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COWBOY EASY

Blaecleah Brothers 1

Stormy Glenn

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Cowboy Easy

Lachlan Blaecleah never expected to find the love of his life in the middle of a street fight with two other men, but he knew the moment he saw Asa Miller that he wanted to get to know the man better. He jumps into the fight and becomes Asa's knight in slightly tarnished armor.

Asa Miller is amazed by Lachlan every time he looks at him. He's a walking, talking cowboy fantasy come to life, complete with hat and boots. After being rescued by him and taken home for a night of debauchery at the hands of the sexy cowboy, Asa isn't sure what to do next. Should he stick around and get to know Lachlan and his large family better or run from the feelings the man invokes in him?

Before Asa can make his choice, someone else steps in to separate the two men, on a more permanent basis. Asa has to decide if what they have together is worth the heartache he feels when he almost loses the man he loves. Or should he guard his heart and lose his cowboy forever?

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EROTIC ROMANCE



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COWBOY EASY

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COWBOY EASY

Blaecleah Brothers 1

STORMY GLENN

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Chapter 1

“What the heck?” Lachlan Blaecleah shouted as he slammed on his breaks and jerked the steering wheel of his truck sharply to the left, swinging the vehicle around sideways before he could hit the three men fighting in the middle of the street.

He put the truck into park and got out, slamming the door behind him then running to the back of his truck. He reached into the bed of the truck and searched around until his fingers closed over the cold metal of his tire iron.

Running around the empty horse trailer at the back of his truck, Lachlan tried to figure out who was fighting who. He instantly recognized two of the men as Billy and Clem Thornton, town bullies. He’d had run-ins with them before and knew they were mostly bluster unless they were working together.

The other man was a stranger.

A motorcycle lay on the side of the road just feet from where the three men fought. Another truck sat off to one side of the road. Punches were being thrown by all three men, but it looked to Lachlan like Billy and Clem were fighting against the unknown man. Lachlan didn’t much care what the fight was about. Two against one wasn’t

fair odds, even if the tall, dark-haired man seemed to be holding his own.

Lachlan raised the tire iron in the air and waded into the fight. He hit the first man he came to on the arm, not hard enough to break it but enough to make the man think twice about using it to hit the dark-haired man.

“Hey, man!” Billy shouted as he turned to look at Lachlan in surprise. “What did you do that for?”

“Two against one hardly seemed fair, Billy.” Lachlan grinned. “I thought I’d even things up a bit.”

“What do you care, Lachlan?” the man shouted. “He’s a greasy biker from out of town. He’s not even from here.”

“Doesn’t matter, Billy. I’m not going to let you or Clem beat up on someone just because you think you can.” Lachlan waved the tire iron in front of Billy. “Either stop now, or I’m going to hit more than your arm. At this point, you still have use of it. That can change.”

“He’s a fag!”

Lachlan almost rolled his eyes, but that would have meant taking his eyes off Billy, and at the moment, he was all that stood between Billy and the man he was calling names. “So what? That doesn’t give you the right to beat the crap out of him.”

“Clem don’t want that type of stuff around here. He says it’s wrong.”

“That’s not up to him, Billy.”

Lachlan hated bigoted people, especially since he was a “fag” himself. He just didn’t broadcast it, which is why Billy thought he’d have an issue with the stranger’s sexual preference. Billy didn’t know Lachlan was gay.

Lachlan raised the tire iron into the air again. “I’ve had about all this I can handle, Billy. Get Clem and get out of here before I report you to the sheriff.”

“You can’t tell me what to do.”

Lachlan rolled his eyes. Billy was definitely not from the strong end of the gene pool. His brother, Clem, wasn't either. Lachlan turned his attention toward Clem, hoping he could make the man see reason.

"Clem!" Lachlan shouted as he reached for the man. Clem turned around, fists swinging. Lachlan ducked but not fast enough. He felt Clem's fist glance off his jaw. Lachlan grunted, dropping the tire iron to the ground as he grabbed his jaw. "Damn it, Clem, knock it off."

"Lachlan?"

"Well, I'm not the tooth fairy."

"What are you doing here?"

"Trying to keep you and Billy from getting thrown in jail." Lachlan rubbed his jaw and spared a quick glance at the stranger standing several feet away, his fists raised to defend himself. "You'd better get out of here before the sheriff arrives. You've already been in jail once this week."

"Oh, Lachlan, we was just having a bit of fun," Billy protested as he came to stand next to his brother.

"I don't think he was having fun, Billy," Lachlan said as he pointed to the stranger. "In fact, it looks to me like he is pretty pissed."

Billy turned and glanced at the stranger, his face flushing when he turned back. "We didn't mean no harm, Lachlan."

"You attacked me, asshole," the man shouted. "For no reason."

"You're a fucking fag," Clem shouted as he turned on the man. His fists came up again like he was about to attack again. Lachlan jumped forward and grabbed Clem's arms, spinning him around and giving him a good shove toward his truck.

"Get out of here, Clem, before I tell your mother what you're up to."

That was the only threat Lachlan could think of that was big enough to get Billy and Clem Thornton to behave. Lilia Thornton was a sweet old woman who was adored by her sons. It was just too bad

their father, Ira, was such a jerk. He was the largest influence on his sons and encouraged their appalling behavior.

Clem glared, retribution shining in his eyes. Lachlan knew he'd have to deal with Clem at some point. He just hoped he wasn't alone when it happened. Even though Lachlan could hold his own in a fight, Clem had a good fifty pounds on him. He might not win that one.

"Clem..."

Clem snarled for a moment then spit on the ground right by the stranger's foot. The man jumped back then sent Clem a snarl of his own. Lachlan thought he might attack and held his arm out between the two men.

"Go, Clem, now!"

"This isn't over, Lachlan."

"I didn't think it was, Clem." Lachlan didn't breathe a sigh of relief until Clem and Billy climbed into their truck and drove away. He wiped his hand down his face, not realizing until he did that he had little beads of sweat trickling down his temples.

Hearing a muttered oath, Lachlan turned to see the stranger lifting his motorcycle from where it lay on its side on the ground and moving out the kickstand. He squatted down and started running his hands over it. Lachlan assumed he was looking for damage.

"How bad is it?" he asked as he walked up.

"Damn cylinder head is broken."

"Did Clem do that?"

"Your friends were waiting for me when I left the café back a ways. I got this far before he hit my back wheel and drove me off the road."

"Clem and Billy are not my friends," Lachlan said. He didn't like being lumped in with those two idiots. "We just happen to live in the same town."

"Nice town you have here." The man stood up, his hands on his waist. "Do you welcome everyone like this?"

Lachlan felt like his tongue was sticking to the roof of his mouth as he got his first good look at the stranger, the totally drool-worthy, drop-dead-gorgeous stranger. He just stared for a moment, drinking in the man's striking features. *Yum!*

Lachlan suddenly wished that they weren't standing in the middle of the road in the dark. He wanted to get a better look at the man, preferably without his clothes on. Knowing the man was gay just made Lachlan's cock ache.

"Yo, dude!" The man waved his hand in front of Lachlan.

Lachlan blinked, his face flaming. "Yeah, sorry, uh, no, not normally. People are pretty nice around here usually. You just happened to catch the two local jerks. Clem and Billy get into more trouble than anyone I know, most of it created by themselves."

"They sound like real nice guys."

"Well, I wouldn't take them home for dinner, that's for sure." Lachlan chuckled. "My ma would skin me alive."

"Your *ma*?"

Lachlan frowned at the man's tone as he crossed his arms over his chest. "Yeah, do you have a problem with that?"

"No, man." The stranger chuckled, waving his hands in front of him. "No problem at all."

"Good." No one got to make fun of his ma.

"Just never heard a full-grown man call his mother *ma*."

"I doubt you've ever met anyone like my ma then. I'd probably lose more than the family jewels if I called her anything else."

"Pity." Lachlan could feel the man's hazel eyes move up and down his body like a caress and almost groaned when they settled on his groin. "They seem like such nice family jewels. I'd hate to see you lose them."

Lachlan swallowed hard. His cock was hardening at an alarming rate, and he was afraid his zipper was going to break. If nothing else, he might hurt himself if things continued like they were. There was only so much room in his jeans.

“Hence, why I call her ma.”

“Good choice.”

The man turned back to his motorcycle again, another small oath coming from him. Lachlan winced. There was a reason he tried really hard not to swear. His mother would wash his mouth out with soap. It had happened enough times that Lachlan just got used to not swearing.

“Is there a bike shop around here?”

“Yeah, but they’re not open until tomorrow.”

“Damn!”

“If you want to take your bike back to my place, I can make a call, maybe have the parts you need waiting for you in the morning.” Lachlan took a deep breath and went out on a limb. “I can offer you a hot meal and a place to sleep.”

“A hot meal, huh?” The dark eyebrow the stranger arched almost took him to his knees. He wasn’t sure he’d ever seen anything sexier. When the man reached out a hand, Lachlan readily took it, liking the strong grip he received in return. “Name’s Asa, Asa Miller.”

“Lachlan Blaeckleah.”

“Thanks for the save, Lachlan.”

“Just in the right place at the right time.” Lachlan chuckled nervously, realizing that he still held hands with Asa. He quickly dropped it. “Clem and Billy aren’t too bad, not really. Their bark is worse than their bite.”

“And you?”

“Me?”

“How’s your bite?”

Oh, fuck me running, Lachlan thought to himself as he tried to swallow. He hadn’t had an offer like this in years, if ever. And it was clear to Lachlan that Asa was making an offer. The man was doing nothing to hide the interest in his eyes.

“Why don’t you come home with me and find out?”

Oh damn, there went the eyebrow again. Lachlan was finding it hard to breathe, and he hadn't done more than shake Asa's hand. He went up north every couple of months on business and usually took care of his sexual needs then. There weren't that many prospects around Cade Creek. But even then, he hadn't been with anyone as hot as Asa.

"Do you have a way to get my bike back to your place?"

"My horse trailer is empty. We can put it in there until we get it back to my place."

"Sounds perfect."

Lachlan hoped he wasn't drooling as he went to open the back of his horse trailer. He opened the gate and popped down the tailgate ramp. Asa was just pushing his motorcycle up when Lachlan turned toward him. Together, they got the motorcycle into the trailer and tied it down with ropes.

Lachlan put up the ramp and closed the gate, slapping the cold metal. "That should do it. I don't live but a few miles from here. It should be pretty safe until then."

"I hope so. Despite her looks, she's my pride and joy."

"She looks pretty good to me." Of course, what would he know? His thing was horses and cattle, not motorcycles.

"She needs a little work still before she's at top running condition, but she does all right for me."

Lachlan shrugged. "If you say so."

Asa chuckled. "I take it you're not into motorcycles?"

"Never been on one really."

Asa's mouth dropped open. "You've never ridden?"

"I ride horses, not motorcycles."

"So..." Asa's sudden grin was startling, "you do know how to ride then?"

"Yeah." Lachlan cleared his throat. "I know how to ride."

"Well, damn boy, what are we waiting for then?"

Lachlan waited until Asa had walked around the side of the trailer before he slumped back against it. He was in so much trouble. Asa was sex personified, and he seemed very interested. Lachlan just hoped he was reading the signals right because if he wasn't, he was going to look like a total idiot when he jumped the guy.

He quickly made his way to the front of the truck and climbed in. Asa was already inside buckling his seatbelt. Lachlan silently groaned and started the truck, hoping he could make it the few miles back to his place before he made a complete goober of himself.

He tried to keep his eyes off of Asa and on the road as he drove the truck down the road. It wasn't an easy feat. Asa had some great thighs. They looked firm and muscular, like they could squeeze a man to death.

Damn!

"So, uh, what brings you out this way?" Lachlan asked, trying to fill in the silence in the cab of the truck. "Just traveling through?"

"Yeah, sort of. I've just been driving for awhile, enjoying the countryside." Asa pointed back behind them with his thumb. "I got kind of hungry, and that little café back there looked as good as any place to eat. I didn't know I'd meet the two Darwin winners when I stopped."

"Darwin winners?"

"Yeah, so stupid that we better hope they take themselves out of the gene pool before they reproduce."

"Yeah, that about sums Clem and Billy up." Lachlan chuckled. "So, you're just out driving then? Any particular destination in mind?"

"Nope, not really. I quit my last job awhile back and have enough saved up that I can take a few weeks off if I want. I decided I wanted to and did."

"Sorry your vacation is turning out so bad."

"Oh, I don't know." Lachlan shuddered when Asa's finger trailed over his thigh. "My vacation looks to be turning out just fine."

When Asa's fingers trailed closer to his aching cock, Lachlan couldn't stand it anymore. He had to know if the guy was teasing him or not. He quickly pulled over to the side of the road and put the truck into park then grabbed Asa's hand, holding it against his thigh.

"Look," Lachlan said as he turned to look at Asa, "I'm sure you've figured out by now that I'm gay."

"I hope so. It's going to put a real crimp in my evening plans if you're not."

"Okay." Lachlan took a deep breath then let it out slowly. "I guess that's kind of what I need to know. I don't take guys home with me, ever, but you..." Lachlan looked Asa up and down and groaned. "You're the hottest damn thing I've ever seen. I'd really like you to come home and spend the night with me in my bed, not the guest room."

Asa opened his mouth to speak, but Lachlan held his hand up to stop him. He wasn't done, and he needed to say this before he lost his nerve.

"I'll be honest with you, Asa. I want to take you home and fuck you into my mattress. However, if that's not something you're interested in, tell me now and I'll drop the whole thing. The offer of a hot meal and a place to sleep is still open no matter what you decide."

Asa didn't say anything for a moment, and Lachlan saw his fantasy of fucking him fading away. He felt the need to apologize and opened his mouth to when Asa leaned across the seat and pressed his finger over Lachlan's lips.

"My turn now, okay?"

Lachlan nodded, not sure if he should duck in case there was a fist headed in his direction or just take his lumps when they came. Asa opened his mouth again like he was going to continue then suddenly stopped and scooted across the bench seat.

Lachlan almost came in his jeans when Asa grabbed him by the back of the neck and kissed him. It was like kissing a light socket. Well, like he imagined it felt like when kissing a light socket. He just

knew that deep, dark lust filled every pore in his body like a lightning strike.

He groaned, moving into the kiss. His hands found Asa's shoulders in the darkness of the cab and slowly slid down his thick, muscular arms. Lachlan wanted to weep with joy. Every single inch of Asa's body that he touched was tightly muscled, just how he liked it.

Asa pulled away far enough that their lips weren't touching and leaned his forehead against Lachlan's. He was panting heavily, his chest moving up and down rapidly as if he had just run a great distance. Lachlan suddenly had the impression that he affected Asa as much as Asa affected him.

"Damn, you're a hot little piece, aren't you?" Lachlan's eyes nearly crossed when Asa's hand moved down to cover his aching cock through his jeans, squeezing him. "How far away is your place? I want to see what this thing can do."

"Ho—" Lachlan swallowed hard. "How fast can you get back into your seatbelt?"

Even though he had said the words, Lachlan was shocked, and a little disappointed, with how fast Asa moved across the cab of the truck and put his seatbelt back on. But the grin on Asa's face almost undid him. It lit up Asa's entire face.

"Is that fast enough for you?"

Lachlan tore his eyes away from Asa and took the truck out of park. He drove back onto the road and started for home again. He knew he was pushing the edge of what his truck could handle with a trailer on the back, but if he didn't get home soon, he was going to need new jeans for sure.

"Damn!"

"That's it, just *damn*?" Asa chuckled. "I kind of hoped for something more profound than that."

"Oh, yeah, I try not to swear as a general rule. It keeps me from having my mouth washed out with soap."

“Excuse me?”

“My ma, Alani Blaeacleah, married my father when she was barely nineteen years old. I was born six months later. When I was a year old, and Ma was pregnant with my brother, she did as my da asked and packed up, leaving behind her family and everything she had ever known to move across the Atlantic Ocean and live here.”

“You’re not from here?”

“No, Ireland. Why?”

“I thought I detected a slight brogue in your voice.” Asa wiggled his eyebrows up and down. “Very sexy.”

“Uh, yeah.” Lachlan felt his face flush and for once wished his skin didn’t have the natural Irish paleness of his mother. It allowed every single blush to be blaringly apparent. “Thanks.”

“So, you were saying about your ma?”

“Well, like I said, she moved here then proceeded to have four more sons. There are five of us all together. And every single one of us know what she will do if she catches us swearing. It’s something we learned very early on.”

“Tyrant, is she?”

“You have no idea.” Lachlan chuckled. “Usually, Ma is the sweetest woman on the face of the planet, but if you rub her the wrong way, she’ll take your hide off. I’m pretty sure even Da is afraid of her when she gets like that.”

“How does she feel about you being gay?”

“Except when I first told her when I was eighteen, it’s never really come up.” Lachlan shrugged. “It’s not like I parade a ton of men before her or anything. I’ve never even brought someone home to meet her. But she’s never said anything about it.”

“Is she going to get upset with me coming home with you?”

Lachlan shook his head. “No, I don’t live with my folks. We have houses not too far apart, just down the drive from each other really, but my home is my own. I can have whoever I want come over.”

Lachlan glanced down then over at Asa in curiosity when he felt the man's hand land on his thigh.

"I'd really like to go home with you, but I don't want to cause you any trouble with your folks if they're going to have a problem with me being there. I know what that's like, man, and I wouldn't want to wish that on anyone."

"Bad experience?"

"Yeah."

Asa didn't say anything more and even took his hand away so Lachlan knew he didn't want to talk about it. He decided to change the subject. "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

"No."

Okay, another subject that they couldn't talk about.

"A lover?"

"Would I be going home with you if I had a lover?" Asa snorted.

Okay. Lachlan was beginning to think they might have nothing to talk about. He couldn't bring up family. He couldn't bring up lovers. What else was there? "Tell me about your bike. You seem pretty attached."

"She was the only thing I took when I left my parents' home, the only thing they allowed me to take."

Well, they were just batting a thousand, weren't they? Lachlan decided to keep his mouth closed. He was a little saddened by the fact that he and Asa seemed to have nothing to talk about outside of sex.

While he didn't expect this thing between him and Asa to be more than a one-night stand, he would have liked to know a little about the first man he had ever brought home with him, even if it was just for sex.

Lachlan took the turn to his drive and drove up until he reached his house. He pulled in front of the long porch and turned the truck off. Glancing to one side, he could see the lights from his folk's house were on in the distance and knew they were up.

He wondered if his mother was watching through the curtains as she often did and what she would think when she saw another man besides him get out of his truck. Would she be upset? Pissed? Would she ask about Asa when he saw her tomorrow? And how would he explain that Asa wasn't staying?

"This is a nice place."

"Thanks." Lachlan turned back to Asa. "We have about two thousand acres here, most of it farmland. I raise Angus cattle with my parents and brothers."

"Nice."

"It's a living, and I enjoy it."

"Maybe tomorrow you can show me around a bit," Asa said as he unhooked his seatbelt then crawled across the cab toward Lachlan.

"Right now, I'd like you to show me around your bedroom."

Lachlan grinned. "I can do that."

Chapter 2

Asa could still taste Lachlan on his tongue, and he wanted more. The man was every cowboy fantasy Asa ever had all rolled into one tall, muscled man. Asa wanted to lick Lachlan from one end to the other then start the process all over again.

Lachlan opened the truck door and climbed out. Asa followed right behind him, scooting across the seat until he could swing his legs to the ground. Standing right next to Lachlan, Asa was glad to find that there was barely an inch difference in their heights, even if Lachlan seemed a bit thicker.

Asa liked knowing he held a man in his arms when he fooled around. And with the way Lachlan looked, he planned to do a lot of fooling around. He might not come up for air for days to come.

“So, about this bedroom...”

“Right this way.”

Lachlan backed up toward his house. Asa stayed on his heels, closing the door and eagerly following the man. Lachlan turned to open the door, and Asa’s eyes dropped to Lachlan’s jean-clad ass. He groaned at the sight.

Lachlan’s ass was perfect.

“Damn!”

“What?” Lachlan swung around just as he opened the door.

Asa grinned and attacked, pushing Lachlan into the house. His mouth came down on Lachlan’s before he could even get the door closed all of the way. Grabbing Lachlan by his shirt, Asa used the man’s natural force to close the door as he swung him around and pushed him up against the hard wood.

Asa pushed up against Lachlan, groaning into the man's mouth as he felt the hard dips and curves of his body. His fingers went to the buttons of Lachlan's plaid shirt, fumbling in his haste to get them open. It was especially hard considering he refused to take his mouth away from Lachlan's. He just tasted too damn good.

The buttons eventually gave way, a couple of them coming free and flying across the room. Asa didn't care. He'd buy Lachlan a new shirt. He wanted skin. When he pulled the material free and pushed it aside, hot, glorious, naked skin met his hands. Asa shuddered, a deep moan falling from his lips. Lachlan felt even better than Asa imagined.

