra if he was going to survive living and working on the same ranch with the man.

* * * *

A knock on the door roused him from his memories. "Come in."

Ezra shouldered his way through the doorway. "You got a minute?" his boss asked.

“Sure, but you realise you own the place, right? You don’t have to knock before entering your own ranch office.” Jax set the work schedule aside and gave Ezra his full attention.

“First off, this is your office. Mine’s in the house. I’d never expect you to just walk into mine, so I’ll gladly pay you the same courtesy.” Ezra took off his hat and sat on the bench beside the door.

“Fair enough,” Jax said. “What can I do for you?”

“Just wanted to make sure everything was going smoothly. I know Wyn and I have spent an awful lot of time up the mountain, and just wanted to check in.”

“How’s the club coming?” Jax asked. The ski lodge being built was supposed to bring tourists to the area. Jax wasn’t really sure if he liked the idea or not, but he was anxious to see the club within the lodge Ezra and Wyn had been working so hard on.

“Good. Real good. Richard was the perfect choice to run the place. He’s already got more ideas than Wyn and I can keep up with.”

“When does it open?” He loved seeing the enthusiasm in Ezra’s face. For so long the big man walked around scaring the locals, but that was before Wyn.

“Not officially until January seventeenth, but we’re having a big party on New Year’s Eve to share the finished project with friends.” Ezra chuckled. “Yes, you’ll get an invite. I wouldn’t leave you out.”

“Thanks. It’ll be nice to have somewhere to go besides Sheridan if I feel like a dance or two.”

Ezra fiddled with his hat a few seconds. “Anyone in particular you’re thinking of dancing with?”

“Nope,” Jax said immediately. He pushed away the image of being in Logan’s arms.

“Hmm. Thought I’d noticed some sparks between you and the new guy.”

“Nope. Logan’s just another cowboy as far as I’m concerned. Besides, what’s good for my sex life isn’t necessarily what’s good for my heart. Learned that the hard way, and don’t intend to make the same mistake twice.”

Ezra’s brows rose. Jax knew it was news to him. Never had Jax openly dated someone in Cattle Valley. His two-year mistake had been done in secret, snatches of time in dark alleys, truck beds, and cheap out-of-town motels. Nope. He’d had enough of that to last a lifetime.

He and Ezra talked for another twenty minutes about the ranch and upcoming hay season, before he noticed the time. “You going with us into Brewster’s for Taco Tuesday?”

“Naw, better not. Brewster still isn’t happy with me and Wyn for opening the club.”

“Shame you have to miss out on the best tacos in town. Want me to bring you back a mess of ’em?”

Ezra’s stomach chose that moment to growl. He chuckled. “Sounds good.” He pulled his wallet out of his back pocket. “Get about twenty of them, a side of chips and salsa, and a thing of refried beans.”

Jax started laughing and shook his head. “What does Wyn want?” He laughed a little harder at the look on Ezra’s face.

“Smart ass.” Ezra stood and settled his hat back on his head. “I’m gonna have to go find a snack to settle my stomach until you get back.”

“Okay. We won’t be long. The guys have started watching that new cop show on Tuesday nights.” Jax rolled his eyes. “Most of them couldn’t even tell you what the show’s about, but they can sure as hell tell you how many times the actors are either shirtless or in their underwear on any given week.”

“Me, too,” Ezra said. “I love to watch that show.”

Jax was still laughing when the big boss left. Alone, he put away the schedule he’d yet to finish and ran a comb through his hair. Walking into the barn, he spotted Chaney and Trevor. “You guys ready?”

“Yep. Just waitin’ on Neil and Logan,” Chaney said, sticking a piece of straw in his mouth.

The hair on the back of Jax’s neck prickled. “Why are they running late?”

Chaney shrugged. “Didn’t say. They just came out of the equipment shed and said to give them ten minutes to clean up.”

Suddenly pissed, Jax started walking towards his white pickup. “I’m not waiting. You guys wanna ride with me?”

Trevor and Chaney exchanged looks. Finally Chaney stepped forward. “I’ll ride. Trevor will wait for the others.”

Jax looked at the leanly muscled blond. “Suit yourself.” The last thing he needed was to wait on Logan because he’d most likely been fooling around in the shed. He refused to let it bother him. Logan could fuck anyone he wanted, wasn’t any of his business.

* * * *

Pulling out the chair across from Jax, Logan took a seat. “Thanks for waiting,” he mumbled.

Jax took a drink of his beer. “Next time be ready to go. We always leave at five, you know that.” Jax turned his head and started a conversation with Richard.

After placing his order, Logan stood and headed for the pool table. The last thing he wanted was to watch Jax being all buddy-buddy with the six-four cowboy from Tulsa. He slapped his quarters on the table and went to the bar to get another beer. “Hey, Kitty,” he said to the waitress, standing at the bar.

“Hey, handsome,” the tall brunette greeted.

James Brewster filled Kitty’s tray and turned to Logan. “Another?”

“Yep,” Logan said, holding up his empty beer bottle. He tossed a couple of bucks on the counter as Brewster handed him his drink. “Thanks.”

He saw his food sitting on the table, most likely getting cold, but he wasn't ready to go back over. He'd tried ten ways to Sunday to get Jax's attention. It seemed everything he did only served to piss the gorgeous man off.

Hell, Jax was the reason he'd fessed up to being gay. It sure wasn't the abundant prospects in his hometown. He'd had his eye on Jax Brolin for years. Everything he'd done up to now had been because of Jax. Logan always knew Jax was a cowboy through and through, and he figured out early that would be the only way to forge a life with the older man. Not that Jax was old, but when you're a teenager, eight years seems more like decades.

He was called to the pool table. What the hell. His dinner was already cold, might as well play a round. Logan noticed Jax's eyes on him several times as he moved around the table, sinking balls. Turning his back, Logan bent over the table, giving Jax a show. He wiggled his hips a little as he lined up the shot. A couple of guys whistled and one even had the nerve to pat his ass, but Logan ignored them. The only man's attention he wanted was still sitting across the room.

After winning the game, he begged off another and went to eat his now cold dinner. The plate of tacos looked less than appetising. He picked around at his food for a few minutes, trying to pretend he wasn't listening to Richard and Jax's conversation.

Kitty brought a large sack over and set it on the table. "Here's your to-go."

"Thanks, sweetheart," Jax pulled out some money and handed it to her. "Keep the change."

When Logan saw that Jax was getting ready to head back to the ranch, he hopped out of his chair. "Care if I catch a ride?"

Jax picked up the sack and looked at Logan's full plate. "Aren't you gonna eat?"

Logan gave a disgusted face and put some money on the table. "I'll eat a bowl of cereal or something."

Jax looked like he wanted to object, but Logan knew his boss didn't have a valid reason. "Come on," Jax mumbled as he headed for the door.

Chapter Two

Jax cursed under his breath as he settled the large sack of food between them on the seat. Logan fastened his seat belt, and Jax pulled out and headed towards the ranch.

"Why do you hate me so much?" Logan asked.

Jax gripped the steering wheel. "I don't hate you. You're Jakey's best friend. You practically grew up at my house."

"This has nothing to do with Jakey. This is me asking you, why you can't stand to be around me. I always thought we got along pretty good."

How did you tell someone you wanted to slowly lick every inch of their body, but knew it would only end in heartbreak? Should he continue to lie? "Look," he finally said, "I'll admit I'm very attracted to you, but it can't go any further. It's easier to push you away than to want what isn't good for me."

"What? Are you saying I'm not good enough to be with you?"

Jax glanced at Logan. The man's hands were fisted and his jaw appeared rock hard. "I didn't say that," Jax tried to clarify. "I'm...I'm still trying to get over someone, and I don't think jumping into bed with you would solve my problems."

"Sounds like an excuse to me. Who's this guy you're trying to get over?"

"None of your business. It's history never to be repeated." Jax took a deep breath. "I'll try not to be so hard on you, but you have to stop tempting me, it only serves to piss me off."

Logan smiled. "I'm tempting you?"

“Don’t be a jackass, a eunuch would be tempted by you, and you damn well know it.”

Jax shook his head as Logan seemed to preen a little at the compliment. He’d have been better off if they’d never had this particular conversation. Not only had he told Logan about his affair, but he’d admitted his attraction. He wondered if things would be easier or harder from now on.

They rode the rest of the way in silence, both seemingly lost in their own thoughts. He pulled up to the side of his foreman’s cabin and grabbed the sack. “I’d better get this up to the house before Ezra starves to death.”

Jax watched as Logan started to walk towards the bunkhouse. His eyes couldn’t help but to stray to Logan’s fine ass. Suddenly, the ass stopped walking, and Logan turned his way. “Hey, thanks.”

“For what?”

“Telling me the truth. At least now I know it’s you and not me.” Logan winked before turning back around.

Damn. Jax had a strong feeling Logan was going to use the information against him. Maybe it was that devilish look in those sexy-as-fuck green eyes, but Jax knew he’d have to harden his resolve to stay away from Logan.

* * * *

The following Tuesday, Logan was ready to leave for Brewster’s on time. He found the rest of the guys standing around the office entrance talking. The door was thrown open, Jax evidently trying to finish his work before they left.

“Damn, I can’t wait to see the fresh cowboy meat that’ll come into town. That’s the best part about the rodeo,” he heard Jax say.

“I agree. Nothing like watching a man ride a bull. Brings to mind all kinds of things,” Chaney chuckled.

Listening to Jax talk back and forth with the other hands about cowboys pissed him off. He shouldered his way through the group and stuck his head in Jax's office. "We eating or not?"

Jax looked taken aback. "Uh...sure." He tossed down his pencil and stood. "Let's go."

Without giving anyone else a chance, Logan jumped into the passenger seat of Jax's truck. The others must've picked up on his mood, because they quickly piled into Chaney's truck.

As soon as Jax pulled out of the ranch drive, Logan started in on him. "So, you have a thing for rodeo guys, huh?"

Jax didn't even look at him. "Who doesn't?"

"I've ridden broncs and bulls before. Maybe I'll enter the competition." He didn't mention that he'd really sucked at his attempts in the past, but Jax didn't need to know that.

"Don't be ridiculous. Most of the guys competing do it professionally. Not only wouldn't you stand a chance, but you'd get yourself killed in the process," Jax laughed.

Logan felt like a piece of shit. Did Jax think he was a joke? "Everything I've learned was because of you," he admitted, his temper rising again. "But no matter what I learn or do, it's not good enough for you. Well, I'll compete in the goddamn rodeo and I'll win. Then we'll see whose laughing."

Jax reached out and grasped Logan's thigh. "Please don't. I didn't mean to laugh at you." He gave Logan a slight squeeze. "What did you mean when you said you learned everything because of me?"

"Forget I said that," Logan said. He didn't really need for Jax to know just how pathetic he really was.

"I don't think I can do that. Talk to me."

Logan started ticking things off on his fingers. "I learned to ride so that I could keep up with you in the field. I learned to work cattle so I could

help you during roundup. I became a Ferrier so that some day I could come to you for a job. Hell, Jax, I'm not even sure if I like horses or cattle, but I know I like being where ever you are."

Jax gripped the steering wheel. "Why? Why would you do something you don't love just to be around me? I'm not nearly worthy of that kind of devotion."

Because I love you. Instead of telling Jax the truth, he shrugged. "Just because."

"I'm curious. If you had your choice of any job out there, what would it be?" Jax asked.

"That's easy. I'd open my own bike shop. You know...sales...repairs, that sort of thing."

"So do it."

Logan noticed the way Jax's hand caressed his thigh. He doubted Jax was even aware he was doing it. Intended or not, the loving gesture had his cock filling in no time. He knew in that second he'd eventually wear Jax's control down. It was obvious Jax was more than attracted to him. If only he knew the story behind the affair that had shaken Jax's confidence.

"Who's gonna give a business loan to a twenty-six-year-old without even a high school diploma?"

"What!" Jax shouted. The truck swerved before he got it back under control. "Why the hell didn't you finish high school?"

"Uncle Bob had that heart attack, and Aunt Olive said I should help him with the horses. She told me they'd done their part by taking me in when my folks died, that it was time I gave back. So I dropped out and started shoeing horses."

"Sonofabitch," Jax said, shaking his head. "Well, the first thing you need to do is to go to the school in town and talk to someone about GED classes. I'm sure they have them. You get your General Education Development then you enrol in a couple of business classes in Sheridan."

“Business classes? I don’t think I can,” he admitted. Hell, he could barely read. No way could he pass college classes. It would be a miracle if he passed his GED.

“You can’t open a business without knowing the basics. Once you get established, you can always hire someone, but in the beginning it’ll just be you.”

Jax must have suddenly realised his hand had travelled dangerously close to Logan’s swollen cock. He gave Logan a hesitant smile and returned both hands to the wheel.

Logan had a lot to think about as they pulled up in front of Brewster’s. Could he dare to dream about opening his own place? Maybe working as a mechanic would be enough. He wanted to dream, but he also was mired in the reality of his own learning disability. It was one of the reasons he hadn’t put up a fuss when Olive asked him to drop out. Before Jax got out of the truck, Logan stopped him with a hand around his forearm. “Thanks.”

Jax placed his hand over Logan’s. “You deserve to do what makes you happy. Just don’t compete in that damned rodeo.”

“I’ll think about it.” He got out of the truck and followed Jax inside. It felt good to finally have a decent conversation with the man. Maybe they were finally on the right track.

His hopes were quickly dashed when Jax took the empty seat beside Richard. What was it with those guys? Were they just friends, or did they have something else going on? Logan pulled a chair up to the end of the table, suddenly feeling out of place.

He shook the notion off when Kitty placed a hand on his shoulder. “Hey, good-lookin’. You want the usual?”

“Yeah, but bring me a pitcher of beer. I’m feeling mighty thirsty,” he answered with a wink.

When he looked up Jax was staring at him. Caught looking, Jax blushed and cleared his throat. “Don’t forget you have to work come sun-up.”

“I haven’t missed a day yet,” he answered. Jax gave him a short nod and resumed his conversation with Richard. When Kitty brought Logan’s pitcher, he took it and his glass over to the pool table.

“Hey, guys,” he said, leaning against the wall.

“Wanna play?” Mario asked.

“Naw. My food will be out in a minute. I’ll just watch.” And boy did he watch, as Mario’s muscles bunched and flexed as he stretched out over the table. Damn that was a fine looking man. Why couldn’t he get Jax out of his mind and go for some of the other available men in town?

Mario took a shot, sinking his ball. He looked up and smiled at Logan. *Oh yeah, that’s what I’m talking about.* He smiled back. A little flirting never hurt anyone.

Mario maintained eye contact as he rounded the table. He motioned to Logan’s glass. “Mind?”

Logan licked his lips and handed the glass to Mario. The man’s Italian good looks were almost too hard to resist. He chanced a glance towards the table. Yep, Jax was staring right at him. *Good.*

Mario took several gulps of beer. “Thanks,” he said.

“Anytime,” he said, taking a step towards Mario. They stood inches apart as they stared into each other’s eyes.

A tap on his shoulder broke the spell. “Your food’s getting cold,” Jax said, before walking off.

Logan grinned. “Later,” he said to Mario. The gorgeous man chuckled. Mario knew exactly what Logan was up to.

“Anytime,” Mario replied with a wink.

He took his seat at the table and ate his food in silence. When it was time to go, he followed Jax to his truck. Once again, Jax had to take Ezra his dinner while it was still hot. Why the big bear of a man was afraid of Brewster was anyone’s guess. Logan imagined this would be their

weekly routine until Ezra and Brewster came to terms with the new club up at the lodge.

Jax slammed his door a little harder than was necessary and started the engine. "Have a good time in there?" Jax asked.

"Okay. You have a nice time with Richard?" Logan fired back.

"Richard's just a friend. He's having trouble with the new manager they hired to run the ski lodge."

"Mmm hmm. Good thing he's got your shoulder to lean on," Logan commented, looking out the window as they drove through town.

"Is that what that whole thing with you and Mario was about? He's dating Erico ya know?"

"No he's not. They broke up a couple of weeks ago. You know Erico doesn't stay with one partner long." He watched as Jax's callused hands gripped the wheel.

"So you're interested in him?" Jax asked.

"Didn't say that, but it beats the hell out of jacking off in the shower every night." He seriously doubted that he'd ever start anything with Mario, but Jax didn't need that information.

"So you're just horny," Jax said with a trace of disgust in his voice.

"Hell yeah I'm horny. My dick gets hard when the wind blows."

"I've noticed."

"You have?" Logan unfastened his seat belt and slid across the bench seat. "I don't suppose you'd like to help me out?" he asked, running his hand up Jax's thigh to the prominent bulge.

"You want more than I can give," Jax answered.

Logan noticed Jax didn't brush his hand away. He massaged Jax's cock with a little more intent. "At this point, I'd damn near settle for anything you're willing to give."

He unbuttoned Jax's jeans, and slipped his hand inside. Jax's cock was half hard and thick as hell.

"Fuck," Jax groaned, and spread his legs.

Logan ran his tongue up the side of Jax's face to circle his ear. "You like that, the feel of my hand pumping your cock?"

When Jax said nothing, Logan went to the next step. He scooted down far enough to taste Jax's erection. Swirling his tongue around the head, he groaned. "Need it," he grunted, and took the fat cock as deep as he could into his mouth.

Jax suddenly turned a corner, sending Logan off balance and off the seat. "Damn, you trying to kill me?"

The truck was thrown into park and Jax pushed his jeans down to his ankles. "I think you got that backwards. Bring that mouth back over here and finish what you started."

"My pleasure," Logan said, swallowing Jax's cock once again. He reached down to unzip his own jeans, before he busted out of them.

Jax ran his hand from the back of Logan's head to the now loosened waistband. Logan started a rhythm bobbing up and down on Jax's cock as his new lover ran his hand down the crease of his ass.

"Mmm," Logan moaned, as Jax pressed against his hole. Jax's finger disappeared for a moment, but was soon back, wet with saliva.

Logan shivered as Jax entered him. Logan knew he wouldn't last long. He wanted Jax to fuck him, but didn't want to break the spell between them. He pulled off, and looked up at Jax. "Let me taste you."

He slid back down on Jax's shaft, lightly scraping the sensitive skin with his teeth. With his free hand, Jax held the back of Logan's head and thrust in and out of his mouth as he added another finger to Logan's ass.

The first spurt of cum hit the back of his throat, as Jax roared Logan's name. Logan pulled off enough to taste every drop of seed that quickly

coated his mouth. *Yes, oh fuck, yes.* Jax tasted better than any man he'd ever gone down on, and Logan knew he was well and truly hooked.

Logan released Jax's softening cock and sat up enough to reach his mouth. Logan wasn't about to give Jax the chance to deny him the kiss he'd been dreaming of for years. He speared his tongue into his lover's mouth as he continued to ride the smaller man's fingers.

Jax groaned into the kiss. The sound was so needy and carnal. Logan lost it, shooting his cum onto Jax's naked thigh. He wanted nothing more than to crawl into Jax's lap and take a nap once he'd come down from his orgasmic heights, but Jax had other ideas. "We should get these tacos to Ezra and Wyn."

Logan looked into Jax's eyes. He could plainly see the man was uncomfortable with what had happened. Even though he felt like he'd been punched in the chest, Logan sat back and pulled out his handkerchief. He wiped off Jax's leg and then cleaned himself before handing the rag to Jax.

By the time Jax cleaned up and righted his clothes, Logan was staring out the passenger window. "Are we gonna act like that never happened?" he couldn't help asking.

"I don't know," Jax said, pulling back out onto the road. "I need some time to think."

Logan said nothing the rest of the ride to the ranch. He started to jump out as soon as the truck pulled to a stop, but Jax stopped him. "I'm not sorry," Jax said. "I don't think it was the smartest thing for me to do, but I wouldn't take it back even if I could."

Logan nodded. "Thanks."

Chapter Three

"Hey, hold up," Logan said, catching up to Richard.

Richard stopped and turned to face him. Man he's a big dude. "I was wondering if you could give me some bull riding tips. I heard you used to compete."

Richard chuckled and shook his head. "Nothing professional. Just back home at the county fairs and stuff. Why? You really thinking about riding?"

"Yeah. I've done the mechanical bull thing, and I'm damn good. I've never really been that close to a live one though."

Richard put his large hands on his hips. "Where would you practice?"

"I thought I'd ask Rance if I could have a go at one of the bulls on the Back Breaker."

"If he gives the go-ahead, call me. I don't know how much help I'll be, but I'll do what I can."

"Thanks." Logan waved as Richard got into his truck and pulled out of the drive. He whistled on his way to the barn. It had been nearly two weeks since he'd given Jax the blow job in the truck. Surprisingly, Jax had been pretty cool towards him since. He hadn't groped him or anything, but he hadn't yelled at him either.

Swinging by his corner of the tack room, Logan picked up his tool box, and headed towards the stable. Clara was due for a new pair of shoes, and Logan wasn't looking forward to it. The damn horse was as skittish as a long tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.

He set his tool chest down outside the stall. "Morning, Miss Clara," he said, petting the dappled grey mare's nose. Logan clipped a lead rope to her bright red halter and led her out into the aisle.

After getting her secured to a post, he scooted his box of supplies over and got into position. With Clara's foot safely caught between his thighs, Logan picked up the nippers and started clipping away at the clinches on the outside of the horse's hoof.

As he worked on auto-pilot, Logan's mind wandered. He had an appointment later in the day with the counsellor at the high school. After

all this time he couldn't believe he was going back to school. Not that you could really consider GED prep classes school, but it was close enough for him.

Logan began removing the individual nails that secured the old shoe in place. He wondered if his momma would've been pleased that he was finally going to get a diploma. Hell, unless she was in fact looking down on him, she wouldn't even know he never finished. His folks had been gone almost seventeen years, killed in a car wreck when Logan was barely nine.

Everyone had told him he was lucky his Aunt Olive and Uncle Bob had agreed to raise him as their own. Logan knew better. Luck had nothing to do with it. Bob wanted the farm his daddy had built. Logan was just part of the package. He was made to feel in the way until he was old enough to work. Once he quit school he did all of Bob's work and rarely saw a penny for his efforts.

He'd managed to save enough to buy a broken down Harley. It had taken months of work fixing it up, but he couldn't have been prouder when Lila was finally finished. He and Jakey had ridden her all over the Montana countryside every chance they got. Spending time with Jakey and his family were the only things in his life, outside of Lila, that mattered to him.

His daddy had been friends with Mr. Brolin for years, so Logan was pretty much raised knowing Jakey, Jed and Jax. When his folks were killed, Logan sought refuge at the Brolin ranch. Jakey's mom, Sarah, remarked one time that they'd petitioned the court to adopt Logan. Of course that was before his aunt and uncle had stepped forward. The court decided Logan would be better off with family and Bob and Olive were awarded custody.

He must've been around twelve the first time he noticed Jax in anything but a friendly way. The twenty-year old was still living at home then, content to work the ranch along side Jed and their dad, Jeremiah.

Logan had gone out riding with Jakey when a mountain lion spooked his horse. Logan was thrown onto the hard ground of the rocky outcrop they'd been exploring.

Chuckling, Logan shook his head as he began trimming Clara's hoof. He'd thought he was going to die that day. His horse ran off and so did the mountain lion, but Logan was stuck on the ground with a broken leg. Jakey was panicked walking in circles around him. At least they'd been smart enough to know they needed help. There was no way Jakey would be able to lift Logan and get him back to the ranch.

Once they made sure the cat was long gone, Jakey jumped on his horse Peanut Butter, and headed towards home. An hour later, Jax pulled up in the old farm truck he drove everywhere. After putting a make-shift brace on his leg, Jax helped Logan to the truck. He'd taken the time to spread straw out in the bed and lifted Logan into the back. Damn, the pain had been bad as Jax picked his way slowly back to the ranch. To this day, Logan didn't know if he'd ever felt such pain.

"You about done?"

Shaking off the memory, Logan looked up and saw Jax's smiling face. "Just have to finish nailing this new shoe on and get to the other three. Why?"

"Looks like rain and we need to get the hay bales out of the field before it does. I'm calling all hands to help out," Jax said.

Logan drove the last nail in. "Let me finish this one up, and I'm all yours." He grinned at Jax.

Jax rolled his eyes and turned to leave. "Five minutes."

After nipping off the ends of the nails on the outside of Clara's hoof, Logan picked up the rasp and smoothed the edges. "You did good, Miss Clara," he said, setting the horse's foot back on the ground. He pulled a small sack out of his tool chest and dug out a horse biscuit. "Here, girl, you've earned it."

He put Clara back in her stall and picked up his tools. After getting them back into the tack room, Logan took off his chaps and hung them on a hook. Jax was waiting for him outside the barn in one of the large hay trucks. Logan didn't mind stacking hay occasionally, but he was glad it wasn't his normal job.

After climbing in, he shut the door and Jax pulled out. “I was remembering that time you rescued me when I broke my leg,” Logan said idly.

Jax started chuckling. “Yeah, I remember that. You practically screamed all the way back to the ranch.”

“It hurt like hell,” Logan reminded him. “Besides, I was twelve. Give me a break.”

“I also remember how you moped around our house the rest of the summer.”

Logan shrugged. “I wasn’t really wanted at home. Without the ability to work, I wasn’t much use to Olive and Bob.”

Jax reached across the bench seat and put a hand on Logan’s thigh. “It was rough for you growing up without your parents wasn’t it?”

“You have no idea,” Logan replied. He covered Jax’s hand with his own. “Your folks’ house was the only real home I knew.”

“They tried, ya know...”

“Yeah, I know. Why the courts decided the way they did doesn’t make much sense, but it is what it is. Hell, I’d still be working for your mom and dad if word hadn’t gotten out about my sexual preferences.”

“How did that happen? I never asked Jakey. Figured you’d tell me when the time was right.”

“Roger Freed saw me in Billings. Word spread faster than a wild fire. Your dad tried to defend me to the few bigots in town, but I knew it wasn’t really his place. When Jakey told me about the opening here, I jumped at it.” Logan squeezed Jax’s hand. “I miss the J Bar though, not just the place, but the people.”

“Next time I go home, I’ll take you with me,” Jax said.

Logan nodded. It made him feel good that Jax was willing to share his family. They pulled up to a strip of bales and Jax stopped the truck.

“We’ll have to do this the old fashioned way. Neil’s using the elevator, so you’ll just have to toss ‘em up by hand.”

“Figures,” Logan said with a grin.

* * * *

Jax slowly drove the truck along the row as Logan threw them up onto the flatbed. About every tenth bale, he’d stop and allow Logan time to climb up and neatly stack the bales. They wouldn’t be able to go quite as high without the elevator, but this was the way hay had been done for years.

Logan’s T-shirt was plastered to his chest with sweat. Part of Jax wanted the younger man to strip it off, but he knew Logan’s skin would be scratched to hell by the dried grass. He’d been thinking about Logan a lot lately, especially at night. Jax would lie in bed and stroke himself to completion with Logan’s face in mind. It had surprised him the first time it had happened. Gone was the face of his old lover, replaced by the honest one of Logan.

When he saw the truck was almost fully loaded, Jax stopped and got out. “You need help hoisting these last few up?”

Logan lifted the bottom of his T-shirt and wiped the dirt and sweat from his face. “I’d appreciate it.”

Jax slipped on a pair of leather gloves and picked up a bale. He carried it the few feet to the truck and hoisted it up to Logan. He couldn’t take his eyes off Logan’s chest and arms as they lifted the bale up onto the stack. Damn. Logan had a body that would make any man want to fall to his knees in worship. No wonder he’d been jacking off with visions of Logan dancing in his head.

He realised he was staring when Logan cleared his throat. “Need something?”

Jax’s eyes strayed to the erection behind the fly of Logan’s sweat stained jeans. *Yeah, I definitely do.* A rumble of thunder broke the spell, and Jax looked up at the swirling dark clouds. “If we don’t move our asses, we’re gonna be in deep shit.”

They quickly finished the row and started back towards the hay barn with their load. "Think we have time for another before the rain starts falling?" Logan asked.

"We can try. The more we can keep dry the better," Jax answered. There were already two trucks being unloaded when they reached the barn. Jax jumped out of the truck along with Logan to help stacking. They helped finish Chaney's load, and sent him back out to the field before starting on Neil's.

"How many you got left?" Jax asked Neil.

"Only about a hundred twenty or so. You?"

"Not much. Maybe eighty. Should go pretty fast, but take one of the tarps with you just in case."

Neil nodded and pulled one of the extra large blue tarps out of the storage shed and tossed it on the back of the truck.

Logan backed the truck up to the barn and started unloading, while Jax got out a tarp and set it in the cab for the time being. Once finished, they headed back out to the field. By the time they reached their destination, it was starting to sprinkle.

Logan jumped out of the truck and seemed to work double time as the rain increased. It didn't take them more than thirty minutes to have the last of the bales loaded. Jax helped Logan spread the tarp over the small stack and secure it down with bungee cords.

Once the hay was safe from the weather, Logan tore his shirt off and let the rain wash his sweaty skin. "Damn. How can it be so hot and raining at the same time? Just ain't right."

Instead of seeking refuge from the storm in the cab of the truck, Jax stood where he was, enjoying the view of Logan's tattooed torso.

Looking Jax in the eyes, Logan unsnapped his jeans. "Might as well get as clean as possible," he said, before pulling his pants down to the top of his boots.

Jax almost groaned at the site of Logan's stiff cock getting battered by the rain. Before he knew it, he was pressed against Logan's practically nude body in a hungry kiss. Logan began pulling at Jax's clothes, and Jax didn't have a desire to put up a fight.

His shirt gone, Logan started on Jax's jeans. "Need to feel you against me," Logan panted, breaking the kiss.

Jax's cock was freed from his underwear and stroked several times. "Mmm," Logan moaned, removed his hand and pressed his erection against Jax's lower stomach.

Never had their height made a difference until now. Damn. Jax rubbed his aching cock against Logan's thigh. "Need," he grunted.

Using his superior strength, Logan turned them around and pressed Jax against the door of the truck.

Jax was lifted enough for their cocks to rub and slide against each other, as he pulled Logan's head down for another kiss. He scraped his teeth along Logan's tongue before capturing it. Jax sucked the bigger man's tongue like he wanted to suck his cock.

Logan's fingers wandered to the crack of Jax's ass, and one speared its way inside of him. "Fuck," Jax ground out, releasing Logan's tongue. He hoisted his leg higher, wrapping it around Logan's waist. "Wallet," he mumbled.

Logan released him long enough to dig Jax's wallet out of his jeans. As Logan looked for the condom, Jax pulled off his boots and stepped out of the soaking wet jeans.

Almost overcome with lust, Jax spit into his own hand and started stretching himself as Logan rolled the condom down his long thick length. Turning around, Jax braced his hands on the running board. "Do it."

He knew it was a romantic spot, but this was about fuckin', not happily-ever-after. Although he wanted Logan's cock buried in his ass like he wanted air, Jax refused to bring feelings into it. He'd done that once and ended up looking like a fool. It wasn't like he didn't care for Logan. Hell,

he'd been around the guy since he'd been popped out of his mamma's belly, but love wasn't in his future anytime soon.

The head of Logan's sheathed cock slowly pushed its way through the outer ring of muscles. Jax couldn't hold back the groan of pain as the wide flared head stretched his hole. Logan showed enough restraint to stop for a few seconds, allowing Jax's body to become accustomed to the larger than average girth.

When the pain subsided, Jax gave a nod and pushed back. Logan's cock continued to ease in until Jax felt the bigger man's balls resting against his ass.

"Better...oh shit. Better than I ever dreamed," Logan said over the thundering rain.

As Logan began thrusting in and out of him, Jax looked down at his own bobbing cock. He wanted to jack himself, but knew he'd go head first into the side of the truck if he let go of the running board.

The strong hands of the Ferrier gripped Jax's hips like a couple of vices. *Damn.* No doubt he'd have bruises as a reminder come nightfall. He'd never been one to come just by fucking alone, so he resigned himself to that fact and just enjoyed the feel of Logan filling his ass. It took all his strength to brace himself as Logan pounded him like the stud he was.

"Can't...gonna," Logan panted as he buried himself deep.

Jax felt the jerking motions of Logan's body as he emptied his seed into the condom. As soon as he knew the other man was finished, Jax stood, releasing the grip his ass had on Logan's cock.

Putting a hand to Logan's shoulder, he made his intentions clear. Logan sunk to his knees and Jax began stroking his cock. It didn't take long for the white ropes of pearly cum to spurt from the head, painting Logan's chest.

Even though the rain quickly began washing his seed from Logan's tanned skin, the image would forever be seared into his brain. Logan pulled Jax down in front of him and kissed him. Jax's arms wrapped around Logan praying he wasn't setting himself up for a fall.

Chapter Four

By the time Logan got back to the ranch and cleaned up, it was three-thirty. He stopped by Jax's cabin on the way to his truck and knocked on the door. Jax answered in nothing but a pair of jeans, hair still dripping from his shower.

"I'm headed into town. I've got a meeting at the high school. I just didn't know if you remembered, and I didn't want you to wonder where I'd slipped off to," Logan said. He wanted to pull Jax into his arms, but knew enough about Jax to stop himself. The man was just plain odd where sex was concerned. Logan knew Jax was trying to keep a distance between them, and he also knew enough about the man not to push him.

"I remembered," Jax said. "I'm glad you're taking this step. Nothing but good will come out of it, you'll see."

"I hope so," Logan mumbled.

"Stop by when you get back and tell me how it went."

"Will do. You mind if I take one of the ranch trucks?" Logan tipped his hat and left.

Jax looked up at the still dripping sky. "Nope. Probably the safest thing."

The drive to town was filled with visions of their time spent in the rain. The feel of burying his cock in Jax's ass had surpassed every fantasy and dream he'd ever had. He knew a lot of it had to do with his feelings for the man, and not just the physical aspects, but it just made it all the better.

The parking lot was almost empty by the time he made it to the school. He parked out front of the main entrance. Cattle Valley wasn't big enough to have a separate high school, so it shared the same building with the town's middle and elementary schools. As Logan opened the door, he wondered just how many students attended classes here.

The office was to his right as soon as he entered. A lone secretary sat behind the high counter typing on a computer. He took off his hat and approached. "Excuse me, Ma'am. I'm here to see Ms. Kraft. My name's Logan Miller."

Looking up from her work, the woman smiled. "She's expecting you, Mr. Miller. Down the hall three doors on your left."

"Thank you," he said with a slight bow to his head. He couldn't believe how nervous he was. Logan found Ms. Kraft's office easily enough and knocked on the already open door.

"Come in," a pleasant voice called.

Stepping into the small office, Logan greeted the guidance counsellor with an extended hand. "I'm Logan Miller."

"Call me Lorna," the woman said, shaking Logan's hand. "Have a seat."

Logan sat in one of the green tweed chairs in front of Lorna's desk and set his hat in the other one.

"So you're interested in acquiring your GED. Is that right?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Well," she said, looking at her calendar. "We can schedule a test here at any time as long as one of our teachers is willing to monitor the test for you."

Logan crossed and uncrossed his legs. He'd gone over this a dozen times with himself. He finally decided it was better to come out with the truth than to fail the test. "Ms. Kraft...um, Lorna? I was wondering if there was someone I could hire to help me prepare." Logan swallowed around the lump in his throat. "I have a bit of trouble with reading," he admitted.

Lorna looked at him for several moments. He couldn't tell if it was pity he saw in her eyes or misunderstanding. Standing, she rested her fingertips on the desk. "If you'll wait a moment, I'll see if Mr. Sanchez can help you."

Logan nodded. "I'd appreciate it."

It was ten minutes before Lorna appeared in the doorway. "Come with me, please."

Logan stood and grabbed his hat from the chair. Following behind Ms. Kraft, he felt incredibly self-conscious. He wondered whether Mr. Sanchez would be as understanding and helpful as Lorna had been. God, he hoped so. No way could he admit to Jax that he flunked the test because he couldn't read the questions.

Lorna stopped in front of a door and ushered him inside. "Eli, I'd like you to meet Logan Miller. Logan, this is Eli Sanchez, your tutor."

Stepping forward, Logan shook his new teacher's hand. He hoped Eli Sanchez was a patient man. "Thank you for agreeing to help me, sir."

Eli laughed. "Sir?" He looked at Lorna. "I've got it from here, Lorna."

Ms. Kraft smiled and nodded. "Just let me know when you're ready for me to schedule the test, Logan."

"Yes, Ma'am. Thank you for all your help."

Giggling, Lorna shook her head and left the room. Logan looked at Eli. "Did I say something wrong?"

Eli clapped Logan on the back and gestured to one of the desks. "No, not at all. We're just used to dealing with high school students. They don't show near the amount of respect you do. Were you always a polite student?" Eli asked.

"Um...no. Actually, I got suspended quite often." He fidgeted in his chair, uncomfortable talking about his past.

Eli's eyes narrowed as he seemed to study Logan. "Did it have anything to do with your special needs?"

"Yes, sir," Logan admitted.

“First things first. Call me Eli. Second thing. I’ll need to test you to see what reading level you’re at. Do you have a problem with that?”

Logan shook his head. “No.”

“Good, then let’s get started.”

* * * *

Parking in his usual spot, Logan turned off the engine and looked at the books in the seat beside him. “Third fucking grade.” How in the hell was he supposed to fool Jax long enough to learn to read at a high school level. He was thankful Eli appeared to be patient and understanding, something the teachers in his high school had lacked.

He pulled the tags off the backpack he’d bought in town. He tucked the Magic Tree House book that Eli had loaned him, along with his reading workbook and text book into a blue canvas bag.

As he walked to Jax’s cabin, Logan tried to work out some kind of schedule. He’d talked to Rance earlier and had bargained his shoeing skills for a couple of hours on one of the Back Breaker’s bulls. Now he had homework to finish daily and drop off at the high school. How was he going to accomplish everything without Jax knowing?

He should probably just forget the rodeo and stick to the learning, but he hadn’t backed down from a challenge in years, and he didn’t intend to start. He’d just have to wake up an hour or two earlier to work on his reading. Maybe he’d hide a flashlight in the hay barn. That way he could sneak out in the mornings and no one would be the wiser.

With his plan in place, he set his backpack beside the front door and knocked. Lamplight filled the porch as Jax opened the door to him. “Hey. Thought maybe you got lost,” Jax said, stepping back.

Logan walked in and took a seat on the couch. “This your pack?” Jax asked, holding Logan’s bag up.

Panic started to set in. “Yeah. Just leave it out there. It’s books and stuff.”

“Great.” Jax brought the backpack in and set it beside the door. “Want me to help you study?”

“No!” Logan shouted before he thought better of it.

Jax held up his hands in mock surrender. “Suit yourself. Just thought I’d offer.”

“Sorry,” Logan said, looking down at the floor. He knew it was only the beginning of Jax’s questions. “One of the teachers at the school, Eli Sanchez, has agreed to help prepare me for the test. He said it’s pretty hard though, so it might take some time for me to get up to speed. I have some homework type stuff to do, and I’m going to meet with Eli three evenings a week.”

“Wow.” Jax’s expression was somewhere between stunned and pissed. “Guess you don’t need my help.”

Feeling like a piece of shit, Logan reached out and grabbed Jax’s hand. He pulled the smaller man down to sit beside him on the couch. Looking into Jax’s eyes, he saw something he’d never seen before. Hurt. That was the last thing he wanted Jax to feel. Swallowing a bit of his pride, he made a small confession. “I’m too embarrassed to have you help me. I need a little more help than what I led you to believe.”

Jax squeezed Logan’s hand. “Don’t be embarrassed.”

Logan shrugged, unable to say more on the subject. “Anything good on television?”

After a few moments, Jax reached over and picked up the remote. “I was just watching a baseball game. You up for it?”

“Sure.”

Jax turned on the game and settled against Logan’s chest. As he pretended to watch the game, Logan’s mind wandered. He glanced at the clock on the DVD player, eight o’clock. He knew he needed to be up by four if he was going to get his homework done before the other cowboys roused from their beds.

Jax snuggled further against him, and Logan forgot all about his schedules. The only way he'd be able to get through the days ahead would be to take one minute at a time and enjoy every second he spent with Jax.

They watched the rest of the game, sharing lazy kisses on commercial breaks. At eleven, Jax turned off the television and stood. "Want to stay the night?"

Logan wanted that more than anything, but he only had five hours before he had to be up. Still, to sleep for the first time with Jax in his arms, was worth it. "I'd like to stay, but I think it'd be better if I snuck out early. No sense the rest of the hands knowing our business." He hated the excuse. It sounded more like something Jax would say, but it was the only thing he could come up with.

Jax's jaw dropped open before he turned it into a fake yawn. "You know, I'm pretty tired. Why don't we just call it a night?"

Logan was left stunned and hurt. "If that's the way you want it." He stood and gave Jax a peck on the lips, before going over to pick up his pack. "See ya around."

* * * *

Logan heard voices enter the barn. He quickly switched off his flashlight and stuffed his books back in his pack. After he set it in the corner of the loft behind a few bales, he quietly waited for the voices to move on. He could hear Jax and Chaney lining out the days work-load.

"So you ready for some of that fresh rodeo meat to ride into town?" Chaney joked.

"Am I ever," Jax replied. "My love life has gone stale as a week old doughnut."

Logan felt like he'd been punched in the gut. What the fuck? Stale? Hell, he'd been trying to talk to Jax for days only to get the cold shoulder. *Rodeo meat's coming to town. Why am I such an idiot?* Of course Jax would cool things down. It seemed the older cowboy wanted nothing

more than to have him a fresh piece of ass over the holiday weekend. He had half a mind to march into Jax's office and set the cowboy straight.

The rodeo was only a week away, and he'd yet to find a time to practice. He'd spent every spare minute either studying, at school or working. Well fuck that. He'd try and get his work done early and head over to the Back Breaker. If Jax wanted a piece of rodeo meat, Logan planned to make damn sure he was in the display case.

Logan waited until he heard Chaney leave and Jax's office door close before making his way down from the loft. It wasn't used much except for the overflow from the regular hay barn, so his stuff should be plenty safe for the day.

He started to stop by Jax's office out of habit, but Jax's words came back to haunt him. Logan ground his teeth together and kept moving. He'd get Moonshine shod and Benny's leg treated before asking for the rest of the day off. He had a rodeo to compete in, and he damn sure didn't plan on making a fool of himself.

Chapter Five

Logan's mood got worse as the week went on, and by Thursday night, he was itching for a fight. He decided to head into Brewster's to have a drink and maybe a round or two with one of the new rodeo guys in town.

He walked out of the bunkhouse, and immediately noticed Jax's truck was gone. *Figures*. They'd barely spoken all week, Logan answering with grunts, and Jax plain ignoring him unless he had an order to give.

The night was colder than he'd thought so he ducked back in and pulled his leather jacket on. As he straddled his Harley, he scratched his bristly jaw. He started to get back off and go shave, but then figured what the hell. It wasn't like he planned on kissing anyone. You didn't need a baby smooth face to fight.

Roaring into town, Logan parked among a long line of pickup trucks. The place was jumping when he stepped inside, jukebox blaring Toby Keith,

and the dance floor was packed. He managed to find a spot at the bar and flagged down one of the temporary bartenders. “Double shot of Jack, and a Michelob.”

He tossed some money on the counter and turned his back to the bar, surveying the room. There were a lot of people he recognised from town, but the outsiders were easy enough to spot. *Oh, ho. What do we have here?* Jax and some cowboy were getting cosy on the dance floor.

Logan narrowed his eyes. Yep, that would be his first target. The bartender tapped him on the shoulder as he laid down Logan’s change. He spun back around and upended the double shot of whiskey. “Damn,” he said, with a shake to his head.

He felt a body press against his back. Stiffening, he looked over his shoulder ready to beat some poor soul into the ground. Instead he looked into Mario’s smiling face.

“Trying to get drunk?” Mario asked.

“As fast as possible,” Logan answered back.

Mario’s deep brown eyes looked towards the dance floor. “Bet I can guess why?”

“Yep. I’m sure you can.”

“Care to dance?”

Logan looked from Jax and his fool partner back to Mario. “That might just be what I’m needin’ at the moment.”

He held up a finger as he drained the bottle of beer. “Let’s go.”

Mario led him to the raised dance floor away from Jax and Mr. Rodeo. “No sense making it too obvious,” Mario said in Logan’s ear.

Logan wasn’t used to holding someone bigger than he was, and struggled for several beats. He finally stopped thinking so much and wrapped his arms around Mario’s trim waist.

“So what’s the problem this time?” Mario asked in his ear.

Logan shrugged. “Not really sure. Thought things were right on track and then...nothing. He barely speaks to me lately.”

Mario nodded. “You want to make him mad or jealous?”

“Either. I just want him to acknowledge me. He evidently has a thing for rodeo riders. I’m plannin’ on showing him I can do anything they can do.”

Mario’s steps faltered. “You ride?”

“No, not really. I’ve been out to the Back Breaker a few times. I’ve ridden my share of mechanical bulls though. Winning isn’t the important thing, riding is.”

“You’re gonna kill yourself. Is he worth it?”

Logan stole a glance through the crowd at Jax. He was surprised to find Jax already staring straight at him. “Yeah. I’ve waited a long time to be something special to him.”

“I hope you’re right,” Mario said, moving his hands down Logan’s back to rest on his ass.

He felt Mario’s erection brush against the fly of his jeans and barely bit back a moan. Even though he had no romantic interest in Mario, he was only human. “What are you doing?” he asked when he felt the Italian man’s lips on his neck.

“Acting. I thought you wanted to put on a show for your man.”

Mario nibbled his way up Logan’s jaw. “The hard ridge in your jeans rubbing against me doesn’t feel like an act.”

Mario swiped his tongue across Logan’s bottom lip. “Figured I might as well enjoy myself in the process. You got a problem with it?”

Did he? “I’ll admit I can be tempted, but I’d hate myself if I let it go beyond a dance,” Logan admitted.

Mario looked him in the eyes and nodded. “Fair enough. My loss.”

Logan bit his tongue. He’d heard a few things around town about Mario and Asa Montgomery, the wealthiest man in Cattle Valley. Against his own better judgement, he heard the question escape. “I thought you had something going with Asa?”

Mario’s entire body stiffened. “We went out to dinner a few times, but that’s it. I’ve had my fill of rich powerful men. You sleep with them and all of a sudden they think of you as arm candy.” Mario shook his head. “Nope, I’ll never be another man’s decoration.”

The haunting look on Mario’s gorgeous face softened Logan’s heart towards the man. He gave the strong Italian a genuine embrace. Though no words were spoken, Mario smiled.

A loud voice broke through the tender moment, capturing Logan’s attention. He looked towards the apparent disturbance. “Fuck!” He released his hold on Mario and wove his way through the crowd towards the bar. *When had the two of them left the dance floor?* Jax and his dance partner were having words right there in front of the entire room full of people. From the looks of it, the taller cowboy wasn’t at all happy.

Before Logan could get to them, the taller man backhanded Jax across the face. Logan watched in horror as Jax’s head snapped to the side before the smaller man fell to one knee. Logan’s boots left the floor and he leapt the final few feet, knocking the stranger over. He managed to get in a pretty good upper-cut before the cowboy regained his senses and started to fight back.

Logan wasn’t at all sure of how many punches he threw and took before he was pulled off the rodeo rider. His neck in a chokehold, Logan recognised the heavily tattooed forearms right away. *Shit.* He was surely going to jail.

Once he’d calmed down, Ryan released his grip on Logan. “You done?” the sheriff asked.

Logan looked at the tall cowboy, and smiled. He had no idea what he looked like, but the other guy looked like shit with a bloody nose and split lip. “Yeah. As long as that asshole keeps his hands to himself.”

Ryan turned and pulled Logan out of the bar by the lapel of his leather jacket. On the sidewalk, Logan waited for the sheriff to march him to the police station. Instead, Ryan put his hands on his hips and shook his head. “What the hell was all that about?”

Logan shrugged, and studied his bruised knuckles. “Ask the other guy. All I know is I saw red when the fucker backhanded Jax.” He heard the door open behind him as the light from the bar spilled out to illuminate Ryan’s face.

Ryan looked over Logan’s shoulder to the new comer. “You want the responsibility of getting this hot head home?”

“Not really,” Jax said.

Logan’s head whipped around towards Jax. “Thanks a lot.”

Jax didn’t even bother looking at Logan. “Maybe Mario will get him the hell out of here for you.”

“Don’t be an ass. I’ve got my bike. Just follow me back to the ranch before Ryan decides to throw me in jail.”

The sheriff leaned forward and inhaled. “How much’ve you had?”

“Not much. A beer and a whisky.” He didn’t mention the whisky had been a double shot.

Ryan shook his head. “I think it’d be better if you came back later for your bike.”

Logan started to argue, but Jax stopped him. “Fine. I’ll drive his sorry ass home,” Jax said.

Before Logan had a chance to say anything, Jax started for his truck. “If you’re coming, let’s go.”

Logan looked at Ryan. “Sorry about what happened.”

“Don’t be. I’d have done the same thing if someone laid a hand on Nate. Just don’t blow the chance I’m giving you.”

After waving goodbye, Logan walked to Jax's pickup and got in. Neither of them said a word until they were out of town. "I coulda taken care of RJ myself," Jax mumbled.

RJ? What kind of name was that? "Yep."

"He may have caught me off-guard once, but it wouldn't have happened a second time," Jax continued.

"Yep," Logan agreed.

"Is that all you're gonna say?" Jax asked.

"Pretty much. I know you can take care of yourself. It wasn't about that. I saw someone hit you, and my anger took the lead."

Jax looked a little shocked. "Why? You seemed perfectly comfortable in Mario's arms. Why worry about me?"

"Cuz I love you, asshole. Always have and always will."

"Yeah, right. That's why you were so adamant about people not knowing what was going on between us." Jax chuckled sarcastically. "Believe me. I can do without that kind of love."

"What? Stop the goddam truck," Logan practically shouted.

Jax turned onto the first available dirt road and parked beside the side of the road. He turned off the engine and looked right at Logan. "You gonna sit there and deny it to my face?"

"Yeah, I am."

"Did you not say you needed to leave my house before the other hands woke up and discovered we'd spent the night together?"

Logan's mind flashed back to the conversation Jax was referring to. *Shit*. How could he have been so stupid? He sighed and reached across the seat to take Jax's hand. "I know that's what I said, but it was just an excuse." How could he tell Jax the real reason he needed those few extra hours to himself?

“Yeah? Well why don’t you try being honest with me.”

Logan had a strong feeling the future of their relationship rested on his answer. “I’ve been studying in the loft every morning.”

“Studying?” Jax looked at him like he was crazy.

“Yeah,” Logan admitted. “I didn’t want you to know. It’s kinda embarrassing.”

Jax turned his hand over and threaded his fingers through Logan’s. “Why would you be embarrassed? I’m the one who convinced you to get your GED.”

Logan shrugged, unwilling to say more. He decided to change the subject away from school. “Is that why you’ve been so distant since that night?”

Now it was Jax’s turn to look uncomfortable. “Yes,” he finally said. “I’ve been someone’s dirty little secret, to be hidden away from the public eye. I knew I couldn’t go through that again.”

He could see the pain in Jax’s eyes when he said it. How could someone ever do that to this man? Logan unbuckled his seat belt and scooted over. “I never even considered hiding you away. It was a stupid excuse to make. I’m sorry.” He cupped Jax’s face in his hand and leaned in for a kiss.

His first taste elicited a moan. It had been too long since he’d held Jax in his arms, and evidently, he had no one to blame but himself. “Let me make love to you,” he whispered.

“Only if you’ll stay the night,” Jax replied.

Logan could see the insecurity in Jax’s eyes. He would never have guessed the self-assured cowboy he’d grown up worshiping would have a moment’s doubt about himself. Logan knew he needed to find out who had mistreated the love Jax so evidently gave. “Of course I’ll stay.”

He wondered what he’d say in the morning when he had to wake early to get ready for the rodeo. Bringing it up now wouldn’t solve anything, because there was sure to be a fight. Logan decided their problems could

wait until the sun came up. Until then he planned to enjoy every second of Jax's body, every square inch, one lick at a time.

Chapter Six

Jax rolled over and snuggled his naked body against Logan. Somehow during the night he'd fallen in love and it scared the shit out of him. He'd only given his heart to one other and he had stomped it into the ground. Would he be able to trust Logan not to do the same? That was the big question.

It was hot enough in the cabin they slept with only a sheet to cover them. Logan was a rough sleeper and was barely covered at all. Jax took the time to look his fill. How in the hell did he get so lucky?

Every muscle of Logan's perfect body was well defined. Although he usually detested tattoos, those on his lover worked for him, but he had to wonder why Logan would hide any of his body under the inked art.

Jax was busy studying the dips on either side of Logan's groin, when his lover's voice filled his ears.

"Morning, love."

Logan's voice was deeper than usual with enough roughness to make it sexy. *Damn. I should've been waking up with him every day.* "Morning. How did you sleep?" he asked, daring to touch the dips he'd been eyeing. He grinned when Logan's cock immediately hardened. Jax knew it was natural in the morning, but he also hoped it was his touch on Logan's smooth skin.

"Fantastic," Logan said with a stretch.

Oh. Oh hell. The expanse of bare skin in front of him bunched and then lengthened with the movement.

Rolling to his side, Jax grasped Logan's ass and pulled their erections together. The feel of Logan's cock rubbing and grinding against his was

heaven. “Does that mean we can try it again? Like...daily?” Jax asked with a chuckle. He didn’t want to come across as greedy, but hell, might as well put it out there.

“I’d love that,” Logan whispered. He licked up the side of Jax’s jaw and over to his waiting lips.

Feeling the cheeks of his ass being pulled apart, Jax slid his leg up to rest on Logan’s hip, giving the man more room to work. Damn, Logan knew how to touch him. An un-manly whimper escaped as Logan’s finger pushed inside his slightly sore hole. There was plenty of time for healing later, now he wanted nothing but this.

Jax began humping himself against Logan’s cock, needing more. He reached over Logan’s shoulder and grabbed a condom and lube from the bedside table. “Need you,” he moaned, opening the foil packet.

While Jax rolled the condom down Logan’s length, his lover took the lube from him and began to prepare him. With all the sex they’d enjoyed the previous night, it didn’t take long for Jax’s body to stretch.

Rolling onto his side, facing away from Logan, he hooked his arm under his knee. “Now.”

He felt the head of Logan’s sheathed cock slowly enter him. “Oh fuck. Yeah. Give it to me,” Jax growled.

Logan thrust forward, smoothly burying himself to the hilt. Jax squeezed his eyes shut, hoping to stave off his impending orgasm. How many times had he come in the previous eight hours? It didn’t seem to matter as his cock leaked pre-cum down onto his skin. Jax had a strong feeling he’d never go dry with Logan around. The man was sexy as fuck and knew how to use the attributes God gave him.

His lover thoughtfully put his arm under Jax’s thigh to help hold him open as he began pistoning in and out of his ass. The new position allowed Jax to use his now freed hand to jack himself as Logan made love to him.

“Love you,” Logan panted in his ear.

Jax opened his mouth to return the sentiment, but quickly snapped it shut. Saying the words out loud would give Logan more power over him. Jax had learned that the hard way, and he was taught by a master.

Damn he'd loved that man to the point of senselessness. Why had it taken him two years to figure out all he was to M was a piece of ass on the side?

He heard Logan call his name, as the sweet body behind him stiffened. Shit. Jax looked down at his now flaccid cock. Thoughts of his previous lover had ruined the moment. The last thing he wanted was to hurt Logan's feelings because of the asshole who'd broken his heart. Putting on his acting hat, Jax rolled to his stomach and faked an orgasm. Hey, if women could do it...

After an adequate show, Jax turned his head to the side. Logan was looking right at him. "You okay?" Logan asked.

"Better than. Just wiped," he answered. "Why don't you hop in the shower, and I'll join you as soon as I get the bed stripped. I've got a pretty full day, and I want the sheets clean by the time we go to bed." Jax felt tightness in his chest at the lie.

Logan seemed to study him for several seconds before leaning in and placing a kiss on Jax's mouth. "Hurry up. I'll be waiting, and I doubt you have enough hot water to last for long."

Jax smiled and nodded. He watched Logan roll off the bed and walk towards the hall bathroom. He still couldn't believe he'd openly lied about something so important. *I'm going to hell.*

* * * *

Logan was putting his boots on when the question came.

"Ezra told me you asked for the day off. Something going on that I should know about?" Jax asked, settling his hat on his head.

"Thought I'd go into town." Logan shrugged. "Join in on some of the festivities. Will you meet me for dinner?"

Jax walked over and straddled Logan's lap. Damn he loved the feel of this man in his arms. "I'm one man down, so it might take me a while longer to get the chores done, but I'll be there."

Logan squeezed Jax's ass. "You going to be my date for Saturday night's dance?"

"You bet I am," Jax answered.

He felt bad for lying to Jax about his plans for the day, but he figured it was tit for tat. Jax had put on a horrible performance earlier in bed. It was something Logan still couldn't wrap his mind around.

For a moment, he wondered if Jax was too sore. Then his mind swung to thinking maybe his lover didn't find it enjoyable. While showering he decided there must be something else going on. They'd made love for hours the previous night and Jax had been with him the whole time. Nope, something else was on Jax's mind earlier. Logan just wished his lover had been honest with him.

Hell. What am I saying? I just lied to the man's face. Well, not technically. Logan was going into town to join in on the Cattle Valley Days festivities. He just hadn't mentioned the rodeo.

Jax gave him a deep kiss before standing. His lover readjusted his hat and grinned. "I'll find you later. Have a good one."

Logan stood and the two of them walked out of the house hand in hand. He received one last kiss on the porch before heading towards the bunkhouse. Thankfully he'd left his borrowed riding kit in the ranch truck. He changed his clothes and stopped back by the office on his way out.

As usual, the door was open. "Do you mind if I take one of the trucks? I figure one of the guys can bring it back later. My bike's still at Brewsters."

"Go ahead. They'll probably all pile in together anyway. There should definitely be someone to drive it back."

Logan tipped his hat and grinned. "Thanks, boss."

Jax grinned. “Get outa here and enjoy your day. It might be the last one for a while.”

Logan saluted and turned on his heels towards the truck. As he neared the battered white pickup, Neil rounded the corner of the bunkhouse. “Hey, where’re you off to?”

“I got the day off. I’m headed into town,” Logan said, not giving away his true destination.

“Gonna ogle some fine cowboy ass, huh?” the younger hand said with a chuckle. “I know Jax is looking forward to it. He and Chaney have talked about nothing else all week. Just don’t use ‘em all up before we get there.”

Logan felt his hands curl into fists at the reminder of Jax’s attraction to rodeo riders. “You’ve got my word,” Logan managed to say through clenched teeth. He’d begun to doubt his crazy idea of riding a snorting, slobbering bull just to impress Jax, but Neil’s casual comment cemented his resolve.

Had Jax been thinking about the rodeo cowboy the previous night when they’d made love? Maybe it was a particular kink of his new lover’s. Shit. Maybe the guy Jax had been so in love with would be at the rodeo. *Fuck.*

Logan climbed into the truck and tore out of the drive. He’d either replace the guy in Jax’s memories, or die trying.

* * * *

“I’m surprised you’re still here,” Ezra said from the doorway. “I figured you’d be in town watching your buddy.”

Jax looked up from his paperwork. “Huh?”

Ezra looked at his watch. “Wyn and I were just heading in to watch the bull qualifiers. Thought I’d stop by and see if you wanted a ride?”

Confused, Jax shook his head. “Wait. What’re you talking about?”

Ezra started laughing and slapped his old hat against his thigh. “You don’t know, do you?”

He felt like strangling the mountain of a man in front of him. “Would you just tell me what the hell you’re talking about?” As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he had a sinking feeling in his gut.

Before Ezra could answer, Jax continued. “Please don’t tell me Logan’s riding.” At Ezra’s bemused look, Jax sprang out of his chair and grabbed his hat. “Goddammit. He’s gonna get himself killed. How could you let him ride?”

He tried to storm by Ezra, but a strong hand encircled his biceps. “Hold up,” Ezra’s deep voice commanded. “That boy doesn’t need my permission to do something on his day off. Logan isn’t my responsibility any more than he is yours. I figure if he wants the thrill of the ride, who am I to stop him?”

Jax looked up at his employer through narrowed eyes. “If he falls and breaks his neck it’ll become your business real fast.”

“Watch it,” Ezra growled.

Shaking his head, Jax pulled free of Ezra’s hold and ran to his truck. Hopefully he’d be in time to stop the idiot from almost certain injury.

Jax was halfway to town before he realised Logan had lied to him that morning. Shit. Only a couple of weeks into an already shaky relationship and they were lying to each other. Why in the hell had he thought a relationship with Logan would be any different?

He pulled into the gravelled parking lot and found a spot. Without bothering to retrieve his keys from the ignition, Jax jumped out and sprinted towards the chutes.

The dust was thick in the air as the team roping competition was underway. When he didn’t immediately see Logan, he hopped up on a temporary stock fence and surveyed the crowd. “There you are you stupid fuck,” he said, catching a glimpse of Logan’s bent over form.

He rounded the pens just in time to see Logan pull a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his mouth. The fresh pile of regurgitated lunch on the ground told its own story. “Coming to your senses?” Jax asked.

Logan’s head popped up. “What’re you doing here? The lure of rodeo ass too much to keep you away?” Logan paused and looked around. “Or are you meeting someone?”

“I came to take your ass back to the ranch where you belong. You’re a fucking idiot if you think you can hold your own with one of those mean sonofabitches. Get your shit and let’s go,” Jax said, reaching for Logan.

“Fuck you, Jax. You aren’t my boss today,” Logan spat out, pulling away.

Jax stepped up, right into Logan’s face. “You don’t know what the hell you’re doing. And it will be my business when you break your fucking neck, and I have to replace your ass come Monday.”

Logan backed Jax up against one of the steel rails. “What? You’re the one who goaded me into doing it, and now you change your mind? I don’t think so. I may be a lot of things, but yella isn’t one of them.”

Jax heard a sound to his left and looked over to see Shep and Jeremy staring straight at them. Logan noticed too, and stomped off, with Jax right on his heels.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” Jax asked, catching up with Logan.

Logan spun around. “I’ve heard nothing else from you and the hands for the last couple weeks except how much you love sexy rodeo cowboys. Well here I am.” Logan spread his arms wide.

Shit. Jax closed his eyes and shook his head. “I said that stuff because I didn’t want anyone to know I had a weakness for a certain tattooed cowboy.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really. Now, would you drop this fool notion of competing and come home with me?”

Logan looked momentarily confused. He gestured down to the number twenty-three pinned to his chest. "I can't back out now. I've already signed up and paid my money."

"I'll reimburse you. Hell, the ranch will reimburse you."

Logan shook his head. "It's not about the money. I don't back out of stuff. Not when I've already given my word I'd do something. Sorry, Jax, but I gotta ride."

Jax took another step forward and wrapped his arms around Logan. "Please. Don't do this."

"I've got to," Logan said, kissing Jax's forehead. "If you don't want to watch, I understand."

Jax took off his hat and threw it in the dirt. "Goddammit you're one stubborn sonofabitch."

Logan pulled Jax even closer. "Careful, or people might start to think you really care for me." He gave Jax another quick kiss, and then another.

The next thing Jax knew they were calling Logan's name over the loudspeaker. "Gotta go," Logan said, pulling away. "Wish me luck."

Chapter Seven

As Jax watched from the railing, Logan mounted the bad tempered bull. Doing something he hadn't done since he was a boy, he sent up a silent prayer. He hated that Logan was determined to go through with it, but part of him admired the man for his sense of honour. Hell, Jax just hoped the man didn't get seriously injured, or worse. The thought sent with it an all over body shiver.

He looked at the restless crowd in the stands. Sadly, a lot of them got a thrill from seeing a body fly through the air as it was bucked off. Jax prayed those people would have to get their thrills elsewhere.

As the buzzer sounded and the gate opened, Jax held his breath. Logan's arms and legs were flopping in every direction. Several times he thought his lover was going to hit the dirt, but Logan managed to hold on. *Eight seconds!* Logan somehow managed to ride that sonofabitch for the full eight. *Damn.*

Jax didn't exhale until the clowns and wranglers managed to get Logan safely out of the arena. "Thank you," he whispered to the late afternoon sky. Logan's scores came up, and they weren't bad. They weren't good, but doable to get him to the finals if a few more cowboys didn't ride the full eight. He made his way over, and checked Logan from head to toe before saying a word.

"What?" Logan chuckled. "No faith?"

Standing, he leaned close and grinned. "That was one of the sloppiest eight seconds I've ever witnessed."

"Stayed on though," Logan declared, thrusting his chin out in defiance.

"That you did." Jax gripped Logan's shoulders. "I'm proud of you. Now that you've proved your point there's no use tempting fate."

Logan shook his head. "Are you nuts? If I make it to the finals I'm riding. Besides, damn, what a thrill."

Jax stared into Logan's eyes for several moments. He knew he wasn't going to talk his cowboy out of it. "I'll kick your ass myself if you get hurt."

Logan waved away his concern. "I'll be fine. Come on, I'll let you buy me dinner."

"I hope hot dogs and nachos are your choice, because if I leave it'll be to take your ass home."

Logan laughed and butted shoulders with Jax. "God I'm a cheap date because that actually sounds good."

"Cheap, hell. Have you seen the prices they're asking for that shit?"

* * * *

Logan followed Jax home on his Harley. He'd never admit it to Jax, but damn he was sore. As they pulled up to Jax's little house, Logan almost groaned just nudging the kickstand into place.

He got off his bike and waited for his lover. "Sore?" Jax asked, eyeing him as he approached.

"Some," Logan admitted. All the way home he'd thought of Jax's performance earlier that day. "Still want me to stay the night?"

"You bet your sweet ass," Jax answered, taking Logan's hand.

Logan warmed at the intimate touch. Even though there wasn't anyone around to see the declaration, it was a start. He knew they needed to talk about that morning, but Logan wasn't sure where to begin. "Wanna go sit in the truck first?"

Jax stopped on the front porch. "What? Why would we do that? Some sort of fantasy?"

"No," Logan said with a shake to his head. "It's just that every time we've had any kind of meaningful conversation it's taken place in the truck."

Jax looked confused. "I'm not following. What do you want to talk about?"

Logan put his hands on his hips and looked around the empty ranch yard. He gestured towards the front door. "Let's talk inside."

Jax's brows shot up. "Ookay." He opened the door and stepped back for Logan to enter. "What's on your mind?"

After using the bootjack beside the door, Logan walked over and fell onto the sofa. Hell, where did he begin this conversation? "Do I satisfy you...sexually?"

Jax looked like he'd been slapped. "What's this about? Weren't you in bed with me when we tried out four different positions? Do you think I'd continue to let you fuck me if I didn't enjoy it?"

Logan could see the flush of anger creeping up Jax's neck. "Yeah, I thought you did, until earlier. You want to discuss the acting job you did on me?"

Closing his eyes, Jax sighed and fell on the sofa beside Logan. "It wasn't you. Well, it was, but..."

Jax broke off and clenched his hands in his lap. "I don't know what to say. No matter what I tell you it'll hurt your feelings."

"How 'bout the truth?"

Jax sighed again and covered his face with his hands. "I wanted to tell you that I was falling in love with you."

"And that made you what? Mad, uninterested in what was going on? What?"

"It made me think of the last person I made that particular declaration to."

Logan slowly stood, towering over Jax. "You were thinking about someone else while I was fucking you?"

Jax nodded. "But not in a good way. Those three little words gave my ex the power to use me at will. The memories made me go soft. I didn't want to hurt your feelings. So yeah, I pretended to come."

"Who the hell was this guy?"

Shaking his head, Jax stood in front of Logan. "It doesn't matter anymore."

"The hell it doesn't."

“No, it really doesn’t. He’s not even around anymore, and the only thing I still feel for him is anger.” Jax reached out and put his arms around Logan’s waist. “Please just forget it?”

With Jax plastered to his chest, Logan grunted and wrapped his arms around his lover. He knew the conversation wasn’t over, but he suddenly realised he didn’t want to know who’d broken Jax’s heart. As long as the fucker wouldn’t be coming back for seconds Logan thought he could deal with it, at least for a little while.

His hands travelled down Jax’s back to squeeze and play with his lover’s ass. “Bed?”

Jax nodded and pulled Logan’s head down for a kiss. “I really do you know.”

“You really do what?” Logan asked.

“Love you.”

Logan’s heart melted in a puddle on the scarred wood floor. “I love you, too.”

As Jax led him to the bedroom, Logan’s body began to stiffen, all of it. *I should’ve never sat down.* “I should probably shower first. I feel like I have half the dirt in the county stuck to me.”

Jax nodded, but didn’t turn around, instead leading Logan into the small bathroom. “Feel like sharing?”

“If you’ll undress me, I’ll share anything you want,” Logan joked.

Jax’s head tilted to the side. “Stiff?”

“Something like that,” Logan answered, looking down at his cock pressing against the fly of his jeans.

Jax’s mouth opened before snapping shut. Logan could tell his lover wanted to scold him for riding, but had thought better of it. Instead, Jax unsnapped Logan’s dirty western-style shirt and pushed it off his

shoulders. “What’s sore?” Jax asked, as he knelt in front of Logan and began pulling off his socks.

“Everything,” Logan admitted. God he hated admitting that.

Jax ran his hands up Logan’s legs, from ankles to crotch. “Even this?” Jax asked, unzipping Logan’s fly.

“Why? You gonna kiss it for me?”

“I’m gonna do more than that,” Jax answered. He pushed Logan’s jeans and underwear down his legs. Logan held on to Jax’s shoulders and stepped out of the dirty denim.

Before he could remove his hands from their perch on Jax, his lover’s mouth engulfed his cock. “Shit,” Logan spat. Damn, Jax knew how to work a cock. Logan’s head fell back as he gave himself over to his lover’s ministrations.

Jax gripped Logan’s hips and urged him to do what came natural. Logan gave in to temptation and began fucking Jax’s mouth. He swore Jax got better every time they did this. “Love you,” he panted, feeling his balls draw up tight.

“Mmm hmm,” Jax mumbled from around Logan’s shaft.

The light scrape of teeth just under the head of his cock set Logan off. He shook with the intensity of his orgasm as he shot down Jax’s throat. His lover greedily sucked down every drop, before setting back on his heels. “Better?”

Unable to catch his breath, Logan nodded and pulled Jax up and into his arms. He held his man for several moments before he was able to speak. “Much better.”

“Good,” Jax said before he kissed him. “Let’s get you cleaned up and in bed.”

Logan reached down and felt the bulging fly of Jax’s jeans. “Let me take care of this.”

“Later. I kinda like teetering on the edge.”

“Pervert,” Logan chuckled.

“Yep. Yours.”

“Absolutely.”

* * * *

Having gone to bed so early, Logan woke before dawn. He watched Jax sleep for about fifteen minutes before sitting up on the side of the bed. Fuck. His muscles and joints felt even worse. Suck it up.

Logan stood and wrapped Jax’s old green robe around himself. He slowly walked into the living room and looked around. Knowing he needed to practice his reading, he wished he’d remembered his backpack. Instead he found a book on one of the side tables. He held the paperback up. “Campus Cravings?” What the hell?

He turned on a lamp and settled into Jax’s recliner. Opening the first page of the book, Logan began reading about some coach. His fingers were itching for his yellow highlighter. Eli had given him permission to highlight any of the words he didn’t either know or understand. This book had quite a few, but Logan continued to try and struggle through. If he was caught reading, he didn’t want it to be with one of his four grade level books.

By the time the sun came up, and Jax wandered down the hall, Logan was only on chapter two. He looked up at his sleepy lover standing in the doorway. “What kind of book is this?” Logan looked down at the erection poking between the folds in Jax’s robe. “Hell, maybe I’d have liked reading if the school library carried this shit.”

Jax laughed and sat on the arm of the chair. “I think hell would freeze over before you found that particular book in any school library.”

“Shame,” Logan chuckled, shaking his head.

“How long’ve you been up?” Jax asked, peering down at the open book with a questioning look in his eyes.

Logan quickly snapped the book closed. Shit. “Uh...not long.”

Jax gave him a half-smile and nodded his head. Without thinking of his sore body, Logan pulled his cowboy onto his lap. His quick intake of breath at Jax’s weight gave him away.

Trying to get off Logan’s lap, Jax squirmed around for a few brief seconds as Logan held him tight. “Just sit still, will ya?”

“I’m hurting you,” Jax answered.

“I’m okay. Just do me a favour and crawl under this robe with me, so I can feel ya.”

Jax parted the ratty terry cloth and Logan was rewarded with his lover’s bare skin. “Yeah, that’s what I’m talking about,” Logan moaned.

Although he couldn’t read all the words in Jax’s book, he knew exactly what was going on. His cock knew, too, and he was primed in all the right places. “You feel good.” Logan rubbed his hands across Jax’s chest to pinch and play with his lover’s nipples.

Jax arched into Logan’s touch. “You like that?” Logan asked, moving one hand down to encircle Jax’s hard cock.

“You know I do,” Jax replied. His body jerked as Logan stroked him.

The movement sent a wave of pain through Logan’s legs. “Dammit,” Jax said, jumping off Logan’s lap. “No matter how much it gets you off, I won’t hurt you.” Jax stood over Logan. “Let’s go back to bed.”

Logan glanced at the clock on the DVD player. “I need to get to get my chores done before I have to head to town. I’ve got two geldings that need shoein’.”

Jax continued to hold out his hand. “Please don’t ride. There’s absolutely nothing else to prove. I love you, not some no name, no face bull rider, you.”

“Thank you, but I have to do this, for me.” Logan sighed. “I’m a quitter. Always have been. School got rough, so I quit. Working for Uncle Bob

became uncomfortable, so I quit and moved down here. Believe in me for one more day. Please.”

With a grunt of acceptance, Jax helped Logan to his feet. “Go lay on the bed, and I’ll get out the analgesic cream.”

“See, that’s why I love you,” Logan said with a grin.

“Don’t push your luck.”

Chapter Eight

“So, who’d you pull?” Jax asked.

Logan took off his hat and rubbed the short bristles of his hair. “Tabasco Red.”

Jax whistled. “That’s that nasty frothing thing the Back Breaker brought over isn’t it?”

“That’s the one.” Logan felt his gut churning at the thought of getting on one of the biggest, ugliest bulls he’d ever laid eyes on. What if Jax’s fears came true and something really did happen to him? Images of being trampled swarmed him. *Fuck. Come on, Logan, shake this shit off.*

“You okay?”

“Yeah. I don’t ride for a couple of hours. Let’s go back to town and enjoy some of the other stuff going on.”

“Like what?” Jax asked.

“Hell I don’t know. This is my first one. You tell me.” Logan started walking towards Jax’s truck. He didn’t know what he wanted to see or do. He just knew he had to get away from the arena. *It’s a bad time to get nervous.*

Jax began clicking activities off on his fingers as they walked. “Well, there’s the kissing booth, the pie bake-off, couple of rides, games, craft sales. You know...the usual stuff at small town fairs.”

“We’ll find something to keep us occupied,” Logan said, jumping into the passenger seat.

When Jax didn’t immediately get in, Logan looked towards the driver’s side door. Jax was standing with his hands on his hips, peering at Logan through the open window. “You wanna talk about it?” Jax finally asked.

“Nope. Just get in and let’s go.”

Jax eased the door open and sat behind the wheel. “You know you don’t have to do this. No one’s gonna think less of you.”

“No one but me. I don’t want to talk about it. I’m doin’ it. I just need some time away from here.”

Jax reached across the seat and put his hand in Logan’s. “Let’s go see the sights.”

Logan was grateful Jax didn’t push the issue. He couldn’t believe he was getting so nervous. It was totally out of character. Hell, he’d taken mountain roads at over a hundred miles an hour on his Harley, why should an eight second ride freak him out?

They rode the couple of miles into the centre of town, and Jax managed to find a decent parking spot behind the bakery. With the town gearing up for the dance later that evening, Main Street was already blocked.

As they neared City Hall, Logan reached out and took Jax’s hand. “This okay?” he asked.

Jax gave Logan’s hand a squeeze. “Course it’s okay.”

The shady lawn around the large brick building brought some much needed relief. “Damn, that feels good.”

“You ain’t a kiddin’,” Jax agreed, before pointing towards one of the trees. “Aww. Now isn’t that just the sweetest sight you’ve ever seen?”

Logan looked over and grinned. Nate was lying with his head in Rio's lap as he was fed bits of pink and blue cotton candy. Jax led him over to stand above the giggling men.

"Looks like someone's having fun," Jax chuckled.

Nate smiled and stretched his arms over his head. "Well, as fun as two people can have in the centre of town without getting arrested." Nate looked up at Rio and winked. "That's an idea. What if we started tearing each other's clothes off and Ryan had to come and put us in the *pokey*?"

Before Rio could stop laughing, Nate had already begun to unzip his jeans. "Hey. None of that," Rio said, stilling Nate's hands. "We promised Ryan we'd be good while he worked."

Logan couldn't believe what he was seeing. Nate's face turned into a pout within seconds. Rio scooped the much smaller man up in his arms. "Sorry, baby, but we promised. We'll sneak away to The Gym after a bit for some relief. Until then you'll have to get by with watching other people kiss."

"Why can't we kiss?" Nate asked. His bottom lip still firmly stuck out.

"Cuz you don't know how to stop once you get going." Rio gestured towards the line of stalls outside the entrance to the hall. "Leave it to the professionals."

Logan looked over, confused. "Damn. They're really selling kisses?"

"Yep," Rio said. "They make a fortune for the park every year. This year they talked Tyler into taking a shift, and I think every bachelor in town has stepped up for a turn at least once."

"All except one," Nate seemed to remind Rio.

"Well, Hearn doesn't count. He's still in mourning. Besides, he's been shooting some pretty nasty looks Tyler's way all afternoon. I don't think he approves of our local fundraising efforts."

Logan felt Jax's grip on his hand increase to the point of pain. "Let's go," Jax said, and started to walk off without even saying goodbye to Rio and Nate.

"Hey, wait." Logan gave Jax's hand a tug. "Aren't you gonna say goodbye?"

Jax didn't even look around, but he did throw a hand up into the air. "See you guys later."

As Logan tried to keep pace with Jax, he thought about what had just happened. Jax had been fine until Rio started talking about the kissing booth. "Did you have an affair with Tyler?"

"Nope," Jax said and kept walking.

"Well, if it wasn't Tyler...oh, my god, you had an affair with Hearn," Logan practically shouted.

Jax stopped in his tracks and released his grip on Logan's hand. He spun on his heels and leaned up into Logan's face. "No. Now drop it."

Logan was surprised by the look in Jax's eyes. It wasn't anger, but...guilt? Knowing this was one of those make or break moments in their relationship, Logan quickly backed down. It just wasn't worth sacrificing his love. "Sorry." He bent down and placed a soft kiss on Jax's trembling lips. "I hope one day you'll trust me, but I won't ask again."

Jax's eyes closed. He lowered his head to rest on Logan's chest. "It was an ugly time in my life. I just want to forget it."

Logan wrapped Jax in his arms. *Damn.* "Let's find something to eat before I have to get back to the arena."

Jax nodded and squeezed Logan once more before pulling away. Logan didn't miss the single tear still slowly dripping down Jax's high cheekbone. He decided to pretend he hadn't noticed, knowing it would only cause further embarrassment.

Instead, he held Jax's hand and led him towards the food vendors. He spotted a sign and headed for it. "I love corndogs."

“They call ‘em grange pups here. There’s something special they put in the batter.” Jax shrugged. “Still tastes like a corndog though.”

“Cool. You want one?” Logan asked, getting in the long line.

“No. I think I’ll go over there and get a buffalo burger.” Logan made a face that made Jax laugh. “You just wait. You’ve never tasted anything so good.”

“Oh yes I have,” Logan whispered in Jax’s ear, brushing the front of his lover’s jeans.

With a shake to his head, Jax pulled away from Logan. “Pervert,” he said with a chuckle.

After watching Jax walk towards the burger stand, Logan studied the menu board. He knew he wanted a side order of something, but was having trouble making out what all they had. He recognised French fries, onion rings and slaw, but they seemed to have quite a few more.

Logan was saved when a warm hand landed on his shoulder. He turned to find his tutor, Eli, standing right behind him. “Hey,” he greeted.

“How’s it going? I haven’t seen you for a couple of days,” Eli replied.

“Okay. I’ve been getting ready for the rodeo. Been reading some though.” He leaned closer to Eli so the rest of the line couldn’t hear him. “Did you know they have books with gay sex in them?”

Eli gave him a surprised look. “Yeah I did, but I don’t think that’s one you got from me.”

Logan chuckled. “No. It was something Jax had.”

“And how did it go? Were you able to understand it?” Eli asked, putting his teacher’s hat on.

“Some.” Logan felt his face flush. “Well, enough.”

Eli grinned. “I think you should stick to the ones I gave you. Save the others as a goal to work towards.”

Logan nodded and pointed towards the menu board. "Can you tell me what they have besides fries, rings and slaw?"

Looking towards the board, Eli began reading off the sides. "Fried cauliflower, fried zucchini, cream cheese jalapeño poppers and potato salad."

"What're you having?"

"Pups and onion rings," Eli answered.

Rubbing his chin, Logan thought through the choices. When it was his turn to order, he decided to stick with the basics. "I'll have six corn dogs, a basket of fries, a basket of rings, and two large lemonades."

Once his food was set on the high counter, Logan turned back to Eli, and shoved half the food to him. "In thanks for everything you're doing for me."

Eli smiled, flashing his cute dimples. "Thanks."

"I'll see you Monday night," Logan said.

"I'll be waiting," Eli replied.

When Logan turned around, Jax was standing right in front of him. "Hey."

"What was all that about? What's going on Monday night?" Jax asked, with an accusatory look on his face.

"That was my teacher. I'm meeting him for a tutoring session." *Where is all this coming from?*

Jax nodded. "There's a spot of shade open."

"Lead the way," Logan said. Something just didn't feel right, and he had a suspicion things with Jax would go on like this until he got to the root of the problem. Who knew loving Jax would be so much work?

Once they settled on the ground with their cardboard trays, Logan tried to lighten the mood. "Are you still gonna be my date for the dance?"

“If you’re still in one piece.”

Logan sighed. Jax wasn’t making this easy. “I’ll be in one piece. Stop worrying.”

Jax grunted.

Dropping his corn dog back on his tray, Logan had had it. “I don’t know what kind of bug crawled up your ass, but I’m sick of it. In the last hour you’ve become an asshole. And I don’t need that right now.” Logan stood and dropped his food into the nearest trash can. He didn’t even look back as he went to find a ride to the arena. Surely someone would take pity on him and give him a lift.

* * * *

As he watched his lover storm off, Jax felt the burger in his belly threatening to come back up. “Fuck!”

Rising, he threw the remainder of his lunch in the can on top of Logan’s, and looked around. There was no sense running after Logan. Until he could open up, Jax knew nothing would change between them.

He looked at his watch. There were still ninety-minutes before the bull riding competition got underway. Maybe if he gave Logan some breathing space until then, things could go back to normal? A guy could hope at least.

“Where’s your shadow?” a deep voice said from behind him.

Jax turned to find Ezra with a goofy grin on his face. “Where’s yours?” he asked.

“Working at the church booth. Answer my question.”

“Logan’s pissed at me. He’s gone to find a ride back to the arena.”

“And you just let him go?” Ezra asked.

Jax shrugged. “We’ve got some problems.”

“Well work ‘em out, boy.” Ezra took a seat under the tree.

Deciding he wasn't going to get rid of his boss any time soon, Jax joined him. "I guess I'm not very good at opening up. There are some things I need to tell him, but I can't bring myself to do it."

"You mean about you and that asshole you were sneaking around with?"

Jax was shocked. "You knew?"

"Hell yeah I knew. I know everything that goes on around my ranch. I may be ugly, but I'm not blind."

That got an unexpected grin out of him. "You're not ugly. Hell, without the mountain man beard, I'd even go as far as to say you're hot."

"Don't let Wyn hear you say that. He's a bit of the jealous type," Ezra said with a wink.

"Don't blame him."

"Nice try, by the way. Now, let's get back to your problem. I say you just tell Logan. Hell, it's clearly over with no hope of resurrecting."

"I can't. I'm more than a little ashamed that I allowed myself to sneak around with him for so long. Then to find out I wasn't the only one..." Jax shook his head. "Not my finest hour."

"Water under the bridge. People do some stupid shit when it comes to being in love. But now you've got the chance to have that kind of love and devotion given back to you. Don't fuck it up." Ezra slapped Jax on the thigh. "Come on. Let's go watch a rodeo."

Chapter Nine

With Ezra at his side, Jax spotted Logan sitting in the shade of the grandstand. His lover looked upset, face turned down with that raggedy cowboy hat perched on his head.

“Go on. Wish the boy luck. I’ll meet you over by the stock corral when you’re done.”

“Thanks,” he said to his boss.

After gathering his courage, he walked over and sat beside Logan. Taking a chance, he wrapped his arm around the cowboy’s shoulders and squeezed. “I’m sorry I’ve been a shit head.”

Logan didn’t turn to look at him, but Jax felt his lover press even further against him. “It’s hard to love a man who seems like a stranger most of the time. I was just sitting here wondering if I ever really knew you at all. Growing up, you were my knight. I held every man I ever met up to you, and they all came out lacking.”

“I’m no one’s idea of a knight. I’m a fuck-up.”

“No,” Logan said, with a shake to his head. “I don’t believe that.” Logan turned to look at Jax. “I’m just trying to figure out why everything is so hard for us. The fantasy of being with you didn’t involve all these other issues.”

“That’s why they’re called fantasies. Real life is anything but.” He put his hand on the back of Logan’s head and drew him closer. “I love you, but we’ll never work it out if you walk away from me.”

Jax gestured in the direction of the stock pens. “Ezra slapped some sense into me earlier. I think we need to talk after you ride.”

Logan nodded, and kissed him again. “Before or after the dance? I’ve got my heart set on two-stepping you around the dance floor.”

“Then it better be after. I’m not sure what you’ll feel like doing with me after our talk.” Jax felt the words resonate in his gut. God he hoped Logan wouldn’t be sickened by him.

The announcer came over the loud speaker calling the start of the bull riding competition. “Shit. That’s you.”

“Yep,” Logan said. “I guess it’s time to get ready.” Logan stood and reached his hand down to help Jax to his feet. “You’ll be rooting me on, right?”

“I’ll be praying for your safety most of the time, but I’m sure I can squeeze a few cheers in there.”

“I’ll be fine. The wranglers are damn good at their job. I promise I won’t break anything that would get in the way of me fucking this sweet ass of yours later.” Logan finished the statement by running both hands over Jax’s butt.

Feeling his cock harden, Jax pulled away. “You’re trying to get me in trouble.”

Logan looked around before cupping Jax’s erection. “Maybe I should forget the ride and take you in the back of one of those horse trailers over there.”

As good as the idea sounded, Jax knew it was time he supported his lover. “After you ride.”

Logan’s brows drew up. “Are you admitting to me that my riding the bull makes you hot?”

“No,” Jax denied. “I’m just trying to support you.” He grinned and thrust his cock against Logan’s palm. “Well, maybe just a little,” he chuckled.

“I knew it!”

* * * *

Jax watched Logan get into his gear. At the last moment, his lover reached into his duffle and extracted the battered black leather jacket he always wore. With a grin aimed at Jax, Logan slipped into the coat.

“What the hell are you doing? It’s like a hundred degrees out here.” Jax commented.

Logan shrugged. “I don’t figure I’m gonna win many style points anyway, and I’ve always done my best riding with this on.”

Jax couldn't help the laughter that escaped him. "You're a regular bad boy cowboy." He shook his head. "I can't wait to see the look on the judges' faces. Just don't go keeling over from heat stroke."

"I got it all under control. Wish me luck." Logan gave Jax a final kiss before they walked hand in hand towards the chute.

The closer they got, the more nervous Jax became. Tabasco Red was one mean looking sonofabitch. He watched as Logan gave a final wave before walking over far enough to see the ride.

Standing beside Ezra, Jax settled in. "Thanks for the advice earlier."

"No problem."

He heard the commotion in the chute before he saw it. When he looked over, all he could see was a swarm of cowboy backs reaching in. The announcer's voice over the loud speaker almost stopped his heart.

"It seems Logan Miller's unconscious. Let's just hope those wranglers can get him out of there before he suffers any further damage."

Jax and Ezra took off as soon as they heard the first part of the announcement. *Shit. Shit. Shit.* Jax made it to the chute just in time to see Logan's lifeless body being hoisted over the edge. They'd ended up opening the chute to let the bull escape in order to get to Logan.

The medics were right there, as the cowboys laid Logan onto the narrow gurney. Jax pushed his way through the crowd of onlookers. "Dammit, let me through!" he shouted.

Zac Alben and Dr. Browning were already by Logan's side, speaking to him. "Logan? Can you hear me?" Doc asked, shining a light in Logan's eyes.

Jax got as close as he could, and stretched out to hold Logan's hand. He felt his lover's fingers move, before his eyes finally opened. Jax's heart nearly broke at the utter confused look on Logan's face.

"You butted heads with the bull," the doctor explained. "Can you talk?"

“Yeah,” Logan mumbled.

Sam Browning looked towards Jax and Ezra. “We’ll transport him to the clinic. I’d like to get some x-rays.”

Jax nodded. Sam and Zac started wheeling the gurney towards the waiting ambulance. Jax refused to let go of Logan’s hand until they lifted the narrow bed into the back. “I’m right behind you,” he shouted to Logan.

Logan opened his eyes once again. His lover still looked dazed and more than a little confused. “Sorry,” Logan mumbled.

“Just rest and I’ll meet you at the clinic.” Sam climbed in back with Logan and Zac shut the ambulance doors.

The announcer was still going through what went wrong over the loud speaker. Jax wanted to run up to the box and pull the plug on the damn microphone. Instead he turned to Ezra. “Give me a ride?”

“You bet.”

They took off at a run to Ezra’s pickup. As soon as they were both buckled in, Ezra peeled out of the parking lot with a spray of gravel. “He’ll be fine,” Ezra tried to soothe.

“Yeah.”

“The fact that Zac doesn’t have the lights and sirens going is a good sign,” Ezra added.

When they reached the edge of town, Jax’s heart dropped as the lights on the ambulance came to life. “Fuck. What do you think that means?”

Ezra shook his head. “I’m sure he’s just trying to get through the festival traffic easier. Don’t worry.”

“Easy for you to say, it’s not Wyn in the back.”

Ezra sped up. “God, don’t go there.”

Jax watched everyone they passed. A look of horror and curiosity etched on their faces. Ezra didn't even bother trying to find a place to park, instead he pulled alongside of the ambulance, blocking the alley.

Jumping out, Jax met up with Logan as they were wheeling him inside. Isaac and Matt were there to greet them. "How's he doing?" Isaac asked Sam.

"In and out. I'm concerned he may have fractured his skull, and I think his wrist is busted."

"Let's get him into x-ray before we try and move him too much," Matt piped in.

Jax stood by feeling helpless. It really put their earlier argument into perspective for him. He could've so easily lost Logan...

Ezra interrupted his thoughts with a hand on his shoulder. "Let's go to the waiting room. They'll come and find us when they know something."

Jax watched the automatic doors swing shut as they took Logan into x-ray. He took off his hat and scrubbed his nails through his hair. "How do people deal with this? I feel like I'm gonna come out of my skin."

"It goes with loving someone. You're always afraid something will happen to them." Ezra ushered Jax into the waiting room. "You wanna cup of coffee?"

Jax shook his head. He sank into a chair and put his face in his hands. He remembered back to the night he'd found out about Mitch's death. Ezra had called down from the main house to inform him of the car wreck.

For days, Jax felt numb, his mind playing and replaying their last time together. Mitch had just made love to him in a hotel room in Sheridan. He was cuddled up to the man he loved when Mitch's cell phone rang. Since it was closer to him, Jax reached over to the bedside table. He looked at the display before handing it to his lover. Mario's name appeared on the screen.

Jax couldn't help notice the momentary gleam in Mitch's eyes as he flipped the phone open. "Hey," his lover crooned.

Jax sat up in bed. No way was that a greeting you give to a friend. Hell, Jax knew that tone of voice, it was the same one Mitch used on the phone with him. Was he fucking Mario?

Mitch's next words confirmed Jax's suspicion. "I can't right now, but I'll call you when I leave. We'll set something up for later in the week."

With the cum still fresh on his stomach, Jax rose and ran to the bathroom. He knelt in front of the toilet and threw up. He could still hear Mitch talking to Mario in that seductive voice he used so well. Damn. He'd been such an idiot. For two years he'd snuck around to be with Mitch. To find out Mitch was fucking around on not only Hearn, but Jax as well, had him feeling like ten times a fool.

Mitch hadn't even cared enough about him to come into the bathroom once he'd finally ended his call. Instead, he stood outside the door and yelled in. "Great as usual, babe. I'll call you when I can get away again."

Jax closed his eyes. He knew he'd never again lie in Mitch's rented bed. With his heart breaking, he heard the motel room door shut. It had taken him hours to get himself under control enough to drive the hour back to the ranch.

After that day, he'd begun to pay more attention to the gossip in town surrounding Mitch. It seemed Mitch had quite a few lovers on the string. It didn't seem to matter how Jax had justified his involvement with Mitch in the past, at night when he was in bed, the shame seemed to envelope him.

The day of Mitch's death, he'd run into him for the first time since Mitch had left him in the motel room. Jax had been ignoring the myriad of phone messages left on his machine, refusing to give Mitch the satisfaction of formally breaking up with him.

Jax had attended Gil and Kyle's wedding in the park. He'd snuck off to use one of the portable bathrooms behind a grouping of trees. When he finished his business and stepped out of the small green structure, Mitch pulled him off to the side. His ex-lover began slobbering all over Jax's neck.

"God I've missed you," Mitch said between licks.

Jax rolled his eyes. He actually felt disgusted having the loser touch him, and tried to push the bigger man away. “Stop it.”

Mitch looked surprised. “What?”

“You heard me. Why don’t you go find someone else to cheat on Hearn with? Maybe you’ll get lucky and Mario will be here, or George, or maybe even Erico.”

Realising he’d been found out, Mitch tried to play it off. “Those are just fucks, baby. They don’t mean to me what you do. You’re number one with me.”

“And Hearn? Where does he fit into the equation?”

“Hearn’s Hearn. We’ve been through this a million times. I feel responsible for him. Hell, it’s because of me that he walked away from his family’s millions. I owe the man a home at least.”

Jax shook his head. How the hell had he fallen for that sad excuse for two years? “He deserves better than you. I notice he’s been spending a lot of time with Tyler lately. Maybe he’s finally figured out what making love to a real man is like.”

Mitch’s fist connected with his jaw in a flash. Jax’s head snapped back at the blow. He recovered quickly and leaned into Mitch’s face. “Hit me all you want. It won’t change what you really are. Hell, I may have to open Hearn’s eyes to the man he professes to love.”

“I’ll kill you first,” Mitch warned him.

“Yeah, I imagine you would, but I can’t say that right now I’d care. It’s time I did something good for Hearn. I’ve hurt him enough by being friendly to his face while fucking around with you every chance I got. I hate what I am, and what I’ve done.”

Mitch started to argue, but Jax wasn’t ready to stop digging in the knife. “I’ve seen the way Tyler looks at him. He’s in love with your man, but Hearn’s too bloody in love with you to notice.”

“Fuck you,” Mitch spat. “Stay away from Hearn. Someday his family will forgive him, and I’ll finally have access to those millions. I’m not about to let you fuck it up now.”

Jax was left open-mouthed as Mitch stormed away. Fuck. How had he been fooled for so long? Never again would he allow himself to get swallowed up by his passion. Fucking was fucking, and love didn’t even need to come into the picture.

By the time he’d made it back to the party, he saw Mitch putting Hearn and Tyler in the car and driving off. Deciding he’d had enough excitement for one day, Jax left soon after. Two hours later he’d gotten the phone call from Ezra, and to this day, he felt guilty. Had he inadvertently caused the wreck that had taken Mitch’s life?

Chapter Ten

Jax looked down at the thumb nail he’d bitten down to the quick. *Damn. That’s gonna hurt later.* A commotion at the door drew his attention. Logan came staggering out of the emergency room with a bright blue cast on his lower arm.

“What the fuck?” Jax ran over to Logan’s side. “What’re you doing up?”

“Leavin’,” Logan slurred.

Jax noticed Isaac and Sam hot on Logan’s heels. “The hell you are,” Isaac said, grabbing Logan’s arm. “You belong in a hospital.”

“The hell I do.”

Jax looked from Logan to Isaac. “What did you find?”

Isaac exhaled and released his hold on Logan. “Broken wrist and one hell of a concussion. He needs to be looked after for the next forty-eight hours.”

“I can do that,” Jax volunteered. He turned towards Logan. “But why won’t you listen to the doctors? If they think you’d be better off...”

“No. Now that’s the end of it.” Logan’s eyes softened a bit. “Please stop making me yell. It feels like my head wants to roll off my shoulders.”

“That would serve you right,” Isaac added sarcastically.

Jax held his hand up. “If I watch him closely will he recover?”

Isaac stood with his hands on his hips. “Probably. You’ll have to watch for signs that he needs further medical treatment. I can print you out a list of things to look for.”

“Okay. Why don’t you do that so I can get Logan out of here?” He didn’t say anything further to Logan in front of the doctors, but he had a few choice words once he finally got his man alone.

Grumbling the entire way, Isaac walked around to the computer in the reception area of the clinic. While Isaac was doing that, Sam handed Logan a clipboard. “If you’ll just sign these release papers, we’ll get you on your way.”

Jax could tell Sam wasn’t any happier about Logan checking out than Isaac was, but he was the calmer head of the two. “His wrist’s gonna hurt like a bitch in a few hours. I’m going to prescribe a mild pain reliever, but watch him closely. If he shows signs of his symptoms worsening, call me immediately. I’d like to get him to the hospital in Sheridan for an MRI, but he’s too damn stubborn to agree.”

“I’m right here,” Logan reminded Sam. “I have the right to refuse treatment. With no insurance, this little trip right here is gonna set me back several months salary.”

“Is that what this is about?” Jax asked. “Money?”

Logan rolled his eyes. “You say that like a man who has a fat wallet. Of course it’s the money, besides, I promised you a dance, and I aim to keep my word.”

“You and your damn word. For once, do what’s best for you, which includes letting me take you home.”

Isaac came out from behind the desk and held out the sheet of paper he’d printed off. Logan grabbed the paper from Isaac’s hand. “Thanks.”

They all watched in awe as Logan stormed out the emergency exit door. “Shit.” Jax started out after Logan. “Thanks, doctors.” He waved as he practically ran out the door. He was shocked that it had gotten dark while they’d been in the clinic. He stared into the darkness. “Logan?”

“I’m here,” Logan said from down the alley.

Jax jogged to catch up with his crazy cowboy. “You left your jacket inside,” he said, taking Logan’s hand.

“I’ll get it later.” Logan squeezed Jax’s hand. “You gonna dance with me?”

“Nope. I’m gonna take your ass home,” Jax answered.

Logan made his way down the alley to the nearest street. The music was getting louder as they neared the party. “I wanna hear Trick play, and dance with the man I love.”

“And what if that man doesn’t want to dance? What if he’d rather take you home and get you settled in bed?”

“Then he doesn’t really love me,” Logan said, stopping on the sidewalk.

“What the fuck is wrong with you? Are you looking to drop dead in the street?” Jax had had about all he could stand for one day. He looked over and noticed several people staring at them as their voices grew louder.

“I wanna dance with you, you stupid sonofabitch. What’s so wrong with that?” Logan backed Jax up against a brick wall.

“We have the rest of our lives to dance. Why does it have to be now?” Jax questioned.

“What’s going on, boy?” A deep voice yelled over the loud music.

Jax looked over and saw Ryan all decked out in his uniform. “Nothing. Just trying to get this hard headed cowboy to go home.”

Ryan walked over and crossed his arms. “Well I heard from more than one person there was a fight brewin’. Is that true?”

“No,” Logan replied. “I just want one dance, and he won’t give it to me.”

Ryan leaned in and looked closely at Logan. Jax could tell he was taking in the huge ugly bruise on Logan’s forehead. “Why’d they let you out of the clinic? You look like shit.”

“Gee, thanks,” Logan said, with a roll of his eyes.

Jax studied the determined look on Logan’s face. One thing about his man was certain. Once he made up his mind on something, a bulldozer wouldn’t budge him. “One dance?”

“Just one.”

Jax looked back at Ryan. “I’ll give him one dance and take him home. We won’t be causing any more trouble.”

Ryan nodded. “See that you don’t. I’ve got better things to do than babysit a couple of arguing love-birds.”

After Ryan walked off, Jax led Logan to the edge of the make-shift dance floor. Logan pulled Jax into his arms and started shuffling to the slow ballad. “I don’t know why you have to make things so difficult,” Logan said in Jax’s ear.

“Because I care,” Jax replied. He could feel the hard scratchy surface of Logan’s cast through the thin material of his shirt.

A couple of minutes into the dance, Logan began wobbling enough that Jax was concerned. He held his lover tighter and tried to help hold him up. If a dance meant this much to the man, by god he was going to give it to him.

“I usually do better,” Logan mumbled in Jax’s ear.

“You’re fine. Being close to you is all that matters to me.”

Logan stopped dancing and looked down at Jax. “I think I’d better get home.”

Jax nodded. “The truck is parked by the clinic. Ezra had Neil drop it off earlier. Do you want to walk to the alley, and I can pick you up there?”

“No, I can make it.”

With an arm around Logan’s waist, Jax helped him to the truck. He got his lover buckled in before getting behind the wheel. “You okay?”

“Yeah. Just tired,” Logan said, leaning his head against the seat.

Jax remembered the prescription for pain medicine he had in his pocket. “I’m sure the drug store’s closed, but I’ll come back in the morning. Luckily I’ve got a bottle of Jack if the pain gets to be too much.”

“I’ll be fine with a couple of aspirin.”

Jax tried to pick his way across the rough country roads. He was sure the last thing Logan needed was to be jostled around like a sack of potatoes. Glancing over at his sleeping lover, Jax’s chest tightened. He still wasn’t sure how they were going to make things work between them, but he was equally sure it would be worth it.

Logan was as true blue as they came. Hell, the man’s word meant more to him than his own life apparently. Nope, when Logan gave his word, he’d move heaven and earth to see it happen.

Jax knew he still needed to talk to Logan about Mitch. He wondered what Logan would think of him. Still, it was the right thing to do. From here on out, he didn’t want any secrets between them.

Pulling into the ranch drive, he noticed the lights were on in the main house. Evidently Ezra and Wyn didn’t stay long at the dance, typical. Although Wyn had really brought Ezra out of the grumpy shell he’d been mired in for so long, the man still wasn’t very social. His boss preferred life on the ranch, and Wyn seemed to readily accept that.

Jax parked and turned off the engine. That's what he wanted with Logan. Yeah, they both had quirks that would need to be worked out, but if they could both learn to accept the other's faults, Jax thought they'd make it.

Number one on his list after coming clean about his past relationship was getting Logan his GED. Strange how Jax hadn't noticed in the past that Logan's heart just wasn't into ranch work. Would his lover be willing to live on the ranch if he could go into town to work?

Hell, what if Logan wanted to leave Cattle Valley? Could he honestly give up his position on the ranch to follow his lover?

Logan stirred and wiped sleepily at his bruised face. The answer was an undeniable yes. He'd follow Logan anywhere. The realisation shocked him. How had this man gotten under his skin so deep, in such a short amount of time? The answer was almost immediate. Logan wasn't a stranger before he came to the EZ Does It. Although it had been in an entirely different capacity, Jax had loved Logan since he was the lost and lonely little boy who came over to his folk's ranch. What would've happened if Jax's parents had been allowed to adopt Logan? Was the love between them inevitable? Would they have committed one of the greatest of taboos?

"We home?" Logan asked.

"Yeah." He got out of the truck and went around opening Logan's door. Logan's hand was clumsily trying to unfasten his seat belt. "I'll get it. It's gonna take some time for you to get used to that cast. In the meantime, let me help you."

Logan's hand dropped to his side as Jax deftly unbuckled him. "Come on. Let's get you to bed," Jax said, wrapping his arms around Logan and helping him out of the seat.

"I need a shower. I stink."

"No shower with that cast. I'll get something to cover it when I go to the drug store. I can give you a sponge bath though." Jax waggled his eyebrows. "Might be fun."

Logan chuckled, before putting his hand to his head. “Don’t make me laugh.”

Jax got Logan settled on the edge of the bed and took his lover’s boots off. Next he unbuttoned Logan’s favourite cowboy shirt, shaking his head at the sleeve Sam had cut to get to his injury. “Shame about the shirt,” he commented, pushing it over Logan’s shoulders.

Damn his lover had a sexy chest. Without thought, Jax leaned forward and ran his tongue over Logan’s right nipple. The action elicited a moan from Logan. Pulling back, Jax started stripping off Logan’s jeans.

When his lover was completely naked, Jax stood. “Wait right there, and I’ll get a pan of water and some towels.”

“Hurry before I fall asleep on you,” Logan said around a yawn.

Running to the linen closet, Jax got out four big bath sheets and spread them over the sheets of the unmade bed. “Go ahead and lie down on those. If you fall asleep, I’ll work around it.”

Before Jax could run off again, Logan grabbed his hand. Jax stopped and looked down at his rodeo rider. “I love you,” Logan whispered.

“I know,” Jax said, bending to kiss Logan. “I love you too.”

Logan smiled and lay back on top of the towels. Jax went to the kitchen and filled a pot with hot water. He then gathered liquid soap, a washcloth and another towel before making his way back to the bedroom.

He set the supplies on the bedside table and removed his clothes. Logan was snoring lightly with his broken wrist nestled over his head on the pillow. Dunking the washcloth in the warm water, Jax started on Logan’s face. He could tell Isaac and Sam had tried to clean him up a little around the bruised area, so he left that part alone. Instead, he concentrated on Logan’s jaw and neck.

His lover’s arms were next. Jax slowly wet the sun-bronzed skin before applying soap to the washcloth. He worked up a decent lather before rinsing the cloth in the pot of water. The only time Logan stirred was when he washed and rinsed the injured arm.

After a good pat dry with the towel, Jax moved further south to Logan's underarms. Logan jerked a couple of times and Jax smiled. It seemed his lover was a bit ticklish. He'd have to remember that for future reference.

As he worked his way down to Logan's groin, he noticed his lover's cock taking an interest. Of course if it didn't, Jax would be afraid Logan was dead. His lover's cock always seemed ready and eager for action.

Running the cloth up the length of Logan's erection, Jax couldn't stand it anymore and bent to take the steel rod into his mouth. He didn't forget his job though, and began washing Logan's balls as he greedily sucked his cowboy's cock.

Logan's legs parted and drew up, giving Jax more room to clean. Finished with Logan's balls, Jax moved the cloth to his lover's ass.

"Fuck," Logan moaned, running his hand through Jax's hair. "Turn around."

Jax released Logan's cock and looked up. "What?"

"Let me taste you, too."

Jax shook his head. "I don't think you're up for that. Just let me take care of you."

"What, and you think I don't need some of your seed down my throat?" Logan asked with a grin. It was one of the first signs of the old Logan Jax had seen since the accident.

Against his better judgement, Jax repositioned himself so they were in the typical

sixty-nine position. Jax ran his tongue up Logan's length before delving back down. He loved the feel of his lover's silky hardness against the back of his throat.

Jax began to rock back and forth over the top of his lover, as Logan took his balls into his mouth one at a time. "Yeah," Jax groaned. His fingers slid between the cheeks of Logan's ass as he continued to swallow the bigger man's cock.

After inserting his finger as deep as it would go, Logan's body jerked as he pumped sweet nectar down Jax's throat. Staving off his own orgasm, Jax hungrily sucked every ounce of Logan's cum, relishing in the taste and texture.

When Logan seemed to melt into the bed, Jax turned and repositioned himself. Lying on top of Logan, Jax kissed him, sharing his lover's taste.

"Mmm," Logan moaned. "You didn't let me finish you."

Jax's hard cock pressed between Logan's still spread legs. "I was hoping you'd let me make love to you." Jax held his breath waiting for Logan's answer. They hadn't done it this way much, but Jax's cock was craving the warmth of Logan's body. Normally catching was fine, but sometimes...

"I'd love it," Logan said, reaching towards the bedside table. He picked up the lube and stopped. "You trust me?"

"Yeah," Jax answered. He was a bit confused at the question.

"I'm clean, and I wanna feel you without a condom."

Jax's eyes felt like they were about to pop out of his head. "I'm clean, too, but don't you think we should get tested or something first?"

Logan shook his head. "I trust you. If you say you're clean, then I believe you. I know you wouldn't do anything to endanger me."

Jax sat back on his heels. How many times had Mitch said those same words, trying to get him to have sex without protection?

"Forget it. I can tell you're less than enthusiastic about the idea." Logan said, dropping the lube onto the bed.

Jax looked down and realised his cock had started to go soft. Closing his eyes, he lay next to Logan and pulled his lover into his arms. "It's not you. Remember that thing I said we needed to talk about?"

"Yeah."

“Well, it’s kind of a long story, but I’ll try not to bore you too much.” Jax began telling Logan about his relationship or lack thereof with Mitch. Several times Logan started to say something, but Jax shook his head. “Just let me finish, and then we’ll talk.”

By the time Jax finished, Logan was rigid in his arms. “It’s not that I don’t trust you. I’d love to make love to you without a condom, and I will, but the statement just took me back for a minute.”

“With good reason it sounds like,” Logan commented. “I’m glad the guy is already dead. Both for your sake and Hearn’s.” Logan leaned up on his elbow and looked down at Jax. “Does he know? Hearn, I mean.”

“No. I’ve heard he takes a bouquet of flowers to Mitch’s grave every Saturday at sunset. How could I tell him the man he loved that much was only using him?”

“How can you not? He deserves to know the truth. Maybe it’ll help him move on. Maybe with someone worthy, like Tyler.”

Jax shook his head. “It’s still too soon. Maybe someday when he seems more able to handle the truth. He’s had a few emotional problems in the past from what Mitch told me.”

“I don’t know that I’d believe anything that bastard said,” Logan growled.

“What do you think of me? I knew for two years Mitch was living with Hearn, and still snuck around with him.”

Logan rested his head on Jax’s chest. “I don’t like what you did, but it sounds like you’ve punished yourself enough for the both of us. The whole experience jaded you, and I’m mad as hell about that. But I’m not Mitch,” Logan said, and looked up at Jax. “I’ll look you in the eye right now and tell you that I’ll never ever cheat on you. Whether you believe me or not, is totally out of my hands.”

“I want to,” Jax whispered. “God, you have no idea how much I want to believe in love.”

“It’s not love that you don’t believe in. It’s people. Mitch didn’t love you, Jax, but I do. There’s the difference right there.” Logan kissed Jax’s chest. “Sleep now. We’ll talk more later.”

Within minutes, Jax felt the rumble of Logan’s chest as he began the soft snore that was so cute. He wasn’t sure how long he laid there thinking about what Logan had said. He’d known for a long time that Mitch couldn’t have loved him, but hearing it seemed to cement the thought.

Chapter Eleven

Logan woke the next morning with what felt like the worlds worst hangover. He rolled to his side and felt the empty bed beside him. The sheets were stone cold. He vaguely remembered Jax waking him earlier, mumbling something about Logan staying in bed until he returned.

As he came more awake, Logan slowly moved his arms and legs. Damn had he been hit by a semi or a bull? Staying in bed definitely wouldn’t be a problem, but with no television and a pre-test looming over his head, Logan knew he should be studying.

Before sliding out from under the covers, he spotted a small pill bottle and a glass of water on the table. Jax must’ve gone into town already. He only took one of the pain pills even though the label suggested two. He needed his head clear enough to sneak to the barn and retrieve his back pack.

It was another thirty minutes before Logan managed to get out of bed and put the clean clothes on that Jax had left for him. He briefly wondered what the other hands thought of him shacking up with the boss. Deciding he didn’t much care, Logan put on his dark sunglasses and walked out onto the porch.

He didn’t see Jax anywhere. Hopefully the boss was in his office with his head stuck in the damned computer. Logan slowly made his way to the barn. God he hurt. Once in the barn, he grabbed hold of the ladder to the old loft and looked up. He never realised how high the loft was.

Logan lifted his foot to start the climb, when a voice stopped him. “What’re you doing out of bed?” Jax asked, wrapping his arms around Logan.

“I need to study. My pack’s up there,” he answered.

“I’ll get it,” Jax said, and moved Logan away from the ladder.

“Don’t open it,” Logan blurted out.

Jax stalled on one of the rungs. “What? Why?”

“Please. Just don’t. It’s...embarrassing,” Logan admitted.

Jax nodded and continued his way up to the loft. Logan yelled up at him. “It’s in the northeast corner behind some bales.”

“Got it,” Jax called down.

Logan shifted from foot to foot until his pack was safely in his hands. “Thanks.”

Jax wrapped him in another hug. “How’re you feeling?”

“My body feels like shit, but my mind seems to be working okay.”

“I should be done in a couple hours. What sounds good for lunch?”

“Anything,” Logan said, kissing Jax’s neck.

“Keep that up and you won’t be getting your studying done, and I’ll get fired for neglecting my job,” Jax chuckled.

Pulling back, Logan looked down into Jax’s dark brown eyes. “We wouldn’t want that now, would we?”

“Nope, we surely wouldn’t,” Jax agreed.

Logan let Jax help him back into the house. When his lover offered to help him undress, Logan laughed. “If you think you’re gonna get me naked and then go back to work, you’re sorely mistaken.”

With a dramatic sigh, Jax placed another kiss on Logan's lips before leaving. After his lover was gone, Logan stripped off his clothes and climbed into bed with his backpack. He got out the book he'd been reading and his yellow highlighter, and settled in.

* * * *

Jax took his boots off on the porch and quietly made his way inside. He'd been a little longer than he figured and hoped Logan had found himself something to eat. He tiptoed into the bedroom and found his lover fast asleep with a book on his chest and a marker in his hand.

Curious, Jax walked over to the bed and carefully lifted the book from Logan's sheet-covered chest. Shit. He thumbed through the pages of the grade school-level book. He couldn't help but to notice all the highlighted words. Most of them appeared to be longer or compound words.

Looking back down at Logan, Jax's heart melted. Was this Logan's secret? No wonder his lover didn't want him opening his backpack. Jax couldn't imagine the shame Logan must've gone through asking for help.

Not wanting to upset his man, Jax carefully set the book back down on Logan's chest and quietly left the room. Maybe he'd talk with Logan's tutor. Eli might have a good idea how he could be of help to Logan.

He went to the front door and opened it. Making sure to close it loud enough to wake the dead, he called out. "Hi, Honey, I'm home."

Jax waited a few minutes before walking into the bedroom. Logan was just zipping his pack and setting it beside the bed. "Sorry I'm late," Jax said, and crawled onto the bed to kiss Logan.

"Mmm," Logan moaned into the kiss.

Thrusting his tongue deep into Logan's mouth, Jax was suddenly overcome with emotion. He'd do anything for this man, anything. His cock hardened as he pressed his groin against Logan's thigh. "Need you."

"Yes," Logan agreed, and started pulling off Jax's shirt.

Standing, Jax stripped out of his jeans. “Are you sure you’re not too sore?”

“Depends on how you plan on contorting my body,” Logan chuckled. “I think I can handle the elbows and knees position, as long as you don’t hammer my head into the wall.”

Before Jax could get back on the bed, Logan rolled to his stomach and got his knees under him. His lover reached for the bedside table and picked up the lube and a condom. “I won’t need the condom,” Jax stated, taking the bottle from his lover’s hand.

Logan looked over his shoulder as Jax settled himself on the bed. “You sure?” Logan asked.

“Positive.” Before applying the slick, Jax ran his tongue over the firm globes of Logan’s ass, taking the occasional nip. Logan made a sound in his throat and Jax knew he was on the right track.

Travelling down the lightly furred crevice, Jax’s tongue circled the tightly puckered hole. He felt Logan’s body shiver under his touch and grinned. “You like?” he asked, pressing his thumb against the wet opening.

“I love,” Logan moaned.

“Good.” Jax greased his fingers and continued to stretch Logan’s body, as his lover’s moans of need filled the room.

“Do it,” Logan gasped, as Jax embedded another finger.

Jax’s hands were shaking with a rush of adrenaline, as he squirted some lube onto his cock and lined himself up with Logan’s hole. “I’ve never done this bare. I probably won’t last long.”

“It’s okay. Just do it,” Logan moaned.

Pressing the head of his cock slowly through the ring of muscles was almost his undoing. “Fuck.” The feeling was like nothing before. Logan’s heat surrounded him, sucking him further in.

Logan had been right. It didn't matter how long he lasted. He'd never forget a single second of this. The feelings that threatened to overwhelm him cemented his love for the man under him. Logan was his, and Jax would do damn near anything to make sure it stayed that way.

* * * *

"I'm going to the bank. Do you need anything while I'm in town?" Jax asked Logan.

"Can't think of anything. Besides I have to go in later anyway for a tutoring session with Eli."

"Oh, that's right," Jax played innocent. He leaned over and gave Logan a kiss before they both walked out into the Monday morning sunshine. "Gonna be a beautiful day," Jax commented.

Turning to face Logan, he cringed at the livid bruise on his lover's forehead. "Make sure you take it easy for the next few days."

Logan grinned and leaned in for another kiss. "Yes, Boss."

Jax swatted Logan's ass and laughed. "If you can't shoe the horses with the cast on, I'll bring someone in to do it. Just ask Chaney what else needs doin' that you can handle one handed until I get back."

"Back? You're leaving now?" Logan asked, looking out at the sunrise.

Jax grinned sheepishly. "Well, I planned on going by the bakery for breakfast."

Logan's eyes lit up. "Ooh, in that case bring me a couple of cinnamon rolls."

"I already figured that. I thought I'd bring back a couple of dozen for you and the guys."

"See, you are my knight." Logan gave Jax another quick peck before heading towards the barn.

Jax looked at his watch. He didn't really need to go to the bank, but he wasn't about to lie either. *I'll just stop by on my way out of town.* He hoped to catch up with Eli before school started at eight-thirty. With any luck, Eli would give him some pointers on ways to help Logan with his reading. He'd already called Gill and told him he had something to discuss with him. Getting into his truck, Jax just hoped his plans didn't backfire in his face.

Kyle's was his first stop when he arrived in town. He swung open the door and wasn't surprised at all to find a line already forming. He waved to Gill who sat at a corner table drinking coffee.

When it was finally his turn, Jax stepped up to the counter. "Looking good," he said, noticing the lack of Kyle's wheelchair.

"Better all the time," Kyle said with a huge smile. He looked towards Gill. "I've got a pretty terrific partner who pushes me a little more every day."

Jax couldn't help but see the love flowing between the two men. It was nice, and gave him new resolve to do whatever it took to make things work between him and Logan.

"What can I get you?" Kyle asked.

"Cup of coffee and two cinnamon rolls for now. I'll also need two dozen rolls to go, but I'll stop back by around ten for those."

Kyle nodded and put two large gooey rolls onto a plate. Next he filled a regular coffee cup. "I assume you're eating with Gill, right?"

"Yep."

When Jax started to dig out his wallet, Kyle held up a hand. "Just wait and I'll ring everything up when you come back for the rolls."

"Sounds good. Thanks." Jax took his plate and coffee over to Gill's table. "How're you doing?" he asked, sitting down.

"Good and you?" Gill asked, filling his cup from the white carafe on the table.

“Gettin’ there.”

“So what can I do to help you get there?” Gill chuckled.

“Glad you asked...”

* * * *

Feeling fantastic about his talk with Gill, Jax parked in a visitor’s spot at the school. He glanced at his watch. Damn. The meeting with Gill had taken longer than he thought. He’d only have about thirty minutes with Eli, and that was only if the teacher had time to talk to him.

Walking into the school’s office, he leaned on the counter and waited his turn. He was a little surprised by all the activity in the small space this early.

“Can I help you?”

“Yes. I was hoping to talk to Eli Sanchez. Is he in?”

“Let me call his room.” The woman punched a few numbers and began speaking to someone on the other end. She broke off and looked at Jax. “I’m sorry. May I ask your name?”

“Jax Brolin. Tell him I’m Logan’s partner.”

A warm smile spread across the older woman’s face. “What a nice young man Logan is,” she said before resuming her talk with Eli. “Mr. Sanchez asked if you could meet him in the gym.”

“Sure. Just point me in the right direction,” Jax answered.

“First I’ll need you to sign in and put one of the visitor’s stickers on. Then go down the hall, make your first left, go to the end of that hall and make a right. You’ll see the gym doors at the end of that corridor.”

After navigating his way through the quickly filling halls, Jax entered the gym. A good-looking younger man stood talking to Eli. By his clothing, Jax deduced it must be the physical education teacher. *Man, they never had teachers that looked like that when I was in school.*

Jax cleared his throat, and both men turned towards him. “Hi, Jax,” Eli said as Jax walked towards them. Eli turned to the hunk. “This is Kenny Trenton, an ex-student of mine who’s now our physical education teacher, and athletic coach.”

“Nice to meet you,” Jax said, shaking both men’s hands. “Sorry to come so close to the start of class, but I have a few things on my mind I’d like to talk to you about.”

“Sure. I’ve got study hall duty anyway first hour.” Eli turned back to Kenny. “I’ll catch up with you later.”

Kenny nodded and waved as he jogged off the basketball court. Jax didn’t miss the way Eli’s eyes seemed to track Kenny’s every movement until he was out of sight. *Hmm, interesting.*

Eli ushered Jax over to the bleachers. “What’s on your mind?”

Jax was suddenly nervous. Was he betraying Logan’s trust by being there? “I wanted to talk about Logan’s reading. He’s been pretty secretive about his tutoring, but I happened to see the book he’s been working on.” Jax shook his head and looked Eli in the eyes. “How bad is it?”

“I’m not sure I should discuss this with you. I can tell you that he’s been working his ass off trying to catch up. It’ll take him longer than most, but I believe he’ll eventually get there.”

“Is it dyslexia?”

“No. It would probably be easier for him if it were.” Eli took a deep breath and leaned his forearms on his knees. “Some people just have difficulties. Logan’s lucky because his learning disability is only showing itself in that area. He seems to be up to speed in math, history, and science. It’s just the reading and spelling that’s dragging him down.”

Eli reached out and gripped Jax’s knee. “He’ll get it though. I’ve got the utmost faith in him.”

“What can I do to help?” Jax asked.

“Not much unless you come clean with him that you know. If that happens it would really help if you’d sit and read with him whenever possible. He’s been highlighting the words he doesn’t understand, but it would be a big help if you were there to help him with them.”

Jax nodded. “I can do whatever it takes.”

“Good. Then half the battle is already won.”

* * * *

Jax made dinner for the two of them later that evening. His stomach had been upset all afternoon thinking about the conversation in front of him. He knew Logan might get pissed that he knew, but Jax thought he could handle that. His biggest fear was Logan feeling embarrassed.

“Something smells good,” Logan said, wrapping his arms around Jax.

“Chilli. I thought we’d have a few of the cinnamon rolls I put back with it.”

“I still don’t get that weird combination of food.” Logan kissed Jax’s neck.

Jax chuckled. “I hadn’t even heard of it until I saw Casey eating it at the diner. I tried it and wow. I was hooked. There’s just something about the spicy chilli mixed with the sweetness of the roll that gets my motor running.”

Logan moved his hand down Jax’s chest to cover his cock. “I thought I got your motor running just fine.”

Jax felt his cock begin to fill. “Oh you do, don’t worry about that.” Jax stirred the chilli. “Get me a couple of bowls out of the cabinet.”

As they worked together to get the food on the table, Jax’s nerves began to get the better of him. His stomach began to rumble and he wondered if he’d be able to keep his food down.

“What’s wrong?” Logan asked.

Taking a deep breath, Jax pulled Logan into his arms. “I need to talk to you about something...”

Chapter Twelve

Jax couldn't stop yawning as he waited for Logan to finish his work day. The two of them had stayed up way too late, Logan working his way through his book, and Jax reading the next Campus Cravings instalment.

He couldn't believe how far their relationship had come in the last month. It had taken several days for Logan to come to terms with Jax talking to Eli behind his back. Jax put his feet up on his desk as he thought about the night their relationship took a giant leap forward.

A knock on the door startled Jax out of his doze on the couch. “Come in,” he called.

Logan stepped into his tiny living room, and shuffled from one foot to the other. “I...um... Will you help me?”

Jax sat up on the couch, and turned on the lamp beside him. “Of course.” He held out his arms and waited for Logan to join him.

“Sorry I've been an ass. I understand now why you talked to Eli.”

Cupping Logan's jaw in his hand, Jax leaned over and kissed his lover for the first time in days. “I love you, and I want nothing but the best for you.”

“I know.” Logan pulled a thin paperback book out of the back waistband of his jeans. “Eli gave me a new book. It's harder than the others...”

Jax stopped his lover with a kiss. Breaking their lip lock, he looked into Logan's eyes. “Can we start at the beginning of the book so I can catch up?”

Logan smiled and nodded. They both settled back on the sofa with Jax's arms around his lover. "It's called The Shiny Penny," Logan said as he opened the book to the first page.

Jax noticed Logan's hands shaking as he tried to concentrate on the written words. Giving his lover comfort, Jax squeezed him tighter. Logan glanced over and gave him a half-smile.

Logan read a couple sentences before coming to a word he obviously didn't know. He pointed to it and looked at Jax. "That's a hard one because you can't really sound it out. There are some words you'll just have to try and memorise and this is one of them." Jax thought for a moment about the best way to work on Logan's memorisation skills. "I know. What if every time we come to a word you don't know, we write it on a recipe card or something? Then we can go through them a couple of times a day until you're comfortable with 'em."

Logan nodded and smiled. "I like that idea."

"Good." Jax stood and went to the kitchen drawer, coming back with a notebook and pen. "I'll get some cards and a box to put them in, but in the meantime, we can just write them on here."

"Okay."

Jax handed the notebook and pen to Logan. "The word is neighbour. Go ahead and write that down."

He watched as Logan logged the word onto the paper. When Logan was finished, Jax took the tablet back and wrote in parenthesis beside it neighbor. "Will that help?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Just remember that's not the way it's really spelled."

Logan nodded and began reading once again. Jax was enjoying himself. It felt nice to snuggle up with his lover and do something positive.

"Sleeping on the job?" Logan laughed.

Jax opened his eyes and yawned. "Not sleepin', just resting my eyes. You all done for the day?" he asked, swinging his feet to the floor.

"Yeah." Logan held his arm up. "I'll be glad to get this damned thing off."

"Well then, let's get to the clinic." Jax picked his keys up from the edge of the desk and walked hand in hand with Logan towards his truck. He caught Logan looking at his bike in longing. His lover hadn't been able to ride his Harley with the cast on. The plaster was just too darn thick to get a decent grip. "Soon," Jax soothed.

"Will you go for a ride with me?" Logan asked, getting in the truck.

"I thought you'd never ask."

* * * *

"How's that feel?" Isaac asked.

"Shrivelled," Logan joked.

Isaac smiled. "It may take a few days to get it up to strength. I'd advise wearing a wrist brace whenever you're working."

Logan nodded and wiggled his fingers. "Thanks, Doc. Sorry I was such a pain before."

Isaac waved away his apology. "Comes with the territory. The men of Cattle Valley are nothing if not stubborn."

"You got that right," Jax said from the doorway. "You all done?"

"Yep," Logan said, jumping off the exam table.

"Good. I've got something to show you before our dinner reservations."

Logan walked towards the only man he'd ever loved. "Cool."

They said goodbye to Isaac and got into the truck. "So where are we going?" Logan asked.

Jax bit his lip and gripped the steering wheel. “Well, I’ve got a surprise for you. I just hope it’s a good one.”

Logan unfastened his safety belt and slid across the seat to Jax’s side. “Is it like a present?”

“Kinda.”

Logan ran his hand down the pearl buttons on Jax’s shirt, before cupping his man’s jean covered cock. “Will you tell me what it is?”

Jax spread his legs and shook his head. “You’re worse than a kid at Christmas.”

Squeezing the package in his hand, Logan licked the side of Jax’s face. “But I ask nicer than any kid I know.”

“You do at that,” Jax moaned, as Logan ran a fingernail over his zipper.

When they pulled into Gill’s station, Logan looked at Jax’s gas gauge. “What’re you doing?”

“Just wait for it.” Jax parked in front of the garage bays and switched off the engine.

Biting his tongue, Logan let Jax lead him to the side of the building. Just before rounding the corner, his lover held up a piece of material. “Put this over your eyes.”

Logan’s brows shot up. “Kinky.”

Jax rolled his eyes, and thrust the scarf towards Logan. “No surprise without being blindfolded.”

Giving in, Logan tied the material around his head. “Okay, I’m blind. Now take me to my present.” He held out his hands and waited for Jax to help him.

Jax led Logan around the corner of the garage and positioned his body. “Okay.”

Logan wasted no time ripping the blindfold off. He staggered back with his hand on his chest at the sight in front of him. A tiny white clapboard building sat towards the back of the lot. A sign on the front said Logan's Cycle Shop. He looked from the building back to Jax. "What did you do?"

"Gave Ezra your notice." Jax pointed towards the shop. "You'll start here Tuesday. I think you should have Sunday and Monday's off, don't you?"

Logan shook his head, trying his best to clear his fuzzy brain. "How? Why?"

Taking Logan's hand, Jax led him to the single garage door. "It's your dream, right? If it's yours then it's mine, too." Jax opened the door. "It's not very big, but I figure it'll give you enough room for your tools and a couple of bikes. If business takes off we can always look for a bigger location."

Jax pointed to a doorway off to the right. "There's a small room up front you can use for an office and then a bathroom in the back."

Logan was having a hard time catching his breath. He put his hands on his hips and bent over at the waist. Jax had been right. Owning his own shop was part of his dream, the other half was standing beside him. He'd take the second over the first any day. "I can't believe you did this."

"Uh...are you mad?" Jax asked, putting a hand on Logan's back.

"Mad? How the hell could I be mad? It's fucking fantastic. But I was supposed to get my GED first."

"That'll come. You've got a good head for numbers, and I'm sure between the two of us, we can keep the books in order."

All he could think about at that moment was his Uncle Bob yelling at him as he packed his shit. "You'll never amount to a goddamn thing, you worthless queer." *Oh, Uncle Bob, you were so wrong. I have a man who loves me enough to let me dream.*

"So it's good?" Jax asked, nudging Logan's side.

Logan wiped the moisture from his eyes and stood to take Jax into his arms. “You’ve made me the happiest man in the world.”

“Wow. Don’t get too excited. I could only afford used tools, but hopefully soon we’ll be able to replace them.”

“It has nothing to do with the shop or the tools.” Logan skirted his lips across Jax’s five o’clock shadow. “You make me the happiest man in the world.”

“Just trying to give back an ounce of what you give me,” Jax replied, turning his head to kiss Logan.

By the time they broke their kiss, Logan’s lips felt raw. “Ready to eat? I think we’ve got some celebrating to do.”

After being seated, Logan took a look around the restaurant. He’d only been to The Canoe a couple of times, and was impressed on every visit. The food was excellent, and the décor comfortable yet lavish at the same time.

His attention was drawn to Ezra and Wyn sitting at a table in front of the big windows. Upon further inspection he noticed Richard sitting with a scowl on his handsome face. “Oh my god. Is that Guy Hoisington?”

Jax looked up from his menu. “Yep. Ezra told me they were meeting to iron out a few last minute details for the bar at Guy’s ski lodge.”

Wow. Logan couldn’t believe he was sitting thirty feet away from an Olympic champion. “Who’s the guy staring daggers at Richard?”

“Chad. He’s the new manager at the lodge. Richard’s had nothing but problems with the guy. I guess Guy hired him away from some big resort in Aspen. According to Richard, the guy thinks he knows everything. That’s part of what the meeting is about.”

“Are you ready to order?” a waitress approached and asked.

Jax shook his head. “Give us another minute, please.”

“Just signal when you’re ready.” The waitress walked over to stand near the beverage centre.

“You know what you want?” Jax asked.

Without thought, Logan picked up the menu. Most of the items on the tastefully printed pages he couldn’t read. Closing it quickly, he shrugged. “I’ll just have a steak and baked potato.”

Jax reached across the table and tapped his finger on the menu. “Would you like some help?”

Logan could tell by the earnest look in Jax’s eyes that he didn’t think badly of him. “Naw. I’m sure it’s full of some wonderful things, but my mouth is set on a medium-rare steak.”

“Good. That’s what I’m having, too.” Jax set his menu on top of Logan’s and signalled the waitress over.

After giving their order, and getting their drinks, Logan sipped at his Jack. “I like this place.”

Jax looked around and nodded. “Definitely has the best food in the region. We’ll have to make a habit of coming more often. It’ll be easier with you working in town.”

A big grin spread across Logan’s face. “I still can’t believe it.” A thought suddenly struck him. “I’ll have to find someplace to live. I doubt Ezra will let me keep my room at the bunkhouse.”

Jax leaned across the table. “I was hoping I could talk you into officially moving in with me.”

“Ezra won’t mind?” Logan felt like jumping up and down in his seat. Good thing he was far too cool to do something so childish.

“Already talked to him about it. He told me if you didn’t move in, he’d hunt you down and tie you to my bed. Something about how I wouldn’t be able to keep my mind on my work if you weren’t there.”

“I accept,” Logan said, and leaned forward to kiss his old boss.

* * * *

Putting the finishing shine on the new bike he'd customised for Nate, Logan didn't hear Jax come in. "Thought I might find you here," Jax said.

Logan looked over his shoulder and smiled. "Am I late?"

"Just a little, it's okay."

Gesturing to the pearl white and red bike, Logan wiped his hands. "What do you think?"

"I think it's perfect. Nate's gonna love it," Jax said, stepping up to inspect the chrome details Logan had added earlier in the day.

"Let me get my hands washed and I'll be ready. Are the guys saving us a spot?" Logan asked, stripping out of his black coveralls.

"Yep." Jax held up the sack in his hand. "I stopped by the bookstore and picked up the next Campus book for us to start when we get home."

"Yummy. I can't wait to read Bear's story." Logan blushed, thinking about the new words they'd had to add to their little vocabulary file since he'd graduated to more adult books. "Maybe we should just get some tacos to go. It would give us another couple of hours to read."

Jax started laughing. "Read, my ass. You know those books always make you horny."

Logan came back into the room drying his hands. "You complaining?"

"Hell no. Just stating a fact."

Logan knew he was. Jax was right on the money. Reading erotic books really made him hot. They'd usually only get a chapter in before Logan was stripping his lover out of his clothes. On several occasions they'd tried getting undressed and reading in bed, but on those nights, Logan was lucky to make it past three pages.

Just thinking about it had Logan's dick hard and wanting. "I know that look," Jax chuckled.

Jax started to back his way to the door as Logan stalked towards him. "I'm gonna fuck you," Logan said. "We can do it on the floor of the garage or in my office, but it's gonna happen."

At the last minute, Jax veered towards the office. "What about dinner?" he asked, taking off his shirt.

"There'll be plenty of time. This one's not about wine and roses. It's about me needing my cock so far up your ass you feel me in your throat." He saw the fire ignite in Jax's eyes at the statement.

While Jax stripped out of his boots and jeans, Logan retrieved the well-used bottle of lube from his desk drawer. He didn't know why Jax always acted surprised. Logan had been fucking him across the desk every Tuesday since his first day at the shop.

Pulling his white T-shirt off over his head, Logan tossed it aside and unbuttoned his jeans. He applied a generous amount of lube to his cock as Jax got into position, bracing his arms on Logan's desk and leaning forward.

"Fuck," Logan said, dropping to his knees to stare at Jax's ass. He reached out and moved the black plug in and out a few times. "Yeah, you play all innocent, but you knew exactly what you were coming here for."

"Just thought I'd be prepared this time. Last week you tore me up," Jax said over his shoulder.

Logan removed the plug and set it on the desk beside his shirt. Fitting the crown of his cock to Jax's sweet hole, Logan surged forward, driving to the hilt in one stroke. The force of the movement drove Jax face first against the desk.

"Damn," Jax grunted.

Logan pulled out and drove in again, and again. He knew Jax well enough to know the man loved the rough treatment. Logan often thought it was the reason Jax egged him on constantly.

"Touch yourself," Logan panted, feeling that familiar tightness in his balls. The sound of their coupling in the small room was better than any

book or porno movie. This was the real thing, and Logan loved every second of it.

Jax's back went rigid as his ass squeezed around Logan's cock. "Yeah," Logan moaned as the smell of Jax's cum filled the room. He pounded Jax's ass a few more times, before releasing his seed deep inside his love.

Logan fell against Jax, gasping for air. He thought as often as the two of them fucked, he'd have built up more stamina, but Jax wore him out every time. "I love you," he said in Jax's ear.

He heard incoherent mumbles coming from Jax. "What?" Logan asked, lifting off his lover and pulling Jax to his feet.

"I said," Jax informed him, wrapping himself around Logan. "Forget the fucking books. None of them Campus dudes have a damn thing on my bad boy cowboy."

"Awe," Logan crooned. "You really think so?" The idea that he could please his lover as good or better than the characters in the books they both loved so much thrilled him.

"No doubt in my mind. You're the best," Jax said, kissing his way up Logan's neck.

"The best for you, anyway," Logan agreed.

"You got that right." Jax ended his trek at Logan's mouth. Who needed tacos.

About the Author

An avid reader for years, one day Carol Lynne decided to write her own brand of erotic romance. Carol juggles between being a full-time mother and a full-time writer. These days, you can usually find Carol either cleaning jelly out of the carpet or nestled in her favourite chair writing steamy love scenes.

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