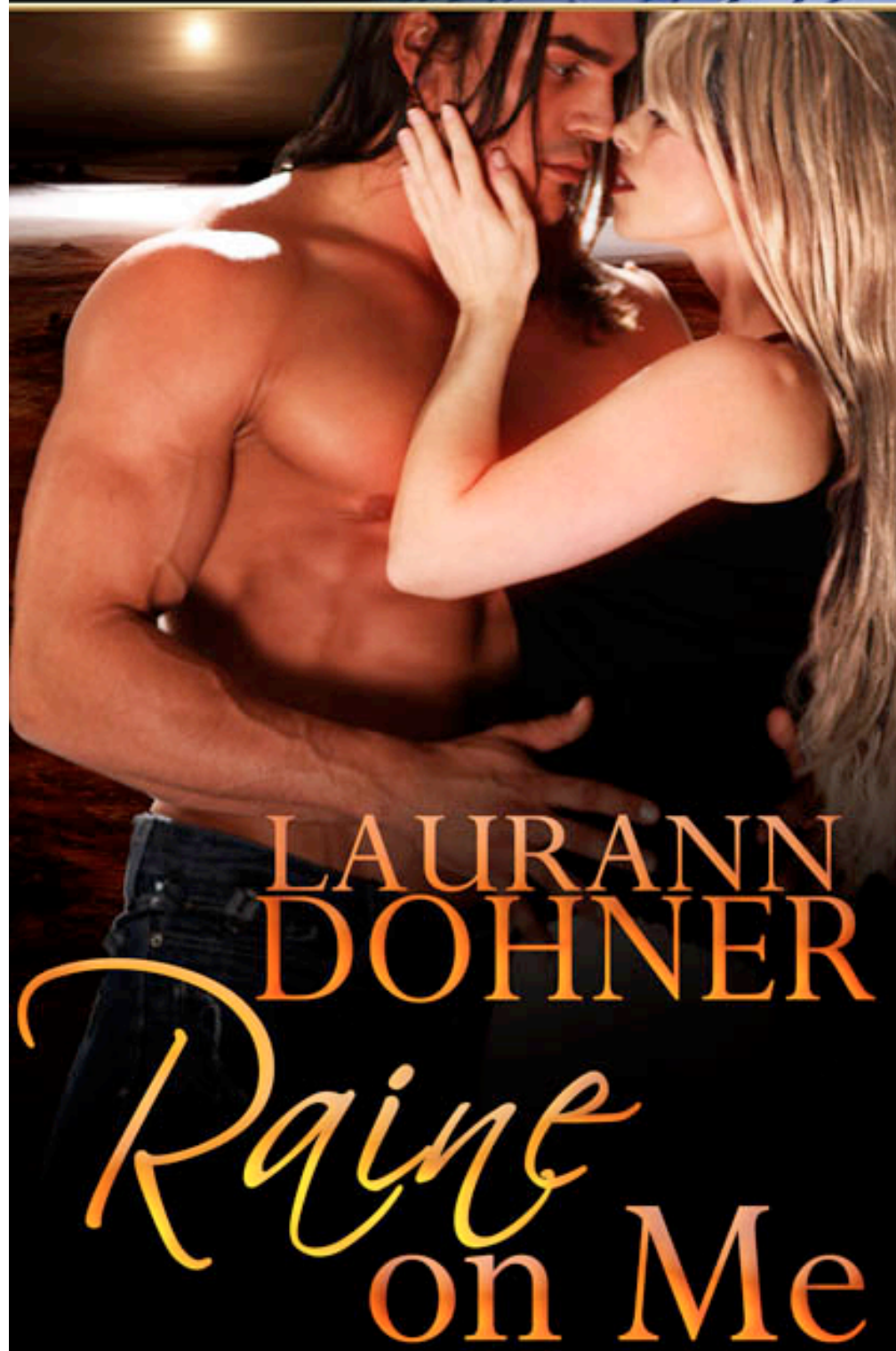


ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



Raine on Me

Laurann Dohner

Book two in the Riding the Raines series.

Brit wants to get on with her life and leave her rough past far behind. Most of the cowboys who end up in her care are cranky old ex-rodeo stars. But not the new guy. He's a tall, mouthwatering hunk with the hottest body she's ever seen. And she can see it all, since not one inch of that incredible flesh is hidden from her gaze. The blunt, crude man shocks Brit a bit when he flat-out tries to get her into his bed...immediately.