"Off," he whispered against Lachlan's mouth when he reached the buttons on the man's jeans. He wanted Lachlan naked, and he wanted him naked now. When he felt Lachlan's hands move to his jeans, Asa leaned back and whipped his cotton shirt over his head, tossing it behind him. He'd get it later. He was too intrigued with the trembling he could see in Lachlan's hands to be concerned with where his clothes landed.

"Bedroom?"

"The door to the left." Lachlan nodded with his head in the direction of the door. He was just starting to unzip his jeans.

Asa reached over and grabbed the two edges of the open jeans with his hands and pulled Lachlan into the bedroom. He cast a quick glance over his shoulder to find the bed then pulled Lachlan in that direction.

Reaching the end of the bed, Asa dropped to his knees and started tugging the tight jeans down Lachlan's thighs. It was immediately apparent that Lachlan didn't wear underwear, and Asa couldn't have been more pleased. There was just something totally erotic about a man that went commando.

"Hot damn!" Asa whispered as Lachlan's cock popped free from his jeans. He paused for a moment, taking in the glorious shaft. Lachlan was long and thick, and just about perfect. The only thing

that would make Lachlan more perfect was if he truly knew what to do with it. That remained to be seen, but Asa was hoping.

“You swear too much.”

Asa blinked, glancing up in surprise to find grass-green eyes gazing back at him, a slight grin on Lachlan’s face. “I what?”

“You swear too much.”

“And?” Asa couldn’t believe Lachlan was chastising him when the man’s cock was bouncing in front of his face.

“Just saying...”

“Maybe I need to give you something else to think about.” Before Lachlan could reply, Asa leaned forward and licked the head of Lachlan’s cock. Pungent bursts of flavor exploded across his tongue as he licked away the small beads of pre-cum on the top of Lachlan’s cock.

Asa groaned and dove down, swallowing Lachlan until his nose was buried in the man’s curly pubic hair. He felt Lachlan shudder, the man’s body jerking forward as his hands buried in Asa’s hair.

“Fuck!” Lachlan shouted.

Asa grinned around the hard shaft in his mouth. That was better. If Lachlan had enough brain cells left to think about Asa swearing, then Asa wasn’t doing his job right. He wanted the man mindless with passion.

Asa began working the cock in his mouth, sucking in hard until he felt the tip hit the back of his throat then slowly pulling his mouth back up until just the head remained in his mouth. He licked the top and around the edge of the head then dove back down again.

Asa worked the jeans down Lachlan’s legs until they were pushed down against the man’s boots. He ran his hands back up the man’s thick, muscular thighs until he reached Lachlan’s firm ass, grabbing one butt cheek in each hand and giving it a good squeeze.

The long, full-body shudder that racked Lachlan’s body thrilled Asa right down to his toes. Lachlan was so damn responsive. Asa

could tell instantly how much Lachlan liked something or didn't like something, although he had yet to find anything that man didn't like.

"Asa," Lachlan groaned, "you keep that up and the show is going to be over before it gets started."

Asa chuckled as he pulled his mouth off of Lachlan's cock and leaned back. "Well, we can't have that, now can we?" He reached over and gave Lachlan's cock one good stroke of his hand. "I want to feel this beauty pounding me into the mattress."

"I can do that." Lachlan sounded breathless. "I can really do that."

Asa grinned and pushed himself to his feet. He toed off his boots and kicked them away then reached for the buttons on his jeans. He met Lachlan's dazed green eyes then watched them fall down to watch what he was doing as he unzipped his jeans and pushed them down his legs.

Lachlan seemed mesmerized, just the way Asa wanted him. Kicking his jeans free of his legs, Asa moved back until he felt the bed hit the back of his legs then fell backward. He scooted up to the head of the bed, his eyes never leaving Lachlan's face.

He grabbed his cock and started slowly stroking himself, his legs falling apart. The hitch in Lachlan's breathing spiked Asa's lust up to a fever pitch. This man was hot and wanting, and Asa was waiting to fulfill the need he could see burning in Lachlan's eyes.

"Coming?"

"Oh yeah." Lachlan started pushing his jeans down farther, growling softly when his boots interfered. He reached to push his boots off, and Asa groaned in protest.

"Wait!"

Lachlan glanced up.

"Leave the boots on."

Lachlan grinned and pulled his jeans down over his boots. It took a moment, and Asa was almost wishing he'd kept his mouth shut by the time Lachlan was done. It felt like forever before Lachlan climbed up onto the bed, boots and all.

Lachlan climbed right up the middle of the bed and settled his large body over Asa's. The meeting of flesh against naked flesh brought a deep groan from both men. They paused for a moment, neither of them moving as they soaked in the feeling of their naked bodies pressing against each other.

Lachlan was all smooth skin while Asa sported just a bit of chest hair across his pecs, a small trail narrowing down to his groin like an arrow pointing south. As tall as they both were, they still seemed to fit perfectly together. Their bodies were pressed together, chest to chest, cock to cock, thigh to thigh.

"I don't suppose you have a hat?"

"I do," Lachlan replied, "several in fact."

Asa's eyes nearly crossed. "One of these days you need to wear the hat."

"Now?" Lachlan's muscles tensed as if he were getting ready to get up off the bed, and Asa.

"No!" Asa shouted as he tightened his grip on Lachlan's arms. "Later, much..." Asa breathed in deeply, "much later."

The pressure of Lachlan's body lying over his was almost as arousing to Asa as the feeling of the man's hands moving across his skin. He knew that this first time was probably going to be a quick one. They were both too keyed up to take things slow.

"Do you have condoms, slick?"

"Yeah."

Asa groaned in protest when Lachlan moved away from him until he realized the man didn't plan on moving too far, just enough to lean over to his nightstand and pull out the supplies they needed. A moment later he was back, a condom and a bottle of lube in his hand.

"Are you sure you want to bottom?"

Asa blinked, surprised by the question. "I don't mind being on the bottom."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, why?"

Lachlan shrugged, looking a little sheepish. "In my experience, not a lot of guys like bottoming, especially ones built like you."

Asa grinned. "I like both."

"Yeah?" Lachlan went all breathless again.

"Oh yeah." Asa wiggled his hips and pushed up with his body, rubbing their cocks together. "I want to feel this big boy fuck me in the ass."

"Geez," Lachlan groaned, his head dropping down for a moment, "the things you say."

Asa reached up and trailed his fingers across Lachlan's lips, loving the plush feel of the pouty lips. "One of these days I'm going to dirty up this little mouth of yours, one way or the other."

"Just not in front of my ma."

"Just not in front of your ma."

Lachlan grinned then nipped at Asa's fingers, sucking them into his mouth. Asa inhaled sharply when he felt Lachlan's tongue lick across his fingers. "Oh damn, please tell me you like sucking cock."

"I *love* sucking cock."

Lachlan started to scoot down Asa's body, and he knew the man was going to be true to his words. Asa almost let him, but he wanted to feel Lachlan inside of him more than he wanted to feel the man's lips wrapped around his aching cock.

Asa grabbed Lachlan's arms to stop him. "Later," he whispered when Lachlan looked up at him, his eyebrows drawn together in confusion. "I need something else from you right now."

"Yeah? And what would that be?"

Asa cocked an eyebrow and spread his legs further apart. "Guess."

"Can I stretch you out or do you prefer to do it yourself?"

"You want to stretch me?" It suddenly became harder for Asa to breathe. That wasn't something he was usually used to. In his experience, most of the men he'd been with preferred him to do it.

"I like it." Lachlan's face burned as if he were embarrassed by the admission.

Asa dropped his arms to his sides and drew his knees up, letting them drop to the side, as well. "I'm all yours."

Lachlan mumbled something under his breath, but Asa didn't quite catch it, and then it didn't matter. He could feel Lachlan's fingers moving between his ass cheeks, and nothing else counted but the sensations that rocked his body.

Asa's mind became a haze of lust as one finger pushed into him, followed by another one then another. His body started to move on its own accord, pushing back on the fingers impaling him. He felt like he was on fire and only Lachlan could put the blazing inferno out.

"Lach...lan...Lany...please," Asa begged as his head whipped back and forth on the pillow, "I need, Lany."

"Damn!" Lachlan was suddenly there, pushing into him, filling him. "Again, Asa, call me Lany again."

Lachlan's demand was fierce, matching the sudden, vigorous movements of his body as he started pounding into Asa almost immediately as if he couldn't stop himself. Asa wrapped his legs around Lachlan's body, hooking his heels together in the small of the man's lower back, then held on for the ride.

"Lany, fuck me, Lany." Asa groaned. "I need to feel your big cock pound my ass, Lany."

Asa was shocked. Every time he called Lachlan *Lany*, the man's thrusts became harder, stronger, more forceful. It was like that little pet name had a direct connection to how fierce the man was. Asa loved it, and he had no problem using it to his full advantage.

"Are you going to fuck me good, Lany? Am I going to feel you tomorrow?" Asa reached up and pushed his hands against the headboard as Lachlan started to growl down at him. He was afraid he might have unleashed a beast. He was thrilled. "Fuck me, Lany. Make me come."

Lachlan went wild. If Asa had been a smaller man, he probably would have been hurt. As it was, he enjoyed every thrust of Lachlan's

cock into his tight ass. The deep growls falling from between Lachlan's clenched teeth only heightened Asa's arousal.

Asa yelped in surprise when Lachlan suddenly grabbed his legs and hooked them over his shoulders. His yelp turned to one long, drawn-out groan when Lachlan immediately started pounding into him at a ferocious rate, moving him up the bed until only his hands on the headboard kept Asa from hitting the top of the bed.

Asa felt like a pretzel, and he couldn't have been happier. Lachlan's thick cock was filling his ass in a manner Asa hadn't felt in...well, forever. Asa wasn't sure anyone had ever fucked him as perfectly as Lachlan was doing. The man *did* know what to do with his big, beautiful cock.

Lachlan's hand wrapped around Asa's cock, and that's all it took. One simple stroke and Asa was coming, roaring out his release as if giving voice to what he felt would let loose the ecstasy racing through his body.

He distantly felt Lachlan's fingers dig into his hips, the painful ache making his pleasure all that more intense. Hot, liquid need filled the condom in his ass as Lachlan froze above him. Asa inhaled breath he didn't have as he looked up at Lachlan. Nothing was hidden from him, not the pleasure the man was feeling, not the awe at what they had just shared, not even the need to feel it again. Every emotion was shown on Lachlan's face.

"Lany," Asa whispered as he held his arms out to the man. Lachlan collapsed down against him, the man's face burying in Asa's neck. Heaving breath blew across his skin, making it tingle and prickle with delight and remembered pleasure.

Asa was a little confused by the foreign emotions he felt at holding Lachlan in his arms. He wasn't even sure why he felt the need to hold the man. He wasn't a cuddler. He never had been. Usually, it was fuck them and leave them. He'd never even spent the night with a man before. Lachlan might be the first.

"I gotta..." Lachlan's face flushed as he pulled away, reaching down to grab the condom and pull it off. He twisted it then tossed it into a trashcan next to the bed. Asa watched with curiosity as Lachlan got up and walked into a nearby room, the bathroom he assumed, and came back with a wet washcloth. "Can I...?"

Asa smiled and spread his legs, warmed by the thought that Lachlan wanted to clean him up. He couldn't think of a single man he'd been with that ever wanted to do that. He couldn't think of a single man he'd been with that cared enough to do it.

Lachlan tossed the washcloth back into the bathroom after cleaning Asa up then crawled up onto the bed, stretching out beside him. He looked hesitant then scooted up beside him and dropped his arm around Asa's waist.

"Is this okay?"

"Yeah." Asa nodded.

They lay that way for awhile, the silence between them thicker than mud. Asa knew neither of them wanted to say anything to break the easiness they had found together, but he was afraid it was also starting to tear away.

Asa finally rolled over onto his side. When Lachlan seemed hesitant, Asa grabbed the man's arm and pulled it around his waist. He grinned to himself when Lachlan sighed and cuddled up to his back, his arm tightening around Asa's waist.

The silence continued to reign between them, but it didn't seem quite so thick this time. Maybe the need they both had to feel the one they were with and their willingness to give movement to that need made it less uncomfortable.

Asa just knew he needed to feel Lachlan pressed up against him. It went against everything he ever felt, everything he'd ever done. It went against everything he ever did to keep himself safe from heartbreak. But there it was.

"My parents kicked me out of their house and their lives when they found out I was gay."

Asa heard Lachlan's soft inhale and couldn't help but wonder what made him tell the man anything about his life. They were a one-night hookup, two strangers that had a desire to be filled and found it in each other. He had no idea why he felt the need to tell these things to Lachlan.

"I'm sorry."

"It is what it is, I suppose," Asa replied. "They couldn't stand the idea that their son was gay. That motorcycle is the only thing I was allowed to take with me because I paid for it myself and it was mine."

"Asa, you don't have to tell me this if you don't want to."

"No." Asa patted the arm wrapped around his waist. "I want to."

"Then I want to listen."

"I spent years knowing I was gay but not saying anything to them. I knew how they felt about fags, queers, and sinners, as they called us. Then one night, after they had tried to hook me up with yet another one of their friends' daughters, I had had enough. I told them I was gay."

"What happened?" Lachlan froze behind him, his body stiffening as if bracing himself for what he was about to hear.

"I was out the door in five minutes, just long enough for my mother to tell me I was going to burn in hell and my father to punch me in the face and tell me that I was dead to him. They never wanted to hear from me again."

"Oh, Asa," Lachlan whispered as he tightened his grip, snuggling closer. Asa could feel soft little kisses along the back of his neck and shuddered. He never told anyone what his parents had done to him. He didn't understand why he was telling Lachlan.

"I lost my family, my home, and my job all in the span of five minutes."

"I wish I could say that it gets easier, Asa, but you would know I was lying. There are too many people out there that believe like your parents. You saw that tonight with Clem and Billy."

"Yeah." And wasn't that a sad fucking state of affairs?

“How did you lose your job?”

Asa let out a small snort. “My father was my boss.”

“Oh damn!”

“Yeah, just about. I didn’t exactly get fired or anything. I quit.”

“Why?”

“I went to work like normal, but it seems my father had told everyone there that I was gay. He also put it around that I was looking to fuck anything with pants and a dick.” Asa snorted again as the memory of that time filled his head. “Like I’d fuck any of those damn perverts.”

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“Oh, there were plenty of them that let me know exactly how they felt about perverts like me. I got everything from dog shit in my car to threats against my life, but you wouldn’t believe how many of them sought me out in private and offered to let me suck their dicks.”

“And they thought you were the pervert?”

“Yep.” Asa shrugged. “I finally just gave up and quit. It was too hard to work in that environment. Between their practical jokes and the death threats to the total lack of professionalism, I didn’t think it was safe for me to stay on the job.”

“Sounds to me like you were right.”

“Yeah, I guess. I’ve just been driving around since then, trying to get my head screwed on straight.”

“Until Clem and Billy tried to rearrange your face.”

“Yeah.” Asa chuckled. He rolled over onto his back so he could look up into Lachlan’s handsome face. He pressed the palm of his hand against Lachlan’s naked chest and started trailing it down toward his cock. “So, cowboy, how do you feel about being on the bottom?”

“I have more condoms and lube.” Lachlan grinned. “Why don’t we find out?”

Chapter 3

Lachlan knew almost instantly that he wasn't alone in his bed when he woke up. It took him just a moment longer before he remembered who exactly was with him. Smiling as he remembered the previous night's activities, Lachlan rolled over to look down at his sleeping lover.

He was pretty sure that Asa was not only the most gorgeous man he had ever seen but the best lay he'd ever had. There didn't seem to be anything the man wasn't into. And he didn't seem to mind letting Lachlan play all he wanted.

Lachlan chuckled softly as he noticed the metal handcuffs still attached to one of Asa's wrists. Finding out that Asa liked being restrained during sex had been fun. Putting that knowledge into practice had been mind blowing.

Lachlan didn't know what possessed him, but he felt the need to lean over and plant a small kiss on Asa's forehead. He went with it then quickly rolled out of bed, feeling like a goober.

He grabbed his jeans off the floor and pulled them up his legs, leaving the top couple of buttons undone. He started for the door, laughing softly to himself when he tripped over his cowboy boots. Asa sure had a thing for cowboys. Lachlan was glad he could accommodate the guy. He couldn't wait to see what Asa's reaction would be when he pulled out his leather chaps.

Lachlan paused as he quietly closed the bedroom door behind him and leaned against the wall. Maybe he shouldn't have thoughts like that. Asa never promised to be more than a one-night stand, no matter how much Lachlan wanted it otherwise.

He hadn't met anyone in a long time that attracted him as much as Asa, and it wasn't just the sex, although that was totally hot. Asa had rocked his world in more than one way last night. Lachlan wanted more.

He wanted Asa to stick around so they could see if they might have something together. Asa was an easy man to like. He had a wicked sense of humor, a keen wit, and a very sexy Southern drawl, all of which drove Lachlan crazy. He wanted to explore that more, not watch Asa drive away on his motorcycle.

"You make a lot of noise, you know that?"

Lachlan jumped and whipped around to see his younger brother, Rourke, leaning against the wall leading into the kitchen. Lachlan closed his eyes for a moment, his face heating up at Rourke's words. He was so embarrassed.

"Rourke, what are you doing here?" he asked as he opened his eyes and walked toward his brother. He needed to get to the kitchen and the coffee pot. He hadn't had enough caffeine to deal with his younger brother yet.

"I slept on the couch last night. You and your friend didn't even see me when you came in." Rourke chuckled then took a sip of the coffee in the cup he held in his hands. "You seemed a little busy, so I decided to let you be."

"And you didn't sleep in your own bed because?"

"Ma's mad at me."

"Again?"

Lachlan loved his brothers, all of them, but being the oldest sometimes made it a little hard to like them. Rourke was one of the worst. He was the troublemaker brother. He'd been getting into trouble since he could crawl. Seems it hadn't stopped as he grew older, either. Maybe he felt he needed to make up or something because he was the middle child.

Lachlan poured himself a cup of coffee then leaned back against the counter, taking several small sips of the hot liquid. Once he had a

sufficient amount of caffeine in his bloodstream, he looked up at his brother.

“So, what did you do this time?”

Rourke shrugged. “Nothing really.”

“Rourke.”

Rourke rolled his eyes. “I came home late, after Ma had put dinner away. I raided the fridge, that’s all.”

“What did you eat?”

“The ham Ma had for Sunday dinner.”

“The whole ham?” Lachlan gaped.

“I was hungry.”

“So you ate Ma’s Sunday ham?” Lachlan set his cup on the counter and rubbed his hand down his face. His ma had to be pissed. No one messed with Ma’s Sunday dinners. It was the one night during the week that all the boys had to be home for dinner. There was no other choice unless they wanted their asses handed to them. “Are you nuts? I’m surprised you’re still breathing.”

“Maybe.” The slow, easy grin that came over Rourke’s face made Lachlan nervous. He knew he had the right to be when Rourke continued speaking. “But she’ll forget all about me when she finds out you brought someone home with you.”

“Rourke,” Lachlan growled, “who I bring home is no one’s business but mine.”

“I’m just saying.”

“You’ll keep your mouth shut.”

“Says who?” Rourke chuckled.

“Rourke!” Lachlan clenched his fists, wanting desperately to wrap them around his brother’s throat. “You will keep your fucking mouth shut!”

“So, you do swear.”

Lachlan swung around to see Asa leaning against the kitchen doorway, his arms crossed over his naked chest. His feet were bare,

too. The only item of clothing he had on was a pair of tight jeans that hugged his body like a second skin.

“Asa.” Lachlan could feel his cock harden right up at the sight of the sexy man. It was as if his cock wanted to come out and play now that their playmate was within sight. “How did you sleep?”

Asa grinned and pushed himself away from the doorframe. He started walking toward Lachlan, his steps slow and sensual. “I slept great, babe, all nice and snug next to my human heating pad.”

Lachlan almost jumped out of his skin when Asa leaned over and kissed him. He cast a quick glance over at Rourke, having never kissed someone in front of his brother. Rourke was just grinning at him.

Asa pulled away and gave Lachlan a knowing grin. Nervous, Lachlan grabbed the coffee cup off the counter and held it out to Asa. “Coffee?”

“Thanks, Lany.”

Lachlan almost melted. He didn’t know what it was about Asa calling him *Lany* that turned him on so much, but he melted every time. “You’re more than welcome.”

“Lany?” Rourke sputtered. “He calls you Lany?”

Lachlan’s eyes narrowed as he turned to glare at his brother. “Yeah, you have a problem with that?”

Rourke roared with laughter, holding up his hands quickly when Lachlan took a step toward him. “No, man, it’s cool, *Lany*.”

“Asa can call me Lany.” Lachlan growled and pointed his finger at Rourke. “You may not.”

Asa pushed over in front of Lachlan, leaning into his body. He chuckled lightly before covering Lachlan’s mouth with his own. Lachlan groaned, his brother and whatever anger he felt at Rourke fleeing in the face of Asa’s kiss.

Lachlan leaned back against the counter to give himself more leverage and spread his legs until Asa’s body settled between them,

their jean-clad bodies brushing up against each other. His arms wrapped around Asa's back, sliding down to grab the man's ass.

"Okay, now my eyes are burning," Rourke said.

Lachlan lifted his head and started to growl at his brother again when he felt Asa's lips on his throat. "Fuck, Asa, I can't think when you do that," he whispered, letting his head drop back, exposing his throat to Asa's questing lips.

"I know," Asa whispered back. "I like it when you don't think too much. Your reactions are so much better then."

Lachlan pulled his head up and looked into Asa's sparkling hazel eyes. They were filled with a mixture of amusement and desire. "Keep it up and you're going to end up back in handcuffs."

Asa laughed as if the idea amused him greatly. "Speaking of which..." Asa held up his arm, the metal handcuffs dangling from his wrist, "do you have a key for these?"

Lachlan felt his face flame as Rourke started laughing hysterically from across the room. There were times he wished he was an only child. This was one of them. "Rourke, shut the hell up before I smother you in your sleep."

"Lachlan, damn man, I didn't know you were into that sort of stuff," Rourke said, the amusement clear in his voice. "Why didn't you say so? I would have loaned you some of my stuff. My cuffs are at least fur lined."

Lachlan rolled his eyes when Asa started laughing. "You're no help."

"No, but he does have a point, Lany." Asa shook the handcuffs attached to his wrists. "These would be much better fur lined, especially if we plan to use them again."

Lachlan was pretty sure he stopped breathing at Asa's words. "Are we? Going to use them again, I mean?"

Asa's hand slowly lowered to Lachlan's chest, but his eyes remained firmly connected. The amusement fell away from his face to be replaced with a more serious expression. "I'd like to."

Lachlan swallowed past the lump that suddenly seemed to have appeared in his throat. He felt something deep within him start to open up and flutter wildly. "I'd like that, too," he whispered. "I'd like that a lot."

"Does that mean you want to take me to meet your ma?"

"After we take the handcuffs off," Lachlan said. He hooked his finger through one loop and pulled on the cuffs. "There are just some things Ma doesn't need to know."

* * * *

Lachlan was so nervous he could spit. He'd never once brought anyone home to meet his parents, or even his brothers. It wasn't that he was ashamed of bringing someone home or even being gay. He just never found anyone he wanted to bring home.

Asa was a different story. Besides the fact that he couldn't stop looking at the man and fantasizing about what he wanted to do to Asa when he was naked, Lachlan generally liked him. He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt that way about anyone outside of his own family.

Rourke was no help at all. He kept looking over at him and Asa as they walked up the driveway toward their folks' house later that day, snickering. Once he started going, Asa didn't seem to be too far behind him.

Lachlan was a little jealous of the almost instant camaraderie that seemed to have developed between Asa and Rourke. If he didn't know better, he would have thought the two men had been friends forever instead of just a couple of hours.

He just knew it was going to be a long day before he could get Asa back to his house and back into his bed where he wanted the man. It had been hard enough to leave it after their joint shower as it was.

Lachlan was still aching from the blow job Asa had given him. He'd never met anyone in his life that was as comfortable with his

sexuality as Asa was. The man didn't seem to care if he was giving or receiving. He just liked sex, and he was willing to put everything into it.

"So, there's just the two houses?"

Lachlan pulled himself out of his thoughts before he passed out from hot flashes and concentrated on Asa's question. "Ma and Da built their house when they bought the property. I built mine a couple of years ago. Each of us boys was offered a section of land when we came of age, a place to build our own houses, but I'm the only one of us that has so far."

"Ma doesn't want us moving too far away," Rourke added, chuckling. "She likes to keep her hands in our cookie jars, so to speak."

"Why haven't you built a house, Rourke?"

"And give up Ma's cooking? Are you nuts?"

Asa chuckled. "That good, huh?"

"Ma could cook for the King of England himself."

"Uh, Rourke." Asa gave Rourke a long look. "There is no King of England. She's a Queen."

"So are you." Rourke smirked as he reached for the door handle. "Your point?"

"Rourke," Lachlan growled.

"I'm just saying." Rourke laughed as he opened the door and started to step inside.

"Well, don't!"

"You boys knock that off," said a stern voice from inside the house. "I won't have you arguing inside my house."

"Yes, Ma," both Lachlan and Rourke answered at the same time. Asa grinned, looking incredibly amused.

"Who'd you bring home with you, Lachlan?" Lachlan looked up to see his mother walking out of the kitchen, wiping her hands off on the apron tied around her waist. "Well, aren't you going to introduce me?"

“Sorry, Ma,” Lachlan said quickly. “This is Asa Miller. Asa, my ma, Alani Blae Leah.”

“Mrs. Blae Leah,” Asa said as he stepped forward and held out his hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet the woman who raised such a fine man as Lachlan.”

Lachlan’s eyes widened. He thought Asa might be putting it on a little thick, but Ma seemed to be eating it up. She smiled widely, shaking Asa’s hand. “Well, aren’t you just the charmer?”

Asa chuckled and cast a quick glance at Lachlan. “I certainly hope so, ma’am.”

“And I’m glad you recognize quality when you see it. Lachlan has always been a good son.”

“Hey,” Rourke said, “I’m right here, you know.”

“Yeah.” Asa smirked as he looked at Rourke. “But you I’m not so sure about.”

“And smart, too,” Ma said. “Lachlan, son, it looks like you might have brought home a winner. I hope he plans on staying for dinner. I think we should all get to know each other better if he’s going to be sticking around.”

Lachlan blinked. Had his mother just said what he thought she said? He glanced over at Rourke to see a stunned expression on his face, the same one he thought he might have on his own face.

“Uh, Ma, I...”

“Go introduce your new friend to your da, Lachlan. Your brother and I need to have us a little talk about eating my Sunday ham.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Lachlan wasn’t stupid. He grabbed Asa’s arm and dragged him out the front door as fast as he could move. Ma was getting ready to let loose on Rourke, and he didn’t want to be around to get in the line of fire.

“Your ma is sweet.”

“You wouldn’t think that if you were in Rourke’s shoes right now.”

“Yeah, maybe.” Asa chuckled. “But I’m not dumb enough to eat an entire ham, either.”

Lachlan stumbled to a stop when he got to the side of his father’s shop. He leaned back against the wall and took a few deep breaths. He still couldn’t believe his mother was taking things so well. Maybe she didn’t fully understand the nature of his relationship with Asa. Maybe she thought he really was just a friend.

“Are you okay, Lany?”

Lachlan smiled at Asa. He wrapped an arm around Asa’s waist and pulled him close enough to feel the man’s body press against his. Whatever breath he had just dragged into his lungs left in a rush when he felt Asa’s cock harden against him.

“I’d be better if you kissed me.”

Asa grinned and leaned forward to kiss Lachlan’s lips. Lachlan groaned, licking at Asa’s lips. No one kissed like this man. Asa didn’t just kiss, he explored and conquered, drawing any hint of resistance Lachlan might have had away, if he had any. He didn’t.

“Asa,” Lachlan groaned against the man’s mouth, “I really like kissing you.”

“The feeling is entirely mutual, Lany.”

The sensual spark that passed between them seemed mutual, as if Asa felt the strong pull of desire as much as Lachlan did. Lachlan thought they might be in complete harmony with each other. He just didn’t know.

“Asa, I...er...” Lachlan didn’t really know how to say what was floating through his mind. He liked Asa, a lot, but he didn’t want to seem like an over-emotional moron, especially if he was wrong about what he thought was going on here.

Asa covered Lachlan’s mouth with a finger. “I was wondering how you would feel about having a house guest for a little while.”

“A little while?” Lachlan asked, his lips moving against Asa’s fingers. Just how long was “a little while?”

Asa shrugged. "Long enough to figure out what this thing is between us."

Lachlan's heart zoomed. Asa felt the same confusing need he did. "I'd like that."

"I've never met anyone like you, Lany, and I don't know if I ever will again. I may have done a lot of stupid stuff in my life, but I'm not stupid enough to give up a good opportunity when it hits me in the face."

Asa seemed so serious all of a sudden, and Lachlan didn't know the man well enough to know if that was a good thing or not. He just knew he felt like Asa did. He didn't want to give up this opportunity to figure out if there was something more than a one-night stand between them.

Feeling like he was going out on a long limb but willing to try in the face of Asa's heartfelt words, Lachlan reached up and trailed the back of his knuckles along the edge of Asa's jaw line.

"I'd like to see where this goes, Asa."

"You might not want to once you get to know me. I'll be honest, Lany. I can be a real bear when I don't get my own way. I can barely function before I have my coffee in the morning, and my idea of a shower usually empties the water heater, and I don't feel the least bit guilty about that."

"You're not saying anything that scares me, Asa."

"I snore."

Lachlan grinned. "I know. I watched you sleep last night."

Asa's eyebrows shot up. "You watched me sleep?"

"Yep. Did you know you curl up with your hand under your cheek? It's very cute, Asa."

"Cute?" One dark eyebrow went down, but the other stayed raised. "You think I'm cute?"

Lachlan laughed and rubbed his hands down Asa's back until he reached his ass, cupping the tight, rounded curves in his hands. "I

think you're hot and sexy, and I wish you were naked right this minute. I'd suck your cock until your legs gave out."

"Fuck, Lany," Asa groaned as he leaned his forehead against Lachlan's, "you can't say stuff like that when I know there is nothing we can do about it. I've been thinking about you sucking my cock since last night."

"Yeah, I did promise to suck your cock, didn't I?"

"You did, and I'm holding you to that."

Lachlan licked his lips, watching as Asa's eyes immediately fell to look at them, then the man groaned and pressed closer. Lachlan could feel Asa's hard cock through his jeans. He reached down between their bodies and palmed the thick shaft.

"I can think of something else I'd like you to hold me to."

"Fuck, Lany!" Asa growled.

A moment later, Lachlan wondered if maybe he had taken things too far when Asa ground their mouths together. Asa's hands gripped his hair, not letting him escape, as if he wanted to. Asa seemed to be on fire, his tongue licking across Lachlan's lips before delving inside to explore and conquer.

Lachlan felt as if his chest would explode, not from lack of air but from the feelings sweeping through him. Kissing Asa was electrifying. He kept waiting for it to become mundane, but that had yet to happen. Each time seemed better than the last.

"I'm going to fuck you so hard you won't walk for a week," Asa whispered against Lachlan's lips.

The shudder that swept through him at Asa's words started at his lips and moved down through his entire body before settling in his suddenly aching cock. He gripped Asa's ass in his hands and pulled the man against him until their cocks rubbed together through their jeans.

"Yes, yes, please."

"Oh, I like it when you beg, baby," Asa drawled slowly, his eyes devouring Lachlan's face. "Are you going to beg me to fuck you,

Lany? Are you going to dirty that pretty little mouth of yours and beg for my cock?"

Lachlan groaned. If Asa kept talking the way he was, if he kept rubbing up against him the way he was, Lachlan wasn't going to be able to stop himself from fucking the man up against the side of his father's shop.

"Lachlan."

Lachlan froze, every ounce of desire he felt draining away in the blink of an eye. Sure enough, Lachlan turned his head and there stood his da at the end of the building, looking slightly embarrassed and like he was trying very hard not to look in the direction of Lachlan and Asa.

"Da?"

"You might want to think of taking that back to your place, son." Donnell Blae Leah slapped the side of the building with his hand. "These walls are pretty thin, son. I wouldn't want anyone to hear anything you didn't want them to hear."

Lachlan's face flamed. He could feel the heat pouring off of him. He had never been so embarrassed in his life. It didn't help that Asa had his face buried in Lachlan's neck. His shoulders were shaking, and Lachlan knew the man was silently laughing.

"Thanks, Da, we'll do that."

"Just don't forget that your ma expects you both for dinner."

"I won't." Not that he wanted to show his face to anyone. He knew his da wouldn't say anything to his brothers, but his ma was another story all together. They shared everything. That was wonderful in a marriage, but when Lachlan would rather keep his embarrassment to himself, not so much.

"You can introduce your young man when you bring him inside, son," Da said. "I'll tell your ma you're going to be a few minutes late."

"Thanks, Da." What else did you say when your father caught you fooling around with another man and offered to give you a few

minutes more? Even thanks didn't seem right, but nothing else would come out of Lachlan's mouth.

Lachlan watched his da walk across the yard and into the house. The moment the front door slammed shut, Asa stepped back from Lachlan and burst out laughing as if he couldn't hold it in any longer. Lachlan started to chuckle, as well, the amusement of the situation and Asa's laughter rubbing off on him.

"I adore your ma and da, Lany," Asa said as he wiped the tears of laughter from his eyes. "I've never met anyone like them in my life. They are certainly taking this a lot better than my parents did."

"I can't believe my da caught us making out against the side of his shop."

"Seriously?" Asa seemed to gap at him. "Forget about him catching us making out, Lachlan. Another few minutes and he would have caught us fucking against the side of his shop, and you know it."

Even though he could feel his face flush again, Lachlan had to grin. "Who says that's still not going to happen?"

The amusement fell from Asa's face as if it had never been there. "Really?"

Lachlan crooked his finger at Asa. "Why don't you come back over here and find out?"

Chapter 4

Asa adored Lachlan's family. They were boisterous, comical, and clearly a loving family, the total opposite of Asa's family. He couldn't even remember getting a hug from his mother, let alone his father. His parents were too strict and proper for that.

Asa was expected to dress for dinner, not show up in jeans and a shirt. There were no loud voices or laughter allowed at the dinner table. They ate slowly, hardly speaking at all. If any conversation did occur, it was light and not very in depth.

Lachlan's family, on the other hand, was loud, very loud. It seemed like everyone was trying to talk over everyone else, and they all had something to say. Food was passed around, everyone dishing up themselves, and everyone ate, all while talking about their day.

Asa had been introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Blae Leah and Lachlan's brothers, Rourke, Quaid, and Seamus. There was one more brother, Neason, but he hadn't shown yet. As far as he could tell, each of the brothers looked almost exactly alike, all standing tall with broad shoulders and thick muscles, sandy blond hair, and eyes in various hues of green. It was like cowboy heaven at the Blae Leah dinner table.

"Asa, would you like some mashed potatoes?"

"Yes, thank you, ma'am."

Asa took the bowl of mashed potatoes that Mrs. Blae Leah handed him and dished himself up before handing the bowl to Lachlan. Now that they were actually sitting down at the table, all of Asa's bravado from before had disappeared. He felt a little weird, especially since Lachlan's da kept looking at him.

He just knew somehow that Lachlan's da knew what they had done against the side of his shop, even if he hadn't actually seen it. Asa felt like squirming in his seat, the need to fidget and drop his eyes almost overwhelming.

Donnell Blae Leah had to know that not a half hour ago, Lachlan had made good on his words and given Asa a blow job that dropped him to his knees. Asa could see it in the furtive glances the man kept giving him as he ate.

"What do you do, Asa?"

Asa's head snapped up, dread filling him as he looked down the table at Lachlan's da. "I'm kind of unemployed at the moment, Mr. Blae Leah. I've just been driving around for awhile, seeing the countryside."

"Unemployed, huh?"

Asa swallowed hard. "Yes, sir."

Mr. Blae Leah nodded and took another bite of food. Asa felt sweat trickle down his temples as the man slowly chewed his food. "Plan on staying that way long?" he asked after a moment.

"No, not long, sir," Asa replied. "I just need some time to clear my head a little before looking for another job."

Mr. Blae Leah grunted then took another bite of his food. Asa couldn't help wondering when the next phase of the interrogation would start, the part where Mr. Blae Leah asked him what his intentions were toward his son. He could feel it coming.

"You not like your last job, son?"

"I...uh..." Asa quickly looked over at Lachlan as panic filled him. He so didn't want to explain things to Lachlan's da. He had a hard enough time explaining them to Lachlan, and he still wasn't sure why he had done that.

"Asa's reasons for quitting his last job are his own, Da," Lachlan said. "You need to let it go."

Mr. Blae Leah stared at his son for several tense moments then nodded and went back to eating. Asa slowly let out the breath he'd

been holding and reached over under the table with his foot and rubbed it against Lachlan's leg. When Lachlan looked at him in surprise, Asa mouthed the words "Thank you."

Lachlan smiled and gave a slight nod of his head then turned back to the table. "So, where's Neason? I haven't seen him all day." Lachlan frowned. "In fact, I haven't seen him since yesterday morning."

"I saw him in town earlier today," Quaid said. "I thought he'd be home by now."

"Your brother is fine," Ma said. "You need to leave him be. He'll come home when he's ready to."

Asa could feel the tension in the room rise, and he suddenly knew it wasn't because of him. Lachlan glanced at Rourke, Quaid, and Seamus then down at his food. Asa could see his fingers clench around his fork. Lachlan was upset. Hell, he was pissed, and Asa didn't know how to make him feel better.

Asa rubbed his foot against Lachlan's again. And once again, he received a surprised look from Lachlan. Asa smiled and rubbed Lachlan's foot a third time. He liked surprising the man. It was a good look on Lachlan. It also made Lachlan smile, which was a great look on him.

"This is a great meal, Mrs. Blaebleah," Asa said as he turned back to his plate and dug in. "I can't remember the last time I ate this well or had a home-cooked meal. Thank you for inviting me."

"You're more than welcome, Asa," she replied, smiling broadly. "And please, call me ma. I'm not old enough to be Mrs. Blaebleah. That was Donnell's mother, god rest her soul. A sweeter woman you've never met."

"You *liked* your mother-in-law?" Asa gaped. "I thought wives were supposed to hate their mother-in-laws."

Ma started laughing. Even her husband started laughing. Asa glanced at Lachlan in confusion, finding amusement filling the green eyes looking at him from his lover's face. "What?"

“You don’t have a grandmother, do you?”

Asa shrugged. “No, not really. Both sets of my grandparents died when I was very young. I don’t remember much about them except what my mother said. She didn’t like my father’s mother very much, said she interfered in their lives too much.”

“Oh, she was a very sweet woman, but that didn’t keep her from interfering in our lives, either.” Ma laughed again. “But she did it because she cared, not because she was a busybody. She only wanted the best for us.”

“I’m not sure my mother would agree with you there.”

“Do you keep in touch with your folks, Asa?” Mr. Blaebleah asked. “Do they live around here?”

“No, sir, I’m not close with my folks.” Silence filled the room as everyone there digested Asa’s words then slowly went back to eating. Asa felt Lachlan’s foot rub against his much as he had done to the other man.

“So, Asa,” Rourke said after a minute, “my brother said something about the Thornton boys giving you trouble.”

“Who?” Asa asked.

“The Darwin brothers,” Lachlan whispered, “Clem and Billy.”

“Oh yeah, them.” Asa snickered. “They busted my bike.”

“You were lucky,” Lachlan said. “They wanted to bust your face.”

“True.” Asa leaned over and rested his head on Lachlan’s shoulders, purposely fluttering his eyelashes at the man. “But then my knight in shining armor came and rescued me.” Asa sighed deeply for effect. “My hero.”

The brothers roared with laughter. Even Mr. and Mrs. Blaebleah laughed. Lachlan just turned beet red and pushed at him. Asa laughed and sat back up. Lachlan blushed way too easily, and it was the cutest damn thing he had ever seen.

“Knock it off,” Lachlan growled.

“Make me.”

“Asa.”

Asa grinned. "What are you going to do about it, big boy?"

Lachlan growled again, but Asa didn't hear any threat in his voice this time. Instead, he heard heat and arousal. The glint in Lachlan's green eyes as he stared over at him made Asa's skin prickle with need.

He wished dinner was over, and quickly. He needed to find a dark place and make Lachlan come through with the promises shining in his eyes. He didn't think Mr. and Mrs. Blae Leah would appreciate him tossing Lachlan down on their dinner table.

"Finish eating, and I'll take you out and show you the ranch."

Asa started shoveling as fast as he could while not making a fool of himself. He barely tasted the food that went into his mouth. It didn't help that he was pretty sure everyone in the room knew exactly what was going through his head.

Asa was pretty sure Rourke was going to make a comment at any moment. The smirk on the man's face said that Asa hadn't fooled him in the least. Quaid and Seamus seemed more easygoing. Rourke scared him. The man would be more than willing to open his mouth to create a moment.

"Which one of you boys is going to help me clean up after dinner?"

Asa glanced up from eating when silence filled the room. He looked around at each of the brothers, waiting for one of them to say something. He expected Lachlan to say something at the least. When no one opened their mouths, Asa knew he had to.

"I'd be happy to help, Mrs. Blae Leah."

"I appreciate it, Asa." Mrs. Blae Leah glanced around the table at each of her sons. "Especially seeing how none of my boys seemed to remember their manners."

All of the boys started speaking at once, talking over each other. Asa's mouth dropped open as he watched them each back peddle and try to get out of trouble with their mother.

"Oh, Ma, I have to go check on the cattle," Quaid said.

“One of the horses is going to drop anytime now,” Seamus said.

“I have some fence posts that need to be taken out to the south pasture,” Rourke said.

“I was going to show Asa the ranch,” Lachlan said.

“Boys,” Mr. Blaebleah warned sternly.

“Yes, sir,” all four brothers answered at the same time, their heads bowing. “We’re sorry, Ma.”

Asa pressed his lips together and looked down at his plate. He’d never seen anything like the Blaebleah family in his life. Mr. and Mrs. Blaebleah definitely ruled the family, and each of their boys seemed to respect their words as law.

He knew in his own family, his parents ruled the household, as well. Only they did it out of hate and fear. Mr. and Mrs. Blaebleah seemed to have the love and respect of each of their sons. Asa had to wonder how they did that.

“Do you have brothers or sisters, Asa?” Mrs. Blaebleah asked.

Asa saw Lachlan tense beside him. He reacted instinctively to reassure him he was all right, rubbing his foot against Lachlan’s as he addressed the man’s mother. “No, ma’am. I’m an only child.”

“And you’re not close to your folks?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Well, son, who do you go to when you need something?”

Asa could see the confusion on Mrs. Blaebleah’s face. Coming from such a large family, she probably didn’t have to rely fully on herself in times of need, not like Asa did. “I’ve learned to rely on myself, Mrs. Blaebleah.”

“That’s no way to live, son.”

“I do all right.”

Mrs. Blaebleah grunted, which Asa didn’t think was a very ladylike sound, but he wasn’t stupid enough to point that out to the woman. “A young man like you needs more than a motorcycle to keep him safe.”

Asa couldn't have prevented himself from looking at Lachlan even if he had been on fire. "I'm beginning to see that, Mrs. Blae Leah."

"I thought I told you to call me ma?"

"Yes ma'am." Asa smiled broadly as he looked back at the woman.

She chuckled and shook her head. "Yep, you sure are a charmer. It's a wonder the rest of my boys aren't falling for you. I'd hate to see what happened if I had had me some girls. Da would be sleeping with a shotgun."

Asa's eyes widened. "Yes, ma'am."

"If you all are done eating, why don't you go out and Lachlan can show you the ranch. Rourke, Quaid, and Seamus can help me with the dishes." Mrs. Blae Leah arched an eyebrow as she stood up and grabbed a few dishes. "Isn't that right, boys?"

"Yes, ma'am," the three brothers answered together.

Lachlan instantly got up and pushed his chair in, reaching for the cowboy hat he had taken off when he came inside. Asa stared at the gorgeous cowboy for a moment then laid his fork down and got up, pushing his own chair in.

He grabbed his plate and then Lachlan's, carrying them into the kitchen. When he came back out, everyone was staring at him. "What?"

"Ma said we would help with the dishes," Rourke said.

"Yeah?" Asa didn't understand the question or why everyone was staring at him. "Your ma worked hard on this meal. The less work for her, the better. Besides, I was just carrying my dishes into the kitchen. I don't know what the big deal is. Is that not allowed?"

"It's very much allowed, Asa, and very much appreciated," Mr. Blae Leah said. "Maybe you'll rub off on my sons and they will learn to appreciate their ma just a little bit more, too."

Asa began to sweat as four sets of eyes swung in his direction. He suddenly had visions of coal in his stocking at Christmas time, maybe

whip cream on his face. Rourke's smirk certainly meant that there would be some sort of reprisal.

"Come on, Asa," Lachlan said, gesturing with his hand, "let's go before my brothers string you up by your shorts."

Asa hurried across the room and joined Lachlan, walking toward the front door. He leaned over and bumped shoulders with the man. "I'm not wearing any shorts," he whispered.

Lachlan paused in the process of opening the front door and stared. Asa chuckled and sauntered past the man. He made it to the bottom of the porch steps before he heard the door squeak closed behind him.

"You really shouldn't say things like that with my family around, Asa," Lachlan said as he caught up and wrapped his arm around Asa. "I don't think my ma would appreciate me tossing you down on her dinner table to have my wicked way with you."

Asa burst out laughing. "I had the very same thought while we were sitting down to dinner."

"I guess great minds think alike."

"Are you kidding me? That wasn't our minds thinking, babe, wrong head."

Lachlan chuckled.

"I like your family, Lany."

"They certainly seem to like you. I thought my ma was going to adopt you."

"While as nice as that would be, I think I'd have to say no. That would make you my brother instead of my lover, and that's just wrong on so many levels."

"Yeah." Lachlan chuckled. "Lover is so much better."

Asa certainly thought so. He'd like to put that thought into practice, too. He might have gotten a top notch blow job just awhile ago, but right now he was feeling the need for something more, something a little more in-depth and intense.

“So, about this ranch of yours...” Asa drawled slowly. “Does it have any hiding spots that don’t have thin walls?”

Lachlan grinned. “One or two.”

“Oh?” Asa arched an eyebrow. He knew Lachlan said he had never brought anyone home to meet his mother, but that didn’t mean he had never brought anyone home period. He just might not have introduced them to his mother.

“My brothers and I spent a lot of time playing hide and seek. I always picked the best spots.”

Asa followed Lachlan around the side of the barn. The moment they were out of sight of the house, Lachlan grabbed his hand and began running across a large open field toward a forest of trees, dragging Asa along behind him.

Asa smiled as he followed after Lachlan. The man seemed to be in a great hurry, and Asa couldn’t say he blamed him. He wanted someplace quiet, private, and away from Lachlan’s family, no matter how much he liked them.

“Will this suffice?” Lachlan waved his hand as he came to a stop.

Asa slowed as he realized they had run to the edge of a small creek. Large rocks bordered the area as if creating a cove just for the grass. Trees towered all around them except over the creek, giving the small cove a green canopy that opened to the stars above.

“Lany, it’s beautiful.”

“It’s also very useful for our purposes,” Lachlan said as he tugged on the hand he held. Asa didn’t even try to stop himself, just fell into Lachlan’s strong, muscular body.

“Just what did you have in mind, cowboy?”

“How do you feel about sex in the great outdoors?”

Asa smirked. “How do you feel about leaving the boots and hat on?”

Lachlan grinned and slowly backed away several steps. Asa’s eyes followed the path of Lachlan’s hands as he began unbuttoning

his shirt, one button at a time. He knew Lachlan was going slow on purpose. The man was trying to torture him. It was working.

It seemed to take forever. Asa was hot and hard by the second button. He was drooling by the fourth. By the time Lachlan had his shirt off and reached for the button and zipper on his jeans, Asa was naked, his clothes in a pile at his feet, his cock in his hand.

“You going to fuck me, cowboy?” Asa whispered as he watched Lachlan finish getting undressed, leaving his boots and cowboy hat on. “Or are you going to show me how well you ride?”

“Well,” Lachlan drawled slowly, making Asa’s toes curl, “I do seem to have the boots and the hat. I guess that makes me the cowboy.”

“So, you’re going to fuck me then?” Asa started lowering himself to his knees. Lachlan stepped over and caught him by the arm, stopping his drop to the ground.

“Being a cowboy means I get to ride the bull, Asa.”

Every bit of air in Asa’s lungs came out in a deep rush of breath. He tried to draw it back in, but it was fruitless when Lachlan leaned down to his jeans, coming back up with a condom and a small packet of lube, placing both in Asa’s hand.

“You want to watch, or should I do it myself?”

“Huh?”

“The stretching, handsome,” Lachlan said. “Do you want to watch me do it or do it yourself?”

“Oh, I...I’d like to do it.” Lachlan grinned and dropped to his knees, presenting his naked buttocks to Asa’s hungry gaze. Asa groaned and dropped down behind Lachlan, between his knees. “Damn, you have the most perfect ass in the world, Lany.”

“Glad you think so.” Lachlan wiggled his back end. “Now, are you going to do something with it or just stare at it all night long?”

Asa planned on doing more than just stare or do something with the glorious piece of art in front of him. He was going to devour it, starting with the small concave at the base of Lachlan’s spin.

Asa leaned forward and raked his tongue across that little bit of naked skin. He could feel Lachlan's groan more than hear it. The man's entire body shuddered. "You like that, don't you? You like having your ass played with."

"Apparently," Lachlan groaned.

Asa bit down on one exposed cheek, sinking his teeth in just enough to leave a red mark. He received another shudder for his efforts. He kissed his way across to the other cheek then gave it the same bite, Lachlan's shudder growing stronger each time.

"I like this game, Lany."

"Yeah," Lachlan panted, "me, too."

Asa reached between Lachlan's legs and palmed the heavy ball sac hanging between his legs. He could feel the hard base of Lachlan's cock just beyond. Moving his hand forward, he stroked and squeezed until he reached the head, wiping away the drops of pre-cum leaking from the tip with his finger.

He brought his finger to his mouth, licking away the drops. Lachlan tasted like ambrosia. Asa wanted more. He sat back and tore open the condom with his teeth before rolling it down his cock. He wanted to be prepared just in case.

One he was safely incased, he opened the bottle of lube and liberally coated his fingers. He reached down with his free hand and lightly smacked the inside of Lachlan's thigh. "Spread them wide, Lany."

Asa almost swallowed his tongue when Lachlan did exactly what he directed, spreading his legs as far as they would go. From his vantage point, Asa could clearly see everything from the tight pink hole he planned on being in soon to the thick, veined cock hanging just beyond Lachlan's ball sac.

"So fucking perfect." Asa groaned as he moved closer and rolled onto his back. He scooted himself up between Lachlan's legs until the man's cock dangled right in front of his face. Lachlan's long groan was the only thing that told Asa the man knew what was coming.

Asa just didn't think Lachlan was prepared for everything that was coming. Asa wrapped his lips around Lachlan's cock, drawing another deep groan and full-body shudder from the man. He wanted to grin, but his mouth was full almost to bursting.

Asa started sucking on the cock in his mouth, stroking his cock around the sides and up over the head before swallowing it down as far as he could. At the same time, he reached up with his hands and pulled Lachlan's butt cheeks apart, pushing a single finger into the tight hole he knew waited for him.

"Oh, fuck me!" Lachlan cried out as Asa's finger sank in to the knuckle. Asa did as Lachlan requested, although he was pretty sure that wasn't what the man had meant. He started fucking Lachlan with his lubed finger while sucking on his cock.

In mere moments, Lachlan was loose enough to add a second finger. Asa pushed them in and out of Lachlan's tight grip until he could push in a third finger. Lachlan was close to sobbing by this point, his cries coming one right after the other, his words unrecognizable.

Asa thrust harder with his fingers, going deeper as he drew the man's cock deeper into his mouth. When Lachlan started moving with him, pushing back on his fingers then thrusting into Asa's mouth, Asa knew it was time. He curved his fingers until they touched the small, walnut-sized gland inside of Lachlan.

Asa wasn't prepared for the way Lachlan went wild when his sweet spot was stroked. The man's cries filled the air even as his release filled Asa's mouth. Asa swallowed down all that he could, the rest leaking down the sides of his mouth.

Asa didn't know where his strength came from other than from desperation. He pulled his fingers from Lachlan's ass and lifted the man off of him. Kneeling behind Lachlan, he grabbed his hips and thrust forward with every ounce of strength he had in his body.

Fully encased in tight, hot silk, Asa froze for just a moment, overwhelmed by the sensations rocketing through his body. It felt like

just the touch of Lachlan's body around his cock was enough to send him over the edge. He'd never felt anything as exquisite.

Asa started moving, slowly at first as he tried to ensure that Lachlan was feeling no pain, then faster and faster as the man's cries filled the small cove again. The faster he moved, the harder he pounded into Lachlan, the louder the cries.

"Asa, Asa, I want to ride you."

Asa was all for that. He pulled out of Lachlan and stretched out beside the man, rolling over onto his back. Lachlan's movements seemed stilted when he climbed over the top of him. Asa glanced up to find the man with his lower lip caught between his teeth.

"Lany, babe, is something wrong?" Asa asked, reaching up to cup his hand around Lachlan's cheek. "Do you not want to do this?"

Lachlan flushed and shook his head. "No."

"Then what..."

"I'm going to come again, and I want you inside of me when I do."

Asa's eyebrows shot up then he started to grin, waving his hand at the hard cock standing out from his groin. "Then, please, climb on board, cowboy."

Lachlan smiled and grabbed Asa's cock, slowly lowering himself down until their groins met. Asa gripped Lachlan's hips, groaning when the man was fully seated. There was nothing on earth like a cowboy.

"Are you going to ride me now, cowboy?"

Lachlan planted his hands on Asa's chest and started moving. Even though he was moving slowly, Asa just about went out of his mind when Lachlan moved up until the head of Asa's cock was all that remained inside of him then slammed back down on him.

"Oh, yeah, Lany, fuck yourself on my cock." Asa groaned as his head fell back, digging into the soft grass behind him. His hands clenched on Lachlan's hips, his body moving up and down in contrast to Lachlan's movements.

The rhythm they found together was like the beating of two heartbeats, one up, one down, the other up, the other down. Asa's world melted around him. The only solid thing was the man on top of him, riding him.

Asa couldn't look away from the glowing embers he could see burning in Lachlan's grass-green eyes. Asa reached up and curled his hand around the nape of Lachlan's neck, pulling the man down into a deep, passion-filled kiss.

Lachlan's hands moved up to grip Asa's shoulders. Second by second, the grip became harder, tenser. When Lachlan's entire body stiffened, Asa knew it was time. He tore his mouth away from Lachlan's and looked up at him.

"Come for me, Lany," he whispered as he pulled the cowboy hat off of Lachlan's head and tossed it aside. He was surprised it stayed on as long as it had.

Asa's breath hitched in his throat as he watched Lachlan come right before his eyes. The man's eyes widened then glazed over. His lips fell open as a small cry came from them. Asa felt a great stream of wetness fill the space between them, but he couldn't look away from Lachlan's face. The look in Lachlan's eyes was too intense.

Asa continued to move his hips, planting his heels in the grass to give himself leverage as he moved in and out of Lachlan's tight entrance. His thrusts were slow, measured, drawing out his pleasure. He wanted to enjoy every moment of it.

"You like fucking my ass, Asa?"

Asa blinked, his heart speeding up a beat. "Lany."

Lachlan leaned down close to Asa, changing the angle in which Asa's cock was enveloped. Asa started panting when Lachlan began placing little kisses along his neck and jaw line.

"I think you do like fucking my ass, Asa. I think you like it a lot," Lachlan whispered into Asa's ear. "I think you like feeling your...big...thick...cock...sink into my ass."

Asa groaned, his body starting to go into overload. Lachlan's words were affecting him more than he thought they would. Maybe dirtying up the man's mouth wasn't his smartest move. It was proving to be more than Asa's senses could handle.

Lachlan suddenly sat up. Asa frowned when he noticed the cowboy hat in Lachlan's hand and watched the man place it on his head. He thought he'd tossed that away. Lachlan's sudden grin tore Asa's thoughts away from the hat and back onto the main attraction.

"This is how cowboys fuck, Asa."

Asa had no idea what Lachlan was talking about until the man brought his boot-clad feet up and planted them in the ground. Lachlan's hands landed on Asa's chest. Lachlan squatted down over the top of Asa, impaled on his cock.

Then suddenly, Lachlan's hips began to move at an alarming rate. Asa didn't even know someone could move that fast during sex. Lachlan no sooner lifted up off of Asa when he was slamming back down, taking every inch of Asa's cock into his ass.

Asa couldn't breathe. He couldn't look away from the man staring down at him. He couldn't have moved if his life had depended on it. The suddenness of Asa's orgasm took him by surprise. He should have been expecting it considering how well Lachlan was claiming him, but he didn't.

"Lany!" Asa shouted as his world exploded. The instant sensations that racked him went on and on, no ending in sight. Lachlan just seem to hold on as Asa convulsed and jerked, filling the condom with his release.

As Asa started to float down from his euphoric high, he felt a suspicious wetness on his chest. He glanced up to see Lachlan panting heavily above him, his eyes a little glossy. Asa stroked his fingers through his cum-splattered chest and held them up to Lachlan.

"Again?"

Lachlan's face flushed as a slow grin moved across his lips.
“What can I say? I like the feeling of a big, thick cock fucking me in my ass.”

“Lany!”

Chapter 5

Lachlan chuckled as he watched his brother, Seamus, try and teach Asa how to rope a calf. Seamus had been trying to teach Asa the proper techniques all morning. His frustration was starting to show through in the rising of his voice.

Lachlan leaned on the wooden fencing and chuckled as Asa missed yet again. They weren't even using a real calf but a dummy calf made of an old wooden barrel and a broom handle. Asa sucked at it, but he truly seemed to want to learn. Maybe it was something you were born with and Asa missed that gene.

"He's never going to make a rancher, son."

Lachlan turned to see his da walking up. He shook his head and turned back to watch the show. "Maybe not, but he sure is bound and determined to try."

Da settled on the fence next to Lachlan, looking out over the training arena. "He has determination, son, I'll give you that, but he doesn't have the heart of a rancher. He doesn't feel the need to sink his hands into the soil or feel a horse run beneath him the way we do. Hell, son, he doesn't even know the difference between black angus and red angus."

"He can learn," Lachlan insisted. He could feel his heart sinking with each word out of his da's mouth.

"No, son, he can't."

"Are you telling me to make Asa leave?"

"No."

"Then what?"

“You’re never going to turn Asa into a rancher, so you need to stop trying. He has the willingness to learn, that’s true. But he doesn’t love it the way we do, and you have to love this life to live it.”

“Da—”

“But he does love you.”

Lachlan blinked for a moment then turned to stare across the arena at the man that had been dominating his thoughts since they met two weeks ago. He had barely been able to do anything without thinking of Asa.

Would Asa like to learn to ride a horse?

Did Asa even like horses?

How did Asa feel about working leather?

Would Asa be interested in bringing a new calf or foal into the world?

Every thought had Asa in mind. Lachlan thought after two weeks together that the need he had to just hear the man breathe would lessen. It hadn’t. He didn’t even like facing the day without opening his eyes and finding Asa sleeping next to him.

“While Asa might not make a good rancher, if he can find what he wants to do in life, something here or in town, then maybe you need to consider asking him to stay on more permanent like.”

Lachlan’s head whipped around. “You’re telling me to ask Asa to stay?”

“I’m not telling you anything, son. This is a decision you need to make on your own. But I do know I haven’t seen you this happy in a very long time. Asa may not be a rancher, but he’s apparently the man for you. You might want to do something to hang on to him before he leaves.”

Lachlan stood there, feeling like a fool as he watched his da walk away as if they hadn’t just had a life-altering conversation. Da was never one to mince words, and he hadn’t this time. Lachlan just never knew that his da would be so accepting of him having a permanent relationship with a man.

Lachlan couldn't stop from grinning as he looked back over to his brother and lover. His eyes returned to the pair just in time to see Seamus shout something and throw his rope down on the floor, stalking away. Asa looked a little stunned. Lachlan climbed over the fence and walked across the arena toward the man.

"What was that all about, Asa?"

Asa turned to look at Lachlan, a sheepish grin on his face. "He said I better be damn good in bed because I certainly wouldn't be roping you in with anything else."

Lachlan sputtered, trying not to laugh. Asa arched an eyebrow until Lachlan couldn't hold it in anymore. He burst out laughing. "Oh, you're no help," Asa snipped.

"I'm sorry, honey, but he's right. You're never going to pick up roping."

"Yeah, you're probably right." Asa sighed deeply as he wound up the rope in his hand. "I really wanted to learn though. I thought if I learned to rope a calf, well..."

"Asa," Lachlan said as he looped an arm around the man's shoulders, "you're not a rancher. You're never going to be a rancher."

"Oh but—" Asa quickly said as he looked up, his face slightly pale.

"So, maybe we should find something around here that you can do."

Asa seemed to let out the breath he'd been holding. "Yeah?"

"I like having you here, a lot. I don't want you to have to leave because you can't be a rancher. I don't want you to leave because you feel you need to. I want you to stay. We can find something for you that you love to do, something besides ranching."

"Everyone here works on the ranch. I thought..." Asa shrugged. "I thought you'd want me to be a rancher, too."

"I want you to be you, Asa, whatever that is." Lachlan chuckled. "Cause let's face it, honey, you're never going to make it as a rancher."

“Oh thank god,” Asa groaned, leaning his head against Lachlan’s shoulder, “I hate mucking out stalls.”

“Yeah, that kind of sucks.” Lachlan chuckled as he turned and grabbed the edges of Asa’s shirt, straightening it a bit and smoothing the material down. “Now, I have to go into town for some supplies. How about you go with me, and we can stop for lunch, just the two of us?”

“Let me get cleaned up first?” Asa wrinkled his nose. “I kind of smell...odd.”

“You have however long it takes me to run up to the main house and get Ma’s shopping list. You need to be dressed and in the truck when I get back or I’m leaving without you.”

Asa let out a whoop that would make any cowboy proud and raced across the arena, jumping the fence and running toward the house. Lachlan shook his head and started for the main house. Asa might not make a good rancher, but he sure had the heart of one.

He also had Lachlan’s heart. Lachlan was slowly coming to understand that the incredible draw that he had to Asa was turning into love. The sex between them was phenomenal. When they spent time together outside of bed, Lachlan felt like he was spending time with his best friend. He couldn’t think of anything he wouldn’t share with Asa.

He didn’t like to be away from the man and was concerned for Asa’s health and safety when he was. The last few days, he started to notice that he said things as if Asa was a permanent part of his life.

And maybe they needed to discuss that. It had just been a couple of weeks, but Lachlan felt like they had lived a lifetime in those days. They had been filled with Asa, with loving and laughter, sharing and caring. Lachlan thought that maybe it was time to tell Asa that he loved him.

Lachlan had to admit that he was scared. He knew Asa liked him. He even knew that Asa didn’t have any plans on going anywhere any

time soon. That didn't mean that Asa was in love with him. But Lachlan could hope, and he did, with everything in him.

And maybe his ma could help him with finding out. Lachlan went into the house to talk to his ma and get her shopping list, feeling more excited with each step. Ma always had a good plan up her sleeve.

Lachlan smirked when he got out to his truck fifteen minutes later. Asa was sitting in the passenger seat, his hair damp, clean clothes on, as well. He even had his seatbelt on. Lachlan climbed in and started the truck.

"What sounds good for lunch?" he asked as he drove down the driveway and out onto the main road, heading for town.

"I don't know." Asa shrugged. "Got a good burger joint in town?"

"We do, big, greasy bacon cheeseburgers the size of your plate and an entire tray of onion rings."

"Is that what you're going to get?"

"It's the only thing the place makes. They make one kind of burger. Your only choice is whether to have bacon or cheese added. The rest comes just the way they make it."

"Are you going to have onion rings?"

"Yes, I love onion rings."

Asa grinned. "Good, then I can, too."

"Asa." Lachlan frowned. "You can have onions rings anyway."

"Not if I plan on kissing you later."

Lachlan blinked. "I see your point. Onion rings it is."

"How do you feel about mushrooms?"

"I'm allergic."

"Really?"

Lachlan chuckled. "No, but I don't like them much. I'll pick them off of anything."

"Oh."

Lachlan arched an eyebrow as he looked over at Asa's distressed expression. "Let me guess, you love them."

"Yeah, kinda."

“Like I said, I can pick them off of anything. So, don’t worry about it. You can have mine.”

Asa laughed and leaned back against the bench seat. He seemed a little preoccupied, staring out the window for several moments. Lachlan began to grow concerned.

“Asa?”

“Have you ever wondered why this seems to be so easy for us?” Asa asked as he turned back to look at Lachlan.

“Easy?” Lachlan frowned in confusion. “Us?”

“We seem to fit, you know? I mean, you don’t like mushrooms and I do, but neither of us sees that as a problem. You’re a rancher.” Asa chuckled deeply. “And I am most definitely not, but we’re both ready to find another solution.”

“Yeah, so?”

“Doesn’t this all seem a little too easy?”

“I’m not sure it’s supposed to be hard, Asa.” Lachlan pressed his lips together, not sure how much to tell Asa about how he felt. He kind of had plans for later tonight, but Asa seemed to want to talk about it now.

“Maybe I’m worried for nothing.”

“No, Asa, I get what you’re saying. We met under unusual circumstances and found an attraction instantly. It’s a little scary.”

“Yeah.”

The tension in Asa’s body made Lachlan’s decision for him. He couldn’t stand the idea that his lover was upset, and that pretty much said it right there for him. Lachlan pulled the truck over to a small turnoff on the road and turned off the engine. He took a deep breath, nervous about baring his soul to a man he’d only known for a couple of weeks, then turned to Asa.

“The night we met, I was honest about what I wanted from you. I wanted to take you home and fuck you into my mattress. It seemed to work out pretty well for me. I think honesty is called for again, and I hope you’re as agreeable now as you were then.”

Lachlan reached over and grabbed Asa's hand and prayed that they were thinking the same thing. He would be crushed if Asa felt differently and would give the man up if that's what Asa really wanted. He just hoped that Asa wanted the same thing he did.

"I'm going to be honest here, Asa. I'm falling for you. I'm falling fast and hard. I don't want you to leave and go find a job somewhere else or continue to travel the country. I want you to stay right here, sleeping in my bed every night."

Asa's eyes fluttered a little bit as he breathed in so deeply that his chest moved dramatically under his cotton shirt. "Lachlan, you—" Asa licked his lips. "You are the most amazing man I have ever met."

"I hope that's a good thing." Lachlan laughed nervously, not sure what exactly Asa meant by his words.

"It is."

"You and I both know that we have something special here, Asa, and I don't care how easy it might seem. It's right." Lachlan dropped Asa's hand and leaned back in his seat. His heart beat faster at the intensity he could see in Asa's hazel eyes. "We've been dancing around this for days, pretending that you might not leave at any moment. It's driving me crazy. I want to know you're sticking around before I fall for you any farther than I already have."

"We've already established the fact that I'm not a rancher, Lachlan. I'm not sure I can find something else around here, and I refuse to be a kept man."

"Asa, I don't care if you're a rancher or not. That's not what I lo—" Lachlan licked his lips as shock rocketed through him at what he was about to reveal. He could see the astonishment in Asa's raised eyebrows and knew the man had caught his slipup. "I want you to be happy, and I hope you can be happy here. If ranching isn't something you want to do, we will find something else, but what you do for a living is not as important to me as where you live."

Asa blew out the breath he'd been holding. A sly smile started to cross his lips. "And you want me to live here?"

“Yes.”

“No more mucking out stalls?”

Lachlan had to press his lips together for a moment to keep his elation at Asa’s words under control. He could feel his heart speed up, and he suddenly wished that they weren’t sitting on the side of the road, exposed to whoever might drive by. He had a desperate need to take Asa into his arms and prove to the man that he was making the right decision.

“No more mucking stalls, Asa.”

“Then I guess I could stick around.” Asa’s fingers started plucking at the seam of his jeans. “I mean, if you wanted me to and all.”

Lachlan scooted across the cab of the truck and wrapped both of his hands around Asa’s handsome face. “I do want you to stick around, Asa, for as long as you want to be here. And I really hope that is a very long time.”

“I’d like that,” Asa whispered.

“Me, too.” Lachlan leaned in with his body, pulling Asa’s face toward him at the very same time. The kiss was gentle compared to their usual frenzied need but powerful all the same. Lachlan put everything into his kiss, all of the emotions he was afraid to put voice to.

Lachlan’s kiss was slow, thoughtful. He felt the pressure of Asa’s lips against his, the soft swipe of the man’s tongue brushing his. Lachlan groaned and gave himself freely to the gentle passion in the kiss.

Lachlan reluctantly lifted his head and looked into Asa’s dazed eyes. “I want you here, Asa. I want you by my side, in my bed, and in my life. I want to wake up every morning with you by my side and go to bed every night knowing you’ll be there when I wake up.”

Asa’s breath hitched in his throat. The man swallowed so hard his Adam’s apple moved thickly up and down his throat. His hand came up to cover the one Lachlan had covering his cheek, pressing against it as if he never wanted it to leave.

“Yes, Lany.”

Lachlan grinned, unable to keep his elation to himself. Asa was giving him exactly what he wanted, almost. Lachlan would have preferred words about how Asa felt, but he knew it was one step at a time. Asa had been emotionally abandoned by his family, as well as physically. It would take him a little bit longer to open himself up to what Lachlan offered him.

Lachlan could wait as long as he knew they were on the same page. If Asa had a vested interest in seeing where their relationship went and a commitment to sticking around, Lachlan could wait a very long time.

“How about that burger, handsome?”

“That would be ni—” Asa’s words were suddenly cut off as the passenger door he leaned back against opened and he started to fall out. Lachlan’s heart seized in his chest. He grabbed at Asa to keep him from falling to the ground. He could be seriously injured or worse.

It was only as he grabbed Asa’s flailing hands that Lachlan noticed the figure standing behind Asa, pulling him from the cab of the truck. Lachlan scrambled across the seat as Asa was pulled out of the truck and crashed to the ground in a heap.

“Clem,” Lachlan shouted as he struggled to get out of the truck and not land on top of Asa, “what in the hell are you doing?”

Lachlan’s answer came in the form of a fist to his face. He grunted and fell back against the bench seat as pain made his eyes water. “What the fuck, Clem?”

“You’re an abomination!” Clem screamed. His eyes blazed with hatred. They shined just a little too much. If Lachlan didn’t know better, he would have thought Clem was high, or at least insane. “You do not deserve to live.”

Yep, insane.

Shock siphoned the blood from Lachlan’s face as Clem raised his fist and started hitting Asa. Lachlan leaned back and brought his feet

up, pushing them out with all of his strength, kicking Clem in the chest.

Clem fell back, staggering several paces. Lachlan used the momentary surprise on Clem's face to scoot out of the truck and jump over the crumbled form of his lover, planting himself firmly between Clem and Asa. He raised his fists into the air, prepared to defend Asa as best as he could.

"I don't know what your problem is, Clem, but you've gone too far this time. The sheriff is going to hear about this."

"You think he's going to do anything about it?" Clem shouted as he stood to his full height. "You and your kind are the spawns of hell. The sheriff will probably give me a medal."

"Me and my kind?" Lachlan asked. His body stiffened in shock when Clem sneered at him. Hatred was written all over his face. "And what kind would that be?"

"You're a fag!" Clem shouted, his hands clenching as if he could barely get the words out of his mouth. "You shouldn't be allowed to breathe."

Rage filled Lachlan at Clem's words. His annoyance increased when he found that his hands were shaking. He didn't understand this fanatical hatred that Clem seemed to have with his being gay, but it consumed the man.

"My sex life is none of your business, Clem."

"You're going to infect everyone else with your evil, and I can't allow that."

Lachlan backed up a step, bumping into Asa as Clem sputtered. He had run into bias against gays before, but he'd never come up against such intense disgust before, and he wasn't sure how to deal with it.

"Clem, you're out of your mind. I'm not doing anything to anyone."

"I'm not going to let your evil infect anyone else."

Lachlan frowned. "You've said that before, Clem. Just what exactly do you think I'm going to do?"

"I've seen the way you look at other men," Clem snapped. "I've seen the way you look at me."

"You?"

Clem Thornton might have been an attractive man at some point, but his hatred and hard living had taken its toll. His belly hung slightly over his belt, showing the damage his bad eating and alcohol consumption had done to his body.

While he didn't have a beard, his face was covered with unshaven hair. His clothes were slovenly, dirty in places, heavily worn in others. They looked rumpled as if Clem hadn't slept in days.

Add in the hatred spewing from Clem's mouth and Lachlan couldn't think of a man he was less attracted to. Even if Asa wasn't in the picture, Lachlan would no more kiss Clem or make a pass at him than he would kiss one of his brothers. Clem made his skin crawl.

"Clem, I've never looked at you like that in my life."

"You lie!" Clem shouted. "I've seen you, the sly looks, the small touches when no one is looking. I know what you want, and I'd rather be dead than give in to the evil you live."

"Go ahead, be my guest." Lachlan waved his hand around to encompass the area around them. "But don't think any of this is because of me or the way I live my life. This hatred is all you, Clem."

"You lie!"

Lachlan gritted his teeth. Clem was just spewing the same thing over and over again. Lachlan was tired of this. Besides, he could hear Asa groaning behind him. He wanted to turn to his lover and assure the man was okay. He didn't want to be facing off against Clem.

"Just go, Clem. You need to stay away from us."

Clem clenched his fists, taking a step forward. Lachlan quickly raised his own fists. "I'm not going to allow you to hurt Asa again, Clem. Just go before this gets out of hand."

Clem didn't seem to hear Lachlan's words, or maybe he was just ignoring them. His hate-filled eyes fell on Asa, and a low, guttered growl came from his throat. He looked slightly disoriented, the glossy look in his eyes giving Lachlan pause.

"This is wrong. What you are doing is wrong." Clem frowned. "What you are doing is evil. Don't you understand that?"

Lachlan hesitated to reply, blinking with bafflement. It gave Clem an opening. The man sprinted past Lachlan and started beating on Asa the moment he reached him. Lachlan spun around and leapt at the man. He grunted in pain as Clem's elbow slammed into his gut but refused to loosen the hold he had on the man as they both fell to the ground.

"Let me go!" Clem shouted. "I'm trying to save you."

Lachlan raised his fist and began pounding it into Clem, hitting anywhere he could. A blind rage came over him, his only thought to keep Clem away from Asa. There was something seriously wrong with Clem, and the man was a danger to Asa and everyone else. He didn't know if it mattered if they were gay or not.

"Lachlan!"

Lachlan absently noted someone shouting his name, but it didn't really sink into the rage blanketing him. His lover's life was in danger, and he was going to get rid of that danger. He continued to pound into Clem.

"Lany!"

Lachlan blinked, his fist raised in the air to deliver another punch to Clem's face. He frowned and turned in confusion when he felt hands pulling at him. "Rourke?"

"Hey, bro, you need to let Clem go."

Lachlan hesitated, torn by conflicting emotions. His rage told him to beat Clem until the man could never be a threat again. His concern over Asa told him to find the man and make sure he was okay.

"Asa needs you, Lachlan."

Lachlan instantly let go of Clem and started searching the area for Asa, finding him leaning against the side of the truck, Seamus kneeling at his side. “Asa,” he cried out, scampering across the ground and pushing Seamus out of the way.

Lachlan drew Asa into his arms and buried his face in the man’s dark brown hair, inhaling the soft, masculine fragrance that intrigued him so much. “Oh, honey, I’m so sorry I couldn’t stop Clem.”

“It’s not your fault, Lany,” Asa whispered as he snuggled into Lachlan’s arms, his face pressing against his throat. “There’s something wrong with Clem, Lany. You have to know that.”

Lachlan lifted his head and glanced back over his shoulder. He watched Rourke and Seamus help Clem to his feet and started to tense. Clem was a bloody mess, but he was still able to stand on his own two feet, which meant he was still a danger to Asa.

“No, Lany, don’t.” Asa’s hands gripped Lachlan’s arms when he started to climb to his feet. “He deserves our pity not our anger.”

“He attacked you, Asa, again. It can’t keep happening. We’ve been lucky so far, but what if he catches you alone next time or when he’s with Billy?”

“Lany,” Asa whispered, his warm hand cupping Lachlan’s chin, “look at me.”

Lachlan could barely tear his gaze away from Clem. He didn’t want to take his eyes off the danger before them. But Asa forced his face away from Clem to his own sweet face.

“Clem can only hurt us if we let him.”

“Asa.”

“We can tell the sheriff so he’s aware of the situation and get a restraining order if we need to. Don’t let this overshadow what we have together. Let it go, Lachlan.”

“I can’t.” Lachlan’s brows crunched together. “I can’t let him continue to hurt you.”

Asa smiled. “While I appreciate your protective nature, I can take care of myself, you know. Clem has been lucky because he’s caught

me unaware. There's going to come a time when I won't be unaware and I will hand him his ass."

Lachlan swallowed hard. "Promise?"

Asa's face was full of strength, shining with a steadfast and serene peace. "I do promise, Lany. I have too much at stake to let some bigoted moron take it away from me now. There's this really hot cowboy that just offered me the world, and I plan to take him up on that offer."

A small cry of relief fell from Lachlan's lips as joy filled him. "I'd like that."

Chapter 6

Asa laughed at Lachlan's enthusiasm. Lachlan was dragging him by one hand through the yard and into the barn. Lachlan said he had something special to show him, and Asa was loath to tamp down on the man's excitement.

Lachlan had been moody for the last couple of days, ever since the attack by Clem. Seeing his demeanor change to that of a giddy schoolboy made Asa think that maybe they were starting to get over the incident.

They had informed the sheriff of the attack but decided not to press charges. Asa thought it might accelerate hostilities between the Thornton and the Blaebleah families. He just wanted to forget the whole thing and get on with getting closer to Lachlan.

That pretty much dominated his thoughts over the last few days. Asa knew how he felt about Lachlan and had for some time. He adored the man right down to his cute little toes. He just didn't know exactly how Lachlan felt about him, not for sure.

Surely the man had to have some emotional connection if he felt the need to invite Asa to stay. That didn't mean Lachlan was in love, despite his early declaration. The actual "love" word hadn't been spoken, not exactly. But Lachlan didn't seem like the type of man to move someone into his home just because he wanted a booty call.

"Come on, Asa."

"I'm coming, I'm coming." Asa rolled his eyes when Lachlan snickered at him. "Okay, I want to be coming."

"Well, get your ass up that ladder, and you just might get your wish."

Asa eyed the tall ladder leading to the second floor of the barn. It looked old, the wood faded and worn. He shivered. "Are you sure it's safe?"

"Come on, scaredy-cat." Lachlan grabbed the first rung and pulled himself up the ladder until he reached the top. Asa watched Lachlan swing himself over the edge then turn around and bend over to look back down at him. "Come on, Asa. It's perfectly safe."

Asa had serious doubts about the safety of anything in the old barn, but he couldn't deny the sensuous grin on Lachlan's face that promised wonderfully wicked things if he reached the top floor of the barn.

"All right, I'm coming, but you'd better pray that this damn ladder doesn't break, or you're going to be doing more than licking my ass."

Asa grabbed the first rung of the ladder, hesitating when it creaked. He drew in a deep breath and levered himself up to the next rung, then the next and the next until he reached the top.

Lachlan reached out for him, and Asa gratefully stepped into the arms the man held out to him. "Tell me there's an easier way down."

Lachlan chuckled. "Well, we can always use the ropes that pull the hay bales up here and lower ourselves down or simply jump off the edge. There's got to be enough hay down there to break our fall."

"And this would be why I don't make a good rancher." Asa snickered.

"Ah, but there are so many advantages to being a rancher," Lachlan drawled slowly.

Asa arched an eyebrow at the man. Lachlan was up to something. He could see it in the crooked smile on his face. "Like what?"

Lachlan grabbed Asa's hand and pulled him further into the loft, around a large stack of hay bales. He stopped suddenly and waved his hand behind him. "This, for example."

Asa glanced beyond Lachlan then took a couple of steps to get a closer look. When he did, Asa's mouth dropped open in shock. Spread out before him was a secret haven built into the stacks of hay.

Stacked hay bales surrounded the area on three sides, giving it a feeling of total privacy. A large, brown blanket had been spread out over the hay on the floor. White twinkling holiday lights were strung from the rafters and gave the small area a low, romantic glow. Soft music played quietly in the background.

“Lachlan, what...”

A brief shiver rippled through Asa as Lachlan’s arms wrapped around him from behind. Warm breath blew across his neck as Lachlan pressed up against him. “I wanted someplace special to tell you that I love you.”

Asa exhaled suddenly, unable to hold the air in his lungs. He closed his eyes and leaned his head back against Lachlan’s shoulder, the man’s words flowing over him like a warm ray of sunshine.

“Oh, Lany, I love you, too.”

“Yeah?”

Lachlan sounded so hesitant that Asa couldn’t help but open his eyes and look at the man. He could see the apprehension in Lachlan’s green eyes and knew that he was afraid of being rejected, just as Asa was.

Asa smiled and reached around to caress the side of Lachlan’s face. “I do love you, Lany, and I’ve never told any man that before.”

Lachlan looked so relieved that Asa chuckled. “You didn’t expect me to say that?”

Lachlan shook his head.

“Surely you knew how I felt about you?”

“I hoped,” Lachlan whispered. He squeezed his eyes closed for a moment. When they opened, tears sparkled on Lachlan’s eyelashes. “I prayed, but I was afraid you wouldn’t feel the same thing I do.”

“I don’t know if I do, Lany. We may not be talking about the same thing here. I know I don’t ever want to be away from you, that just the time you go to work out on the ranch is like a slow torture to me.” Asa turned in Lachlan’s arms so he could rub his thumb over Lachlan’s trembling lips. “I know my day is brighter with you in it.

And the mere touch of your hands on my body is better than any orgasm I've ever had."

"Damn, Asa," Lachlan groaned, "you say the most amazing things."

"Is this what you're talking about?"

"Hell yes!"

"See." Asa chuckled softly as his heart swelled with joy. "I told you that I was going to dirty up that pretty little mouth of yours."

"So you did."

"Oh, I want to do a lot more than dirty up that pretty mouth of yours." The dark blond eyebrow Lachlan arched sent a thrill of anticipation racing through Asa. "Why don't you show me what else you can do with it?"

He groaned deeply when Lachlan licked the tip of his thumb before sucking it into his mouth. "Oh, you're good."

Lachlan grinned around his thumb. Asa smirked.

"I'm better."

Asa dropped to his knees and grabbed the buttons of Lachlan's jeans. He started to unbutton Lachlan's pants, but his hands were grabbed and pressed against thick, muscular thighs. Asa glanced up, confused. He didn't know too many men that turned down a blow job.

"As much as I would love to have your lips wrapped around me..." Lachlan visibly shuddered, "and believe me, I would, but I want tonight to be about you."

"And you don't think loving on you would be about me?"

Lachlan pulled on his arms, hauling Asa to his feet. "I have something else planned for tonight."

"Just what do you have in mind, cowboy?"

"Get undressed."

Asa backed away from Lachlan and started undressing, slowly. The slower he moved, the hotter the glow in Lachlan's eyes grew. By the time he stood naked in the middle of the blanket, the lust burning in Lachlan's green eyes was almost blinding. Lachlan's chest heaved

with his heavy breathing. The man looked tense, as if he was ready to pounce.

Asa held his hands out to his sides. "Is this what you wanted, cowboy?"

Asa's skin prickled when Lachlan growled. He wasn't sure he'd ever heard a sound like that come out of someone's mouth before, and certainly not from a man looking at him the way Lachlan was looking at him. The man wanted to consume him.

"Lachlan?" Asa whispered as he took a step back. He wasn't afraid. He would never be afraid of Lachlan, but the man looked really intense. Lachlan's fists were clenched. The corner of one lip curled up, but Asa didn't know if it was a snarl or a sneer. "Babe? Are you okay?"

"I don't think I'll ever get enough of you, Asa," Lachlan whispered hoarsely. "You're so fucking beautiful."

Asa felt his face flush. He'd been called a lot of things, handsome, gorgeous, even sexy, but no one had ever called him beautiful and looked at him with the same intensity as Lachlan. He didn't think he'd ever get enough of *that*.

"I'm all yours for as long as you want me, Lany."

Asa's eyes widened as Lachlan finally gave in to the desire blazing on his face and pounced. Asa was quickly pressed against Lachlan's body, the man's arms wrapping tightly around him. "I'll always want you, Asa."

"You make me ache, Lany." Asa shuddered as Lachlan's hands stroked down his back to grab his naked ass. "You make me need."

"I like that," Lachlan whispered as he nuzzled the side of Asa's neck. Asa let his head fall back, exposing his vulnerable skin to the man's questing lips. He felt the heady sensation of Lachlan's lips against his throat. "I want to make you ache, to need. I want to make you forget anyone that has come before me."

"No one ever came before you," Asa replied. "I might not have been a virgin, but no one has ever made me feel like you do."

“And no one ever will.” Lachlan growled. “No one has ever loved you the way I’m going to love you.”

Lachlan’s lips covered Asa’s mouth with a hunger that made Asa melt against the man. His kiss was surprisingly gentle despite the strong hardness of Lachlan’s lips. Asa groaned, giving himself freely to the passion he could feel in it, the need.

A hot ache grew in Asa’s throat. He needed more than a kiss, as earth moving as it was. He needed to feel Lachlan’s body pressed against his, to feel the man’s naked skin. Asa jerked Lachlan’s shirt out of his jeans and pushed his hands up under the material, moving across the man’s smooth chest.

Lachlan suddenly tore his mouth away from Asa’s and looked at him. Their eyes locked as their breathing came in unison, hot and heavy. Lachlan kept their eyes together as he slowly lowered to his knees and leaned forward, licking away the drops of pre-cum that glistened on the tip of Asa’s cock.

Asa’s breathing stuttered in his chest. A quiver moved through him as he watched Lachlan slowly open his mouth and swallow his cock down to the root. Lachlan was making what he was doing a visual show.

Asa could see it all, the way Lachlan’s tongue moved across the head of his cock, the slow indentation of Lachlan’s lips as the man sucked Asa’s cock into his mouth, even the way Lachlan’s lips swelled every time they moved down Asa’s thick shaft. It was a visual seduction, and it was working. Asa could feel himself coming closer and closer to a mind-blowing orgasm with each passing second.

He reached down and curled his hand around the side of Lachlan’s face, delighting in the soft moan that fell from the man’s lips. The vibrations alone from the sound that came from Lachlan made Asa ache.

Asa knew his words had power over Lachlan. The man loved hearing him talk dirty. He also knew Lachlan loved being called *Lany*,

and he planned to use both to his advantage. "Touch me, Lany, make me come. Give me what no one else can give me."

Asa yelped as he was suddenly lifted into the air then gently laid back on the blanket. Nearly six and half feet of hungry male stood between his legs. Lachlan moved a lot quicker than Asa had, stripping off his clothes in mere moments.

Asa had no idea where the items went as Lachlan tossed them away, and he didn't really care. He only had eyes for the gorgeous, naked man being revealed before him. The moment Lachlan was totally naked, Asa held out his arms.

Lachlan dropped back down to his knees and crawled forward until he loomed over the top of Asa. The closeness of their bodies was like a drug to Asa, lulling him into a passionate euphoria.

When Lachlan's hands began to move over him, Asa bit his lip to stifle his outcry of delight. His heart seemed to rush to every spot Lachlan touched. Asa didn't know his body was so sensitive to Lachlan's caress until it happened, and then he could only beg for more.

"Lany, please."

He looked up, and his pulse beat more rapidly at the intensity he could see in his lover's eyes. Lachlan seemed to have eyes only for him. Asa had to believe that it was true. The need mirrored in Lachlan's eyes couldn't be faked. There was just no way.

"Love you, Lany," Asa whispered.

"Yes," Lachlan hissed.

Asa groaned loudly and pushed up against the powerful body above his when he felt Lachlan's thick, lubed fingers slide effortlessly into his tight entrance. His senses leapt, and a delicious shudder heated his body.

Lachlan began thrusting his fingers in and out of Asa's tight ass. At the same time, he leaned his head down and licked around Asa's nipple, biting at the sensitive nub before moving on to the other one.

All of Asa's senses, every nerve in his body, fired up at the same time until he didn't know where he ended and Lachlan began. His heart hammered in his ears, only overshadowed by the heartbeat over the top of him.

"Lany, Lany, Lany," Asa whispered over and over again. "I need, Lany."

"And I'm here to fill that need, love."

Asa tingled at Lachlan's endearment but not as much as he did as when he heard the soft tearing sound of a foil packet. A moment later, he felt the man's cock replace his fingers. Lachlan slowly slid into him, and time suddenly stopped. For a long moment, Asa felt like he was floating in nothingness as he stared up into Lachlan's green eyes. Everything the man felt, all of the love and devotion he had, was right there, shining in his eyes.

Then Lachlan started moving. It didn't matter to Asa how slowly the man moved, he felt every inch of his cock move in and out of him. It was purely a sensual experience made even more intense by the fact that they weren't just fucking. They were expressing their feelings for each other in a physical manner.

Lachlan made no attempt to hide the fact that he was watching Asa. He didn't move away. He didn't look away. He just stared down at Asa until the intensity in his eyes became stronger than the pull of desire in Asa's body.

A hot ache grew in Asa's throat. His eyes watered with unshed tears. His heart beat frantically in his chest. Explosive currents raced through him when he saw the same in Lachlan's face and knew that what was happening between them was more than physical gratification. It was in a higher level, a more spiritual level, emotional.

"Lany," Asa whispered, "my Lany."

"Love," was Lachlan's only response as the man surged into him. Asa cried out, his head falling back as an orgasm suddenly flowed

through him so intently that spots danced in front of his eyes. Waves of ecstasy throbbed through him.

Asa's body melted against Lachlan's, and his world was filled with the man as he shattered. He breathed in deep, soul-drenching drafts as Lachlan cried out above him, filling him with the sign of his release.

Asa slowly moved his hands over Lachlan's back, his sides, rubbing up to wrap around the man's neck. He held Lachlan to him, their sweat-soaked bodies pressing together as their heartbeats slowed.

Asa snuggled against Lachlan, their legs entwined. He didn't ever want to leave the haven he found in Lachlan's arms. He sighed with pleasant exhaustion. "Thank you, Lany."

Lachlan's lips moved against his skin, a small kiss placed over the pulse in his neck. "Thank *you*."

* * * *

Asa wrinkled his nose, some odd scent pulling him from his deep sleep. He could feel Lachlan's body warming him from behind and realized that they had fallen asleep in the hiding spot the man had taken him to in the barn.

He just didn't understand what the scent was that dragged him from his dreams. It was true that Asa didn't know much about ranching, but somehow the scent still seemed out of place. He opened his eyes, frowning as the scent became stronger.

It was a hot, almost suffocating smell. It was wrong. Asa pushed himself up and glanced around. He couldn't see anything out of place, but still...Asa rolled away from Lachlan and climbed to his feet. He searched around for his jeans. When he found them, he quickly pulled them on, zipping them up.

He walked around a stack of hay bales and cautiously moved to the edge of the loft. Swallowing past the fear lumping in his throat,

Asa peered over the edge. What he saw made him more afraid than the fact that he stood on the second floor of a building with no safety net.

The barn was on fire!

Asa raced back to Lachlan, falling to his knees beside the man then shaking him as hard as he could. "Lachlan, the barn is on fire!" Asa shouted. "Lachlan, wake up. The fucking barn is on fire!"

"Wha—" Lachlan's forehead wrinkled as he rolled onto his back and opened his eyes, looking up at Asa in confusion.

"The barn is burning!" Asa shouted.

"What?" Lachlan yelled as he quickly got to his feet and raced to the same edge Asa had been standing at. Asa started to race after him, but Lachlan was turning back before he could reach the edge. "Get your boots on. We have to get the stock out of the barn before it burns down."

Asa grabbed his boots and yanked them on as fast as he could then looked at Lachlan, watching as the man got dressed. "What do you need me to do?"

"We have to empty the stalls." Lachlan grabbed his shirt off the floor then Asa's, tossing one to him. "They are going to be frightened. When you open the stall door, talk calmly to them. They will feel your fear. Cover their eyes with your shirt until you get them to the barn doors then pull it free."

Asa nodded. He wasn't sure he could do what Lachlan directed, but he sure would try. This ranch meant everything to the Blaebleah family, and the Blaebleah family meant everything to Asa. He'd do whatever it took to save them.

Asa climbed down the ladder after Lachlan, coughing when he reached the bottom. The barn was already starting to fill up with thick, gray smoke. He could hear horses screaming in fear in their stalls and knew they didn't have much time left before they would all be dead.

“Open the doors then watch me with this first horse, see what I do.”

Asa nodded and ran to open the big bay doors at one end of the barn. They led into fenced field, one where the animals could get free but would still be penned in. He turned back to see Lachlan entering one of the stalls.

Hurrying to the side of the stall, Asa watched Lachlan soothe the horse inside, covering his eyes with the shirt in his hands. Once the horse calmed down, Lachlan grabbed the bridle on the horse’s head and led him quickly from the stall to the bay doors. When he whipped the shirt away, the horse made a high screeching sound then bolted, running off into the field.

Lachlan glanced at him. Asa nodded and moved to the next stall. He pushed the stall door open and found himself face to face with the biggest damn horse he’d ever seen. The thing stood almost as tall as he did.

Asa raised his hand and began making murmuring noises to the horse, walking slowly toward it. The horse pranced away, huffing loudly. Asa had serious doubts that Lachlan’s directions would work, but he had to try. He continued making soothing sounds and slowly lifted the shirt to cover the horse’s face.

Asa was shocked when the horse settled down the moment his eyes were covered. He almost paused until he heard voices shouting outside the stall. Asa grabbed the horse’s bridle and pulled him toward the bay doors.

He could see other people running around. Some had hoses of water, pointing them at the barn. Others were grabbing the animals and pulling them from the barn. Asa pulled the shirt off of the horse’s head he had then slapped him on the hindquarter. The horse took off.

Asa turned back to get another horse just in time to see Lachlan come flying out of one of the stalls and crash to the barn floor. His heart felt like it stopped beating for a moment as he waited for

Lachlan to get up and shake it off, only, he didn't. Lachlan just lay there on the floor in a heap.

Asa forgot all about the horses and raced over to Lachlan. He barely missed being trampled by a horse running out of the stall Lachlan had just flown out of. The horse looked terrified, but it didn't come close to how Asa felt when he reached Lachlan and found the man unconscious.

Asa's heart finally started beating again when he searched for a pulse on Lachlan's neck and found one. There was also a large bruise on the man's forehead. The smoke was getting thicker, breathing getting harder. Asa knew he had to get Lachlan out of the barn before he died, before they both died.

Asa lifted Lachlan up and carried him out of the barn. He found a spot several yards away from the burning barn and carefully laid the man down, cradling his head in case there was damage to his back. He just hoped he hadn't done any damage when he carried Lachlan out of the barn.

"Ma, Da," he shouted without looking away from the man, "Lachlan's hurt."

Ma Blae Leah was at his side within moments, falling down next to her son. "What happened?"

"I think he got kicked or something. He was in one of the stalls, and he just came flying out." He glanced up at the barn, wincing when he saw the flames licking at the roof. "I couldn't leave him in there, but I don't know if I did more damage or not."

"He's alive, Asa, and right now, if he was still in that barn, he wouldn't be."

Asa wanted to believe Ma, but he was hesitant to do so. Fear ate at him faster than the flames burning up the side of the barn. Asa would be devastated if anything happened to Lachlan, especially if he caused it.

"Asa!"

Asa looked up at Ma.

“Go up to the house, and call the ambulance and the sheriff. We need to get Lachlan to the hospital, and someone needs to come out here about the fire.”

“We were in the barn.” Asa wondered if he or Lachlan could have started the fire. “We were sleeping in the loft, but I smelled smoke. I woke Lachlan up, and he said to get the animals out. We were doing that when...” Asa pressed his lips together as tears filled his eyes. He couldn’t put words to what he’d seen.

“Asa, honey, we’ll figure out what happened to the barn later.” Ma patted his hand. “Right now, we need to get help for Lachlan.”

Asa nodded. He felt disconnected with everything around him except the need to care for Lachlan. He climbed to his feet and started toward the house in a daze. Just as he reached the front porch, Neason came running out, a stack of blankets in his hand.

“I called the ambulance,” he said as he rushed past Asa. “They should be here in a few minutes.”

Asa ran after him. By the time he reached Lachlan, Ma was covering him with a blanket. Asa dropped back down beside Lachlan, across from Ma. He reached out to push back a stray lock of hair from Lachlan’s forehead then stopped when his eyes fell on the bruise on the man’s head.

“Ma?” he whispered.

“He’ll be okay, Asa. Lachlan has endured more than this and been just fine. Why, I remember once when he fell out of the second-floor loft of the barn. He couldn’t have been more than ten years old at the time. I thought for sure he was done for, but wouldn’t you know it, he was home that very same day, playing in the loft with his brothers.”

Asa grabbed Lachlan’s limp hand, afraid to do more. He appreciated the words from Ma, but he knew how serious Lachlan’s injuries were. He’d seen worse, but he’d also seen people with wounds not as severe die.

Lachlan was Asa’s life, the heart that beat in his chest. If he died, Asa didn’t know if he would be far behind him. Lachlan had become

such a part of his life, the main part. Asa didn't want to be without him.

The sound of the ambulance sirens was music to Asa's ears. He watched Neason run to the driveway and direct the paramedics to where they were. The fire truck was right behind the ambulance, the sheriff driving up behind the fire truck.

All of a sudden, there seemed to be activity everywhere. The paramedics pushed Asa out of the way as they went to work on Lachlan. The firemen started unrolling their hoses as they tried to put out the fire. And the sheriff wanted to question everyone.

Asa stood there, not knowing what to do. Well, he knew what he wanted to do, which was go with Lachlan. He just didn't know if he could. He wasn't exactly family, even if he was Lachlan's lover. He didn't know if he had that right.

Asa bit his lip as he paced back and forth beside where the paramedics worked. He made sure he stayed out of the way but close enough to keep an eye on his lover. When they lifted him onto a gurney and wheeled Lachlan toward the ambulance, Asa followed a few steps behind.

His heart ached when they placed Lachlan inside of the ambulance and closed the doors, barring him from entering. Asa tried to see through the muted glass windows, but all he could see were blurring figures moving about inside. They showed him nothing.

Asa began to feel agitated. He started to reach for the door handle when he felt a hand on his arm. He glanced over his shoulder to see Mr. Blae Leah standing behind him, a grim expression on his face.

"Let them work, son. That's the best thing for Lachlan right now. They'll let us know how he is before taking him to the hospital."

Asa clenched his hands and nodded, stepping away from the doors. He was losing his mind and needed to think of something else besides the fact that the love of his life could even now be dying in an ambulance with strangers.

“Did all of the stock get out of the barn? Lachlan was real worried about that.”

“We got them all out, Asa. Don’t worry about that. Rourke and Quaid are rounding them up right now, putting them in the south pasture. Until we can get some sort of covering structure put up, that’s the safest place for them.”

Asa nodded. “Do you know how the fire started?”

“It looks like it was started on purpose.”

“But who...” Asa shook his head. “No, you have to be wrong. I may have only been around for a few weeks, but I can’t see anyone wanting to hurt anyone in your family. You’re good people.”

“What about you?”

“Me?”

“Could it be someone after you?” Da asked. “You did say that you’re not close to your family.”

“No one knows I’m here, sir, I swear. I didn’t tell anyone.”

“Why not? Are you ashamed of being with Lachlan?”

“I love Lachlan!” Asa snapped.

Da suddenly smiled then gestured to the ambulance with his thumb. “Then don’t you think you’d better get inside the ambulance with him?”

Asa couldn’t move fast enough.

Chapter 7

Lachlan felt a heavy weight lying across his hip before he even opened his eyes. He blinked several times, the light in the room making his eyes hurt. When his vision finally cleared, all Lachlan could immediately see was white. Everything looked white.

He turned his head, frowning when he saw his da sitting in a chair against the wall. His brother, Neason, was curled up on the floor next to him, his head on his knees. Both men were sound asleep.

Lachlan glanced down and found someone else sound asleep, Asa. His head was lying on Lachlan's hip. Both of Asa's hands were curled around Lachlan's arm. Lachlan reached down and brushed the hair back from Asa's forehead.

Asa groaned and jerked a little. His eyes fluttered and opened. He seemed disoriented until he saw Lachlan looking down at him. Then he inhaled sharply and sat up.

"Lany," he whispered, jumping to his feet. "How do you feel? Do you hurt anywhere? Do you need something to drink? Are you hungry? Should I call the doctor?"

"Whoa, slow down, honey." Lachlan started to chuckle, but that quickly turned to a groan as shards of pain shot through his head. He reached up to grab his head, but Asa stopped him, pulling his hands back down.

"No, Lany, you shouldn't touch, not until the doctor looks at you. You have quite the bump on your head."

Lachlan frowned. "What happened?"

"Do you remember the barn burning down?"

“The barn burned down?” Lachlan barked, quickly regretting his loud words when more pain filled him. “Damn, that hurts.”

“Stop swearing, Lany. Your ma is sleeping right over there.” Asa pointed to the other side of the bed. “And I don’t think a head injury will keep her from washing your mouth out with soap.”

Lachlan smiled because he knew Asa was right. Nothing except life support would stop his ma from chastising him if she caught him swearing. “Tell me what happened. The last thing I remember was taking you up into the barn loft.”

“You remember that?”

“I’ll never forget it.” Lachlan watched Asa’s face flush, and Asa glanced down for a moment then sat back in his chair. He frowned, confused by the way Asa fidgeted with the blanket. “Asa, is something wrong? Was someone else hurt?”

“Oh, no,” Asa’s eyes snapped up to his, “no one else was hurt, just you. We even got all the stock out of the barn safely. Unfortunately, the barn was a total loss.”

“We didn’t have anything in the barn that could cause a fire. I didn’t even bring any candles or lamps up to the loft.”

Lachlan really didn’t like the grimace that crossed Asa’s face. “The fire marshal and the sheriff think the fire was started on purpose. They found two gas cans inside the barn.”

“We don’t keep gas cans inside the barn, Asa,” Lachlan insisted. “That would be stupid.

“But who would do something like that?”

Asa shrugged. “The sheriff questioned everyone, but so far he doesn’t have a suspect. He’s investigating it as arson.”

“And me?” Lachlan gestured to his head with one hand. “How’d I get this?”

“Your stubborn ass horse.”

“Asa!”

Asa flushed and glanced across the bed. “Sorry, Ma.”

Lachlan grinned and turned to look at his mother, glad he wasn't the one caught swearing. "Hey, Ma."

"Lachlan, son, how are you feeling?" Ma asked as she walked closer.

"My head hurts, but I'm okay."

Lachlan leaned against the hand Ma stroked over the side of his face. He could see the worry lines around Ma's eyes and knew he'd been hurt pretty badly. Ma raised five rambunctious boys. She didn't get worried over much.

"It's good to see you open your eyes, son." She gestured toward Asa. "You had this young man quite worried."

"Yeah?" Lachlan turned to look at Asa, really look at him, and he could see what she was talking about. Asa's face was unusually pale. Tight lines marred Asa's perfect skin, especially around his mouth and eyes. Even now, with Lachlan awake, Asa looked strained. "Are you okay, Asa?"

"Yeah, I'm good." Asa squeezed Lachlan's hand. "I've just been worried about you. When I saw you come flying out of that horse stall...I don't think I've ever been so scared in my life. You weren't moving, Lachlan."

"I'm okay, Asa."

"I know, I just..." Asa's eyes closed, and he pressed his forehead against the back of Lachlan's hand. "I was really scared, Lachlan." There were tears glistening in his eyes when he opened them and looked up. "Don't ever do that to me again, Lachlan."

"I won't." Lachlan could see how agitated Asa was. His fingers trembled where they wrapped around Lachlan's hand. Lachlan squeezed Asa's hand. "I won't, Asa. I promise."

Asa watched Lachlan for a moment then sat back, sniffing hard. "So, I guess I should go get the doctor," he said as he stood. "The quicker he comes to see you, the quicker we can take you home. We have a barn to rebuild."

Lachlan watched Asa walk out of the room then turned to his ma.
“Is he okay?”

“You scared him, son. I’m not sure Asa realized you were mortal until you were hurt, and now it seems very real to him.” Ma brushed his hair back from his forehead, a gesture she’d done since he was a small babe. “He loves you a lot.”

“I love him, too.”

“I know.” Ma smiled, the lines around her eyes softening. “I can see it every time you look at him.”

“And it doesn’t bother you?” Loving Asa was easy. Wondering how his family would react wasn’t.

“I just want you to be happy, son. That’s all that matters to me or your da. Who you love is less important as long as the person you love loves you back.”

“We’ve never really discussed it, you know?”

“There’s nothing to discuss, son. We don’t get to choose who we love. It just is.” Lachlan frowned when his ma turned and grabbed the chair behind her, pulling it to the side of the bed. She sat down and grabbed Lachlan’s hand. “Have I ever told you about what happened when I fell in love with your da? Why we moved from Ireland?”

“I thought Da wanted us to have a new life here?”

“He did, but there was more to it than that. My family was rather well off, one of the gentry you might say. Your da’s family was not. They barely had a pot to piss in.”

“Ma!”

Ma laughed. “It was true. Your da’s family actually worked for mine. That’s how I met your da. He came to work in our stables.” Ma sighed deeply, a far-off look in her eyes. “You should have seen him, Lachlan. He truly was a sight to behold.”

“Ma!” Lachlan wasn’t sure he wanted to picture his da as a robust, virile man.

“Well, he was. I knew I wanted him the first time I ever saw him. I soon learned that the feeling was mutual. We spent a year seeking

each other out in private, afraid of what my family would say.” Ma smiled. “And then you came along.”

“Me?”

“When my folks discovered I was pregnant with you, they forbade me from ever seeing your da again and arranged a marriage for me to a man from a neighboring well-to-do family.” Ma grimaced. “I hated him. For one, he wasn’t your da. He was also pompous and smarmy.”

“Smarmy?” Lachlan frowned. He wasn’t even sure he knew what that meant, but it didn’t seem good, not from the frown he could see on Ma’s face.

“He was creepy, always slinking around, trying to catch me in dark corners and stuff.” Ma shivered as if remembering the man made her skin crawl. “He just wasn’t a nice man, and he wasn’t your da.”

“So, how did you—”

“Your da snuck into my room one night about a week before my wedding. By then, I was several months along with you. Your da loved me and wanted me to go with him, to sneak away in the night. He said he couldn’t offer me the world, but he would love me until his dying breath.”

Lachlan suddenly understood what his ma was trying to tell him. “He did offer you the world.”

“Yes, he did.” Ma smiled brightly as she glanced across the room to her husband. “And I’ve never regretted sneaking away with him that night. Things haven’t always been easy for us, but we had each other, and that was more than enough.”

“Is that why we don’t talk with your family? Why we’ve never been back to Ireland?”

Ma’s laughter filled the room. “There’s a standing arrest warrant for your da for kidnapping me.”

“Ma, it’s been over thirty-five years. Surely it’s been dropped by now.”

“No, my family doesn’t forgive or forget. I embarrassed them by running off with a stable hand. It didn’t matter to them that I loved your da. I was to marry for prestige and power, not love.”

“But, it’s been years.”

“And every year, my family makes sure that the warrant for your da’s arrest is renewed. That’s why we came here from Ireland, so that your da wouldn’t end up in jail. It doesn’t matter to them how long it’s been or that we have five grown sons together or even that we love each other. All that matters to them is that they were disgraced.”

“That’s just so wrong.”

“And it’s why who you love is less important to your da and me than if who you love loves you back. And if loving Asa makes you happy, then that’s all that matters to us.”

“I do love Asa, Ma, and he makes me very happy.”

“That’s all we want, son. I just wish he’d hurry back with the doctor so we can take you home where you belong.”

Lachlan laughed. He could see a lot of mothering in his future. “I just want to sleep for a few days then figure out who burned our barn down.”

“We will, son. Don’t you worry. The sheriff knows what he’s doing, and he’ll find whoever did this.”

“And in the meantime?” Lachlan asked. “We have animals that need to be in the barn, horses getting ready to foal. What are we going to do about them?”

“Lachlan, we’ll figure it out. You need to concentrate on getting better. I’m not sure your young man can handle much more. He’s been going out of his mind since you were hurt. He needs you to get better.”

“I need him, too, more than I ever thought possible.”

* * * *

“I’m going to hop in the shower.”

“Want some company?” Lachlan grinned and wiggled his eyebrows. He’d been home for three days now, and in that time there hadn’t been any hanky-panky between him and Asa. It was hard to convince Asa of that, but today Lachlan went back to work on the ranch. Surely that would assure Asa he was ready for more.

“Um, I’m really dirty. I kind of just want to get in and get cleaned up.”

“Oh.” Lachlan quickly turned away when he felt his face flush. He didn’t want Asa to see how he felt, and he knew it was plastered all over his face. Rejection sucked. “I’m going to go out and check on the cleanup then. I’ll see you when you get out.”

Asa didn’t say anything, just walked into the bathroom and closed the door. Lachlan’s heart began to ache when he heard the lock turn. There was no reason for Asa to lock the door unless he really didn’t want Lachlan to come in.

Lachlan sat down on the end of the bed and looked down at his hands, pressing his fingers together. He didn’t understand what was going on with Asa. Before the fire, things had been perfect between them. Since the moment he woke up in the hospital, Lachlan felt this huge chasm growing between him and Asa, and he didn’t know why.

Asa would barely kiss him. When he did, it was a light peck on the cheek or the forehead, never on the lips. Any time Lachlan tried for something more intimate, Asa turned away. Lachlan was beginning to feel like Asa didn’t want him anymore, at least in a sexual way.

Asa was attentive and caring in every other way. He made sure Lachlan ate, cooking most of the meals that they ate at home. He helped out around the house and even pitched in to help clean up the mess from the burned down barn.

It was when they were alone and Lachlan tried to bring them closer together that things got dicey. Asa seemed to avoid sitting next to Lachlan, preferring the single chair in the living room when they

watched television. He joked and laughed the same, but Lachlan could see tension growing in the lines on Asa's face.

The hardest part was late at night. Asa insisted that his desire to wear something to bed at night was due to the chance that something could happen again and he didn't want to be caught unaware, or naked. At first, Lachlan thought it was cute. Now, he found it annoying.

Lachlan wanted to feel Asa's body pressed against his. He wanted to feel them loving on each other. He just didn't know how to make it happen without coming right out and saying it. And he didn't want to beg to be touched by the man he loved.

Lachlan heard the shower shut off and decided he wasn't ready to confront Asa quite yet. He needed to figure out what was going on before he said anything. If Asa said he didn't want him anymore, Lachlan wasn't sure how he would handle it.

He grabbed his boots from the side of the bed and quickly pulled them on then headed for the door. He heard the bathroom door unlock just as he stepped out of the bedroom. Lachlan didn't need to look to know that Asa would be dressed. The man was never naked around him anymore.

Lachlan knew he slammed the front door harder than usual when he walked out. He just didn't care. Confusion and resentment were starting to war inside of his head. He had been injured, not killed. And even if he wasn't up to par, that didn't mean Asa couldn't hold his hand or cuddle with him.

Lachlan began to stew as he joined in to help everyone clean up the burned debris from the burned barn. He was starting to feel like a piranha in his own home, and he didn't like that. He had a concussion, not a sexual disease.

Lachlan pulled his gloves out of his back pocket when he reached the destroyed barn and yanked them on. He grabbed the first piece of charred wood he could get his hands on and carried it to the debris pile his da was making then went back for more.

After awhile, he saw Asa walk out of the house, making his way toward him. Asa was frowning as he looked across the yard at Lachlan, as if he disapproved of what Lachlan was doing.

Well, tough shit, Lachlan thought to himself as he grabbed more wood. He had a lot of excess energy to burn off, and if Asa didn't want to help him do it when they were alone together, then Lachlan would find another way.

Lachlan ignored Asa when the man stopped and stood next to him. He just grabbed some wood and carried it to the debris pile before coming back for more. Asa stood there for several minutes then heaved a huge sigh.

"What?" Lachlan snapped as he swung around to glare at Asa. "Is there something else I'm doing wrong?"

"Lachlan!"

Asa looked hurt, and that made Lachlan angry. He didn't like the thought that his words could hurt that man, but he didn't know what else to say to Asa. They seemed to have come to a line that couldn't, or maybe shouldn't, be crossed.

"What do you want from me, Asa?"

"Lachlan, I'm just worried that you're overdoing it. You've only been home from the hospital for a few days." Asa glanced around the pile of charred and burned wood. "Should you be out here working like this?"

"That's what ranchers do, Asa. If they fall off a horse, they get back up and ride again."

"You didn't exactly fall off a horse, Lachlan."

Lachlan rolled his eyes and grabbed some more wood. When Asa reached down and grabbed a pile of wood next to him, Lachlan paused and looked at the man. "Aren't you afraid of getting too close to me? You might catch what I have."

Asa gave Lachlan a glinting glance. "What in the hell are you talking about, Lachlan?"

“You’ve gone out of your way to avoid me since I woke up in the hospital.” A sense of inadequacy swept through Lachlan as he spoke. “I figured I must have caught something you didn’t want to catch.”

“Lachlan, you...” Asa licked his lips as if they had suddenly gone dry. He glanced nervously around the small area they stood in. “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I don’t know what I’m talking about? Me?” Lachlan dropped the wood in his hands and slapped them against his chest. “Then these last few days have been my imagination? You think this distance between us is due to my concussion? Maybe I need to go back to the hospital again so they can run more tests because there must be something wrong with me.”

“There’s nothing wrong with you, damn it!” Asa shouted, his eyes snapping back up to Lachlan’s.

“Then why in the hell won’t you kiss me or touch me? You can barely stand to be in the same room with me.” Lachlan waved his hand angrily in the air. “And god forbid I see you naked.”

“Is that all you think about? Sex?” Asa snapped. “Is that all there is to our relationship?”

Lachlan inhaled sharply, his hands dropping uselessly to his sides. Put the way Asa phrased it, Lachlan sounded like a complete asshole. Maybe he’d seen more in what he thought they had together than Asa did.

“I thought our relationship was about love.” Lachlan swallowed hard, a lump of tears forming in his throat. “But maybe I was wrong about that, too.”

The anger seemed to fall from Asa’s eyes as the man reached out for him. “Lachlan.”

Lachlan pulled his hands out of Asa’s reach and stepped back. He couldn’t stand to feel Asa’s hands on him when he wanted the man’s touch so much. He just might break down and beg.

“If you don’t want me anymore, you just have to say so, Asa.” Lachlan’s heart started to shatter at the shocked look on Asa’s face.

He backed away a few more steps, ready to run and hide once he'd said his piece. "I won't keep you where you don't want to be. You're free to leave any time you want."

Lachlan didn't wait for Asa's reply. He didn't know if he could stand to hear it. It was suddenly clear to him that he and Asa wanted different things. And whatever Asa wanted, Lachlan didn't have it.

He turned and sprinted toward the house, hoping to hear Asa's voice call him back. He even paused on the doorstep and turned to look back. Asa no longer stood near the ruins of the barn. He'd walked over and now sat on the steps of Ma and Da's house, staring off into space.

Asa hadn't called out or said he cared, and maybe that was the only answer Lachlan needed. Lachlan felt tears prickle his eyes as he pulled his front door open and walked into his house.

He walked straight into his bathroom and started stripping his clothes off. He didn't know what he was going to do if Asa actually left, deal with it he supposed. Lachlan turned on the water then stepped inside, letting his tears mingle with the shower spray.

His heart was breaking, and he didn't know why. He didn't know what he had done to make Asa stop loving him. His throat ached with defeat as he realized he might never know. Asa wasn't talking.

Chapter 8

“I watched you when my boy was injured,” Da said as he sat down on the steps next to Asa. “I saw how you were with him. I know you love him.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then why doesn’t he know it?”

“I don’t know if it’s that easy.” Asa sighed as he watched his fingers twist together. “I do love him but...”

“Well, either you do or you don’t, son. Which is it?”

“I do.”

“Then what seems to be the problem?” Da’s hand waved in the direction Lachlan had stalked off. “Why are the two of you arguing?”

Asa felt like his heart was collapsing in his chest. It ached just thinking of how close to death Lachlan had come. “He was dying and...and...” Asa cast a quick glance at Da then back down to his hands. “I sort of promised god I would stop being gay if he would give Lachlan back to me. It was the biggest thing I could think of to promise, and then he did and...and now Lachlan wants...but I can’t because I promised, and if I do Lachlan might be taken away from me again and...”

“Well, damn, boy, god would never hold you to a promise like that. God doesn’t do that.”

“But what if you’re wrong? What if god does want me to keep this promise? I can’t take that chance. I can’t...” Asa pressed his lips together as the thought of something happening to Lachlan threatened to make him start crying again.

“Did you ever think that maybe god gave Lachlan back to you because you were willing to sacrifice something so big and not because he wants you to keep that promise?”

“What?” Asa turned and looked at Da again.

“Son, god doesn’t expect us to be perfect. He expects us to try.”

“But I am trying,” Asa cried out as he dropped his head into his hands. He could see his relationship with Lachlan fading right before his eyes, and he didn’t know how to stop it. “That’s the problem.”

“Asa, you misunderstand me. You were willing to sacrifice something so big, and maybe god gave Lachlan back because of that, not because you promised but because Lachlan meant that much to you that you were willing to promise.”

Asa slowly raised his head and looked over at Da again. “You think?”

Da shrugged, clasping his hands together between his knees as he looked out over the yard. “God doesn’t want us to be unhappy, son. I actually believe he is in favor of us loving others. Why would he keep the two of you apart when you love each other so much?”

“Because we’re gay?”

Da snorted. “And?”

“Isn’t it wrong in god’s eyes for two men to be together?”

“Ah, son, I doubt there is a man anywhere, or written word, that can accurately say what god thinks. You must remember that the bible was written by man, and man is fallible. You need to decide how you think god wants us to be, not man.”

“But...”

“Before Lachlan was injured, did you think what happened between the two of you was bad? Was the love you felt for each other wrong?”

“No.”

“Then why do you question yourself or your love for Lachlan now?”

Asa stared back down at his hands. He kind of understood what Da was saying, but he was just so afraid that Lachlan would be taken from him if he broke his promise. "I will always love Lachlan. I just..." Asa shrugged. "I'm afraid."

"Of Lachlan?"

"No." Asa clasped his hands together much like Da was doing and looked out over the yard. "I guess maybe I'm afraid of losing him."

"That's something we all go through when we decide to give someone our love, son. We're putting ourselves out there, allowing someone else to be in control of our hearts, on whether we live or breathe. That's not easy."

Asa chuckled nervously. Da had put into words exactly what Asa was feeling. He was scared to death that something would happen to Lachlan and he would lose his reason for living.

"As much as I don't understand this thing between the two of you, I do understand that you love each other. I may never know why two men would be attracted to each other, but it's not for me to say whether it's wrong or right. I see the love you have for my son and the love he has for you, and that's all a father wants for his child, someone to love him like you love Lachlan."

"I do love him, I swear I do."

"I know that, son. I can see it just by the way you look at him." Da looked pensive for a moment as he looked out over the yard then he chuckled, which surprised Asa considering the seriousness of their conversation.

"The Blaebleah family has been around for hundreds of years, Asa, long before we came to America. There's an old Blaebleah legend that says each Blaebleah will have one mate, one person that they know on sight is meant only for them. And they will love this person, man or woman, for the rest of their lives. There will be no other for them." Da smiled as if the thought in his head brought him great joy. "I knew the second I saw my Alani that she was it for me. I

would never love another, and I never have. I've never even looked at another woman. I imagine it is much the same for Lachlan."

Asa blew out the deep breath he'd been holding while Da told his story. He prayed that Da was right. To be Lachlan's one and only was Asa's biggest dream. "I don't have a legend like that in my family, but I know I'll never love anyone but Lachlan."

"Then maybe you should consider marrying him." Da shrugged his shoulders, his face turning slightly red. "I believe that god wants us to love one another, even you and Lachlan, but I also believe that love needs to be blessed by God in a sacred union."

"This state doesn't allow homosexuals to get married. You know that."

"Son, the union between two people is not up to the state. That's simply a business practice, a way for the state to collect money. The union between two people is between them and god. It needs to be blessed by god and no one else."

"The separation of church and state." Asa snickered.

"Exactly," Da said. "What the state believes and what we believe are two different things. If you marry Lachlan in the eyes of god, then what sex you are shouldn't matter to anyone. It's a sacred union, not a business arrangement."

Asa started to warm to the idea. Hell, he was almost jumping for joy. The idea of being married to Lachlan, of having that tie to the man, was almost more than he could comprehend. And to know Lachlan's folks would support it meant even more.

"I do have one request if you choose to do this, Asa."

Asa held his breath, ready for Da to smash his dream to the ground. What could the man want? "What?"

"The Blaebleah name is a proud one, an old one. We've had a long and illustrious history. I know you must be proud of your own name but—"

“Not hardly,” Asa snapped. “I’d just as soon forget where I came from. My family hasn’t given me anything but grief since the day I was born.”

“Then maybe this won’t be so hard for you. If Lachlan does decide to accept you, then I ask for you to take the Blaebleah name as your own. In more conventional marriages, the bride usually takes her husband’s name. I know yours won’t be a conventional union, but I’d be right proud to call you son, Asa.”

“Yo-you want me to become a Blaebleah?”

“I do. I would understand if you wish to keep your own name, but I would consider it an honor if you chose Blaebleah instead.” Da chuckled lightly. “Of course, if you chose to keep your name, I would understand, and it would have no influence on my accepting your marriage with Lachlan. That’s a given, as long as you promise to love and care for my son.”

“I don’t know what to say, Mr. Blaebleah. And I do promise to love and care for Lachlan, for as long as I have a breath in my body.”

“Well, then, if this is something you can live with, then maybe you should call me Da instead of Mr. Blaebleah.”

Asa was shocked. He just nodded his head instead, beyond speech in that moment. The idea of being a real part of Lachlan’s family was just a dream floating around the outer side of his love for the man. He would have taken Lachlan despite everything else, but to be offered the chance to be part of the Blaebleah family was something he only fantasized about.

“There’s a jeweler in town down on main street, a Mr. Jenkins,” Da said. “You go in there and talk to Mr. Jenkins, tell him I sent you and why. He’ll take care of you and ensure that you get the rings you want.”

“Rings?” Asa was still trying to wrap his mind around being offered the Blaebleah name and acceptance of his relationship with Lachlan, and now Da wanted to discuss rings?

“Hell, son, you can’t expect to propose to Lachlan without one, can you?”

“No, I guess not.” Asa chuckled. He started to think how he would feel wearing a ring for everyone to see that showed the world he belonged to Lachlan. He found himself warming to the idea more and more as he thought of it. The idea of Lachlan wearing his ring intrigued Asa even more. He wanted everyone to know that the man belonged to him. Hell, he’d shout it from the rooftops if he needed to.

“I need to run to town.”

Da chuckled. “I thought you might.”

Asa stood up and started down the steps, pausing at the bottom to look back at Da. “Thank you, Da. I’ll do right by Lachlan, I promise.”

“You better watch those promises, son. They seem to get you in a lot of trouble.”

“I only have one more promise to make to a special someone, and it’s one I will never break.”

Asa raced down the driveway to his motorcycle, a renewed energy filling him. He knew what he needed to do to make things right between him and Lachlan. He just needed to do it.

* * * *

Lachlan heard Asa’s motorcycle start up, and his heart dropped. For a moment, he couldn’t breathe, couldn’t think. Asa was leaving him. Tears welled up in his eyes and started to fall down his cheeks as his heart broke in two.

He couldn’t let this happen. Asa was his life, the heart that beat in his chest. If the man didn’t want to have sex with him anymore, Lachlan would have to accept that. But he couldn’t let Asa leave. Lachlan wasn’t sure he’d survive without him.

Lachlan turned off the water and jumped out of the shower. He grabbed the nearest towel and wrapped it around his waist, running from the room. Lachlan stopped long enough to grab his car keys then

ran out the front door, holding onto the towel with one hand, the keys with the other.

He spotted the dust from Asa's motorcycle just as he reached his truck. If he hurried, he might be able to catch the man before he left for good. Lachlan jumped into his truck and started it up. He backed up and took off, his tires screeching even in the dirt with the force of his driving.

He had to catch Asa. He had to beg the man not to leave. Lachlan started racking his brain, trying to figure out a way to convince Asa to stay. It was clear from Asa's actions, or lack of actions, over the last few days that the man no longer wanted to be Lachlan's lover, but surely what they had between them was more than sex.

Lachlan ached with the knowledge that he would never be able to love Asa in a physical manner, but just being with the man was enough for him. He just wanted the chance to love Asa, to care for the man he had come to know, to give him a home. That would have to be enough.

Lachlan drove like the hounds of hell were after him, taking corners a little quicker than he knew was safe, driving faster than the law allowed, but it paid off when he caught up with Asa's motorcycle. He honked the horn over and over again until Asa pulled off the road and turned onto a small dirt road.

When Asa climbed off his bike and started hurrying back to the truck, Lachlan gripped the steering wheel and pressed his lips together to prevent himself from throwing up. Now that he had stopped Asa, he wasn't sure what he was going to say to convince the man to stay. What did he have to offer Asa that would make him stay?

By the time Asa reached his window, Lachlan was hyperventilating. His knuckles were white where they gripped the steering wheel. Lachlan's heart felt like it was going to jump out of his chest at any moment. He couldn't breathe.

"Lany, what the hell is wrong?" Asa asked as he yanked the door open. "Is someone hurt? Did something happen?"

Lachlan closed his eyes and tried to keep his tears at bay, but they trailed down his cheeks anyway. Knowing the futility of trying to stop them when his heart was breaking, he opened them again and looked over at Asa.

"Please don't leave," Lachlan whispered. "I'm sorry I got mad at you. I'm sorry I yelled. I swear I won't ever do it again. I just..." Lachlan swallowed and looked at where his hands wrapped around the steering wheel, unable to look at Asa in case he saw rejection there. "I love you and I don't want to be without you. If you don't want to have sex with me, I understand, and I promise to never ask again. Just...please don't leave me, Asa."

"Jesus, Lany, is that what you thought I was doing?"

"Isn't it?"

Lachlan jerked when Asa suddenly grabbed him and pulled him to the edge of the door. He couldn't prevent the shudder that racked his body as Asa's strong arms wrapped around him. He leaned forward and buried his face in Asa's neck, breathing in the man's rough, masculine scent.

"Oh, babe, I'm not leaving," Asa whispered against the side of his head. "I'm never leaving you, Lany."

"Then where were you going?" When Asa laughed, a nervous-sounding laugh, Lachlan leaned back to look into the man's face. He was surprised to find it slightly flushed. "Asa?"

"I wasn't going to ask you this way," Asa said. Lachlan frowned, concerned about the way Asa was looking at him, the bashfulness in his words.

"Ask me what?"

"I had a little talk with your da, and he made me see some things that I was missing. He made me take a long hard look at what I wanted." Asa smiled ruefully. "And he made me see that you're the best thing that ever happened to me. I would be a fool to let you go."

Lachlan's breath hitched in his throat. He leaned into the hand Asa stroked down his face, needing the close contact more than he

needed air. "Don't let me go," he whispered, praying with all of his heart that Asa wasn't a fool.

"That's where I was going, Lany, into town to get us some rings."

"Rings?"

"I wanted to ask you to marry me."

"Ma-marry you?"

"Yeah, Lany." Asa's hand moved over the side of his face again.

"I want you to marry me. I want to spend the rest of my life showing you how much I love you."

Lachlan felt the joy start filling him at Asa's words. He could think of nothing he wanted more in the world than to spend his life with Asa, but..."I know I promised not to ask, but I need to know. If you'd just tell me what I did, I swear I'll never ask again."

Asa frowned. "What you did?"

Lachlan swallowed before answering, his eyes dropping away from Asa's intense stare. "Wha-what did I do that made you not want to...to be with me anymore?"

"Lachlan, I do want to be with you. What do you think this is all about?"

"Then why won't you touch me anymore?" Lachlan hesitantly looked into Asa's deep hazel eyes again, afraid of what he might see. "You barely even look at me, and you practically run from the room when either of us is naked. You...you won't even kiss me."

"Fuck, Lachlan, you think..."

Lachlan cried out when Asa's lips suddenly covered his. He felt like it had been weeks, maybe even years, since he'd felt the man's lips press against his, since he tasted Asa's unique flavor. Within the blink of an eye, Lachlan's desire exploded and went from nonexistent to raging.

"I want you more than I have ever wanted anyone in my life," Asa whispered against Lachlan's lips, almost as if he was afraid to lose the contact between them. "I could spend the rest of my life just looking at you and die a happy man."

“Then why?”

Asa rested his forehead against Lachlan’s, grinning. “Because I made a stupid promise that I thought I had to keep.”

“What promise?”

“I promised god that if he would give you back to me, I would give up being gay.”

Lachlan blinked and leaned back to get a better look at Asa’s face. Surely he couldn’t have heard that right. “You...” Lachlan frowned as Asa’s words started to sink into his mind farther. “You promised god you would stop being gay if I lived?”

Asa’s face flushed as he nodded. “Yeah, I know, it was stupid, but I was so afraid you were going to die. I would have promised anything.”

“So you chose being gay?”

“I offered him my life, but he didn’t seem to want that.” Asa shrugged, looking totally embarrassed. “When I told him I would give up being gay if he gave you back to me, you woke up, and I kind of figured I had to keep my promise.”

Lachlan couldn’t figure out if he was ecstatic at Asa’s sacrifice or pissed over what the man had put him through. He went with pissed and punched Asa right in the mouth. He clenched his fists, wanting to hit Asa again as he watched the man fall to the ground.

Asa rubbed his jaw and looked up at him. “What in the hell did you do that for?”

“Because you’re a fucking idiot,” Lachlan shouted. “How dare you make that sort of decision for the both of us without talking to me first.”

“Lachlan, you were dying.”

“I don’t give a flying fuck.” Lachlan unclenched his fist and waved his hand wildly in the air. “How in the hell do you think I felt these last few days? You wouldn’t touch me or kiss me. You could barely look at me. I thought...” Lachlan’s voice lowered to almost a whisper. “I thought you didn’t love me anymore.”

Lachlan was surprised with the quickness in which Asa jumped to his feet and moved to stand next to him again. "I didn't mean for that to happen, Lany, I swear. I just...it was so hard to be around you and not be with you. Every second has been a nightmare. But I thought I was doing the right thing."

"You were being a dumbass."

Asa chuckled. "Yes, your da made me see that. He said god would never make someone keep a promise like that, and god probably gave you back to me just because I was willing to sacrifice that part of myself."

Lachlan wanted to say that his da made sense, but none of this made sense to him. "Asa, you can't just give up being gay because you choose to. Either you're gay, or you're not. It's not a choice."

"No, but whether I act on it is a different story."

"So, you thought if you didn't have sex, you wouldn't be gay anymore?"

"I thought..." Asa drew in a deep breath. "Okay, let's be honest, I wasn't thinking. And yes, it was stupid, but it was all I could come up with at the time. I was terrified out of my mind, and I would have done anything to have you back."

"And now?"

"Now I know that what we have is too special to give up. And the best way that I can thank god for giving you back to me is to love you for the rest of my life, every day, in every way."

"And that's what the rings are all about?"

"It's not legal in this state for two men to get married, but your da said that's just a business transaction required by the state to raise money. He said that a true union is between us and god."

"I agree."

"Then will you marry me?"

The hesitation in Asa's words told Lachlan that the man wasn't sure of his response.

“I know we can’t be married in the eyes of the state,” Asa said quickly, “but we could be married in the eyes of god and our family.”

“Our family?”

Asa’s face flushed. “Your da offered to let me take the Blaeacleah name.”

“You’d do that? Give up your name for me?”

“I think I’d be doing it less for you and more for me. The thought of being married to you, of being a part of your family, is better than any fantasy I have ever dreamed up. I’d take your name in a heartbeat.”

“Do you promise to stop trying not to be gay?”

“Do you promise not to hit me again?” Asa countered.

Lachlan grinned. “Nope.”

“No?” Asa’s eyebrow shot up.

“I have every intention of laying you out on your ass if you ever try to do something like this again. We can’t change who we are, Asa, and we’re gay. Get used to it because it’s not going to change any time soon. Not having sex isn’t going to change that.”

“Okay, I get what you are saying, and if I ever do something so stupid again, I give you full permission to punch me in the mouth again.”

“Like you have a choice.” Lachlan snickered then sobered quickly. “I’m serious though, Asa. You don’t get to make decisions like that without discussing it with me first. There are two of us in this relationship, and what we do affects both of us.”

“I know, and I’m sorry.” Asa’s hand pressed against Lachlan’s chest and started rubbing gently over his heart. “You just don’t know how scared I was, Lany. I never want to go through that again. I don’t know if I’d survive it.”

Lachlan wrapped his arms around Asa’s shoulders and pulled the man close to his body. He nuzzled the side of Asa’s head, planting small kisses along the curve of his neck and his ear.

“I’m here, and I’m fine, Asa. I’m not going anywhere.” He felt Asa’s hands grip his hips tightly, and a small shudder worked its way through Asa’s body. Asa suddenly stilled then jerked back, staring down at Lachlan in shock, his mouth hanging open.

“Lany, you’re naked.”

“Technically, I’m in a towel, Asa.” Even if that towel was hanging low on his hips and threatening to come undone and fall to the ground. “I was in the shower when I heard your bike start up. I needed to stop you, and I didn’t have time to get dressed.”

Asa swallowed hard. His eyes started running up and down Lachlan’s body. “Lany, you’re naked.”

“You said that already, Asa.” Lachlan chuckled.

Lachlan gasped in surprise when Asa suddenly reached down and pulled the towel from around his waist. Before he could chastise Asa for stripping him naked on the side of the road, Asa had dropped to his knees and swallowed Lachlan’s cock down to the root.

“Geez, Asa,” Lachlan groaned as he grabbed the sides of the doorframe, his mind melting in a matter of seconds. Asa seemed to be oblivious to their exposed position on the side of the road. Anyone could drive by at any second. Hell, they could be arrested for breaking so many laws they wouldn’t see the light of day for months, maybe years. Asa didn’t seem to care.

After a few strokes of Asa’s tongue, Lachlan lost his ability to care, too. It had been days since he had been loved by Asa, and it just felt so damn good. Lachlan just needed a little bit more.

He scooted up until he sat on the edge of the bench seat then leaned back until he could reach the glove box with his hand. Flipping it open, he searched around until his hand landed on the bottle of lube he kept in the small compartment.

“Asa,” Lachlan whispered as he popped the top and poured a liberal amount into his hand. “Asa, honey.” When Asa lifted his head, Lachlan held out the bottle of lube. “You have two minutes to fuck

me before we need to get the hell off the side of the road. And if anyone comes, you better hope they drive right on by.”

The moment Asa took the bottle of lube, Lachlan reached down between his legs and started preparing himself for the man’s cock. He wanted to be good and stretched because he knew Asa had a very thin thread on his restraint. He was going to get truly fucked. Asa’s eyes had already darkened, his nostrils flaring. The man was on the edge of his control.

The more Asa looked at him, the faster Lachlan worked the fingers in his ass. He imagined he could come just from watching Asa watch him. It didn’t help that he could see Asa slowly stroking his cock as he watched. The man was hot, pure and simple.

Deciding he was stretched enough, Lachlan pulled his fingers free and wiped them on the towel beneath him. He grabbed his legs and pulled them up to his chest, baring himself to Asa’s hungry eyes. “I’m waiting, Asa.”

“I don’t...” Asa stepped closer, swallowing hard. His eyes sought out Lachlan’s. “I don’t have a condom.”

Lachlan held one hand out to Asa, drawing him closer when the man grabbed it. He felt Asa’s cock poke at him and almost lost his grip on his thigh. “It doesn’t matter anymore, Asa. We’re going to be married, remember?”

“Yes? You’re saying yes?”

“Yeeesss!” Lachlan’s word came out in a loud yell when Asa pushed forward in one forceful thrust until he was planted fully inside of Lachlan’s ass. “Fuck me, Asa,” he growled. “Fuck me hard. Make me feel you.”

Asa was very good at following direction. There were no gentle thrusts, not sweet loving. It was rough and fierce and just about made Lachlan’s head blow off. Asa seemed to be on a mission to fuck Lachlan as hard and as fast as he could.

And Lachlan loved every second of it...all sixty of them.

Lachlan cried out and arched into the air as the pleasure racing through his body exploded, spunk shooting so high out of his cock that it landed on the steering wheel and all over Asa and Lachlan.

One deep thrust later and Asa roared. Lachlan shuddered as he felt Asa's seed fill him. He had never been fucked without a condom before, and it put a whole new spin on the sensations running through his body.

It wasn't because of the physical difference between having a condom and no condom but because Lachlan knew no one else would ever fuck him in the same manner again. That was something reserved only for his future husband.

Asa's body collapsed down on top of Lachlan, his breath blowing harshly across Lachlan's chest. Lachlan clenched his inner muscles, chuckling when Asa shuddered. He reached up and stroked his fingers through Asa's dark brown hair, tears prickling the corners of his eyes at the sudden deep tenderness he felt for the man he held in his arms.

"Love you, Asa."

Chapter 9

“Hey, babe,” Asa called out to Lachlan from the living room, “there’s a bunch of cars and trucks coming down the driveway.”

“Oh?”

A moment later, Asa felt a hand land on his shoulder. He turned his head to see Lachlan standing slightly behind him, peering over his shoulder to look through the front window. Asa gestured out the window to the vehicles.

“Friends of yours?”

“I don’t know, but I think that’s the sheriff’s car in front.” Asa jumped when he felt Lachlan’s hand smack his ass. “Come on, we’d better go see what this is all about.”

Asa rubbed his butt cheek thoughtfully. “I’d rather stay here and try that out again, preferably naked.”

“Later, honey. Work first, spankings second.” Lachlan chuckled and headed out of the house.

Asa pouted for just a moment then followed Lachlan out the front door. He really couldn’t complain too much. His ass still ached from the pounding he’d received the night before. Ever since their argument and makeup on the side of the road two weeks ago, Asa and Lachlan had been going at it every chance they got. Hell, rabbits would be proud.

Asa was still trying to wrap his head around how close he had come to losing everything, his lover, his new family, and his new status as fiancé. If Lachlan hadn’t come after him, Asa didn’t know what would have happened.

Granted, Asa planned to bring rings back and propose to the man, but Lachlan's way of doing things was so much better. Lachlan was better at a lot of things, like communicating. Asa was trying, but he knew he wasn't nearly as good as Lachlan.

The man had no problem expressing his feelings either verbally or physically, and Asa appreciated that about Lachlan. He was slowly coming to see that it was the only way to have an honest relationship, even if it did still scare him on occasion. It was becoming easier each time, though.

"Who are all these people?" Asa asked as he walked up to stand next to Lachlan, watching vehicle after vehicle come to a stop, people piling out.

"This is one of the reasons Cade Creek is such a wonderful place to live, Asa," Lachlan said. Asa was a little surprised when Lachlan wrapped an arm around his waist considering it looked like half of the town's population was climbing from their cars and trucks. "They've come out for an old-fashioned barn raising."

"A what?"

"A barn raising, honey."

"I heard you, Lachlan, I just don't know what that is."

Lachlan pointed to several of the trucks. "Those trucks there are loaded down with wood and material. All of these people here have come out to help us build a new barn."

Asa frowned as he looked out over the crowd gathering near where the old barn had stood. "Why?"

"Because that's what people do when they live in places like Cade Creek. They work together and help each other out. There are no big cities nearby, honey. We're kind of on our own here. We have to help each other survive because no one else is going to do it."

"So, all of these people have given up their free time to come out and build your barn?"

"And donated the supplies."

“They donated the supplies, too?” Lachlan nodded, smiling and looking way too pleased with what was going on. He even waved to several people, saying hi to others. “How do we pay them back?”

“We help them when they are in need.”

“Oh.”

Asa had never seen anything like it. Men and women were unloading supplies and stacking them near the patch of dirt where the previous barn had stood. Other people were unloading food out of the vehicles. Even the children were involved, carrying items toward the barn site or into the house.

“I guess we should pitch in and help, huh?”

“Yeah.” Lachlan chuckled. “It’s kind of rude to stand around and watch when people come for a barn raising. They might rebel and leave.”

Asa followed Lachlan’s laughter to one of the trucks and started helping unload. He had no idea how to build a barn, but he was a good lackey. He could carry and fetch with the best of them. He might even be able to swing a hammer...if someone showed him how.

The trucks were just about all unloaded when Lachlan came over and grabbed Asa’s arm. “Da and the sheriff want to talk to us.”

“Oh?” Asa suddenly wondered if someone had seen them fooling around on the side of the road a couple of weeks ago and swallowed nervously. He hoped they weren’t going to do any jail time. They were supposed to get married in another week.

“Asa, Lachlan.” Da nodded at them as they walked up. All of Lachlan’s brothers stood behind Da, and Ma was walking down the steps, heading in their direction.

Asa reached over and gripped Lachlan’s hand, suddenly afraid something was more wrong than he had initially thought. “Is there a problem, Da?”

“The sheriff wanted to talk to us real quick about the barn burning. He thinks he has a suspect.”

Asa waited. He was a little intimidated by the sheriff, mostly because his father was a sheriff in their own hometown. Asa had been his father's deputy when he quit and moved away. He was uncomfortable around anyone in uniform after what he went through with the other people he worked with.

"Fingerprints on the gas cans found inside the barn were linked back to Clem Thornton," the sheriff said. "I understand you've had a run in with him?"

"Yeah," Asa said, "a couple of times, once when I first came to town and then again a couple of weeks later. Why?"

The sheriff nodded. "I think that boy has it out for you."

"Me?" Asa asked. "I don't even know the guy."

"No, but Clem has never made any bones in regards to how he feels about men like you."

"Men like me?" Asa's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean men like me?"

The sheriff gestured with his head to where Asa had a tight grip on Lachlan's hand. Asa refused to let go of Lachlan's hand or be ashamed of the fact that he was holding a man's hand no matter who saw them.

"You mean gay men," Lachlan said, his voice tight and harsh.

"I'm afraid so, boys."

"Well, he's just going to have to get used to it," Lachlan snapped, and Asa loved him just a little more for defending what they had together. "Asa and I are getting married next week. He's not leaving anytime soon."

The sheriff's eyebrow arched as he crossed his arms over his chest. "You don't say, married, huh?"

"Yes," Asa growled through his clenched teeth. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"I will if you don't invite me."

Asa blinked, his anger leaving him as quickly as it had come. "You want to come to our wedding?"

"I'd be honored to. It's about time at least one of the Blaebleah boys settled down and got married. It might as well be you." The sheriff chuckled as he glanced around at Lachlan's brothers. "I can only hope the rest of the boys settle down soon. I'm not sure how much longer our town can have that many unattached Blaebleah boys running around."

Asa glanced over at Lachlan to see a confused and slightly surprised expression on his face. He looked back at the sheriff. "Well, consider yourself invited then, Sheriff."

"I appreciate it, boys." The smile on the sheriff's face fell away, and a more serious expression replaced it. "But we still have Clem Thornton to deal with. I sent some of my boys out to his place to talk with him, but he seems to have disappeared. I have an APB out for his arrest right now, and we'll bring him in as soon as we find him."

"What about Billy?" Rourke asked. "Was he involved?"

"He may have known what his brother was doing." The sheriff shook his head. "But, no, I don't think Billy really had anything to do with it. He readily answered all of our questions when we brought him, and I believe him."

"Billy?" Rourke asked.

"Billy's not a bad kid, not really. I just think he's been under his brother's thumb for too long. Clem can be a mighty intimidating man when he wants to be, and I think Billy is afraid of him."

"Billy?" Rourke repeated.

"He didn't seem intimidated when he and Clem attacked me," Asa said.

"Well, be that as it may be, I still don't believe Billy was involved with burning down your barn. I think that was all on Clem, but until I can find him and question him, I suggest you all keep an extra eye out on the place. There's no telling what that man might do when he finds out the two of you are planning a wedding."

"Oh." Asa blanched, gripping Lachlan's hand harder. "Maybe we sh—"

Asa's eyebrow shot up when Lachlan's hand slapped over his mouth. He looked at the man, seeing the intense determination in his grass-green eyes. "Don't fucking say it. We're getting married in a week, and to hell with Clem Thornton."

Asa felt joy fill him at Lachlan's insistence that they get married. Lachlan seemed almost fanatical about it. Asa opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue, licking Lachlan's palm until the man pulled his hand away.

Lachlan had one eyebrow arched. He glared at Asa as if he waited for Asa to argue. Asa had no intention of arguing. He'd marry Lachlan today if he could get away with it, right this second even. He'd take Lachlan any way he could get him, any time he could get him.

Lachlan Blae Leah had captured Asa, heart and soul, before Asa even knew it had happened. But maybe some things were just meant to be easy.

Asa grinned. "No swearing, Lany."

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stormy believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two or three men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul Mates, true love, and happy endings.

Stormy lives in the great Northwest region of the USA, with her gorgeous husband and soul Mate, six very active teenagers, two boxer/collie puppies, one old biddy cat, and one fish.

You can usually find her cuddled in bed with a book in her hand and a puppy in her lap, or on her laptop, creating the next sexy man for one of her stories. Stormy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website at www.stormyglenn.com

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