Brit is the sexiest woman River has ever come across. Every time he thinks he's starting to tame her, she tries to bolt from his life. He's a man who always gets what he wants and the more time he spends with the mouthy, stubborn woman, the more convinced he becomes that he can never give her up. Good thing for him he's not above chaining a woman to his bed if that's what it takes to keep her right where he wants her – under him.

Ellora's Cave Publishing



www.ellorascave.com

Raine on Me

ISBN 9781419932571

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Raine on Me Copyright © 2011 Laurann Dohner

Edited by Pamela Campbell

Cover art by Syneca

Electronic book publication February 2011

The terms Romantica® and Quickies® are registered trademarks of Ellora's Cave Publishing.

With the exception of quotes used in reviews, this book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any means existing without written permission from the publisher, Ellora's Cave Publishing, Inc.® 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

Warning: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. No part of this book may be scanned, uploaded or distributed via the Internet or any other means, electronic or print, without the publisher's permission. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. (<http://www.fbi.gov/ipr/>). Please purchase only authorized electronic or print editions and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted material. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the author's imagination and used fictitiously.

RAINE ON ME

Laurann Dohner

Dedication

To Mr. Laurann, who proved to me that it's possible to find true, lasting love despite having to kiss a few frogs before you find a prince.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Harley: H-D Michigan, LLC

Velcro: Velcro Industries B.V., LLC

Chapter One

"Hello?"

Brit studied the beat-up old motor home and wondered if it was still roadworthy since it looked like something from the early seventies. She glanced down at her folder to make sure she had the right address, verified it, and dread pitted in her stomach. She knew how cantankerous some of those old cowboys could be. She reached up to pound on the metal door.

"Anyone home?"

Silence. She turned her head to glance around the trailer park. She wished she could say she'd visited worse but unfortunately this one happened to be the winner of that title. Other old trailers were parked around her. The neighbor had a well-weathered travel trailer. He or she had put up a torn awning between the spaces littered with broken furniture as if it were an outdoor living room, complete with old TV and extension cords running out a broken window to said TV. A dog barked and someone coughed loudly.

Her hip buzzed, startling her. She reached for her cell phone, clipped to the front pocket of her jeans, unclipped it, and jerked it to her ear.

"Brit Sheril."

"Did you find him?"

The voice made her flinch. Her boss had to be one of the worst cantankerous old cowboys she'd ever come across. "I found it but he doesn't appear to be home, Dale. I tried, but no dice, so I guess I'll come back to the office."

"Nope," the man's voice sounded raspy from too many years of hard drinking and heavy smoking. "He's there. Trust me. Just let yourself in. He usually keeps a key under the broken step, hidden beneath a rock."

She clenched her teeth, irritated. "I can't just walk into someone's..." She curled her lip while she stared at the old hunk-of-junk box on wheels. "Home."

"His family and I go way back and he's a friend of mine. They kept me in horses when I rode in the circuit. This guy got busted up bad and he could be too hurt to move so get your little ass in there to check on him for me. I want you to get that man on his feet. I gave Darcy and Eve all your appointments today so he's your only concern. Do whatever it takes but get him up and about. Tell him I called his family so they know what he did. You tell him all that and that they are expecting him to get his ass back to the ranch pronto."

She sighed, realizing the pointlessness of arguing. "What did he do? You just shoved a file at me, so what am I looking at? I just drove and haven't had time to read it since you told me to get here immediately."

She heard Dale's chair creak as he leaned back. She could imagine him propping his cowboy boots on his desk as he so often did. Dale stood six foot four and had to be three hundred pounds of retired rodeo champion. He'd started the physical therapy center she worked for after he'd busted the hell out of his body in the years he'd nearly killed himself on the backs of wild animals. He'd seen a need, hired the best therapists he could find, and started his own company.

"He's got a slew of injuries. Three years ago he got thrown into a wall and it busted his leg in four places. I think he's got two pins in the right one and had to have hip surgery. One of my boys called me to tell me four days ago that River went back into the arena even though the damn fool knew his days were over. He's too busted up but the prize money tempted him, I guess. It was one of those low-ass outfits that don't follow the rules. They wanted a good show and were putting anyone crazy enough on the backs of their bulls. He won but nobody has seen him since. If he ain't showing up at the bar or at work, that means he's injured. Get in there to see how much damage there is."

"Maybe he used the money and got the hell out of here to set up somewhere else." The motor home looked as though a good wind would trigger it to fall apart. "You know how these guys are. They're drifters."

"This one has got a job and he loves his horses. He is steady as can be. He's special to me, Brit, so get your ass in there and find him." The chair creaked. "Shit. Randy just walked in. It's tax time and he's going to ream my ass good about how I keep records. Call me back in a few hours to let me know how River is. I need a new office manager," he muttered. "One who looks cute when she starts yelling." He hung up.

Cursing under her breath, Brit snapped the phone closed, and clipped it back onto her hip. She bent over, peered under the drop-down steps of the motor home and sure enough saw a rock. *No one could be fool enough to...* She was wrong. She saw the key as she lifted the fist-sized object. The single key fit into the door. She turned it, feeling the lock twist, and took one more deep breath.

"Don't shoot me," she called out. "If you have a gun, I'm not an intruder. Dale Hass sent me. Hello? Anyone home?" She opened the door wide, climbing the steps, praying they didn't collapse under her from excessive rust. "Hello?"

She sniffed. The smell wasn't bad at all considering that most of these guys took their cleaning tips from the local garbage dumpsters. She could only detect a faint smell of beer. Her eyes quickly adjusted to the dim interior as she hovered just inside the living room area.

Her gaze took in the ancient, green shag carpet, the built-in couch that really needed a throw over it to hide the hideous, starburst, once-yellow-but-now-rusty-orange pattern. It was surprisingly clean for a cowboy. She'd worked for Dale for five

months. She'd met a lot of his old rodeo tramp friends in that time since he'd assigned her to them, most of whom were pigs when it came to living.

She had to admit to being a little impressed at the neatness she saw. This one obviously had a girlfriend. She glanced around the room and decided no woman lived with him though, since one with eyesight wouldn't live with that ugly-ass couch without at least tossing a sheet over it.

"Hello?"

She turned, staring down the hallway. The bedroom door was ajar. She really hoped, if the guy were home, he'd at least be alone. She'd hate to walk in on two people in bed together. It had happened once. She softly groaned at that horrible memory of the sixty-something couple in bed. It wouldn't have been so bad except they'd asked her to join them. "Rodeo sixty" looked like eighty miles of bad road.

Sighing loudly when she got no response, she slowly walked toward the bedroom. A horrible thought struck her. *What if the old guy has passed?* She paused in the hallway and turned her head to glance in at the clean but tiny all-in-one room. Yeah, she decided, the guy definitely had someone in his life looking after him. That probably meant he wouldn't be days long gone if he had died. She forced her attention to the crack of the bedroom door, forcing her legs to move.

As she tapped on the door it moved. A large bed dominated the small room. As the door slowly opened she saw a black bedspread on the floor with black silk sheets. A tan, bare leg came into view.

The door stopped. Brit stared at the back of a tan, muscular calf trailing down to a naked foot. He obviously slept on his stomach from the position of his leg. She took a deep breath. If he were breathing, her day would be a hell of a lot better.

"Hello?"

He didn't move.

"Shit," she muttered.

She prepared for the worst as she took a deep breath and pushed the door wide open, expecting to see a dead guy. Instead what she found stunned her. She blinked once, twice, and then hard a third time as her gaze took in the body sprawled on the bed.

Most of Dale's friends were sixty plus but this guy wasn't old. A pair of tan, muscular legs were spread a few feet apart. She followed those naked legs up to the nicest ass she'd ever seen. He had a firm, tan, rounded ass. She could see it all since the guy was butt—literally—naked. Her gaze flowed over the nice curve of his bottom to a broad back, higher up to muscular, broad shoulders and thick buff arms that were stretched above his head. Long, black, silky hair spread across one of those arms, blocking her view of his face and the area from elbow to wrist. His big hands were curled around a pillow, his fingers out of sight.

Her gaze raked down his body again as she swallowed. He definitely wasn't past his prime. Now that the initial shock had passed, she took in his body one more time, an inch at a time, studying him. That's when the other factors registered.

His right knee appeared a little bigger than the left. She spotted an ice pack—the kind that wrapped around—at the edge of the bed. He'd had ice on that knee but even from the back she could still see the swelling. A thick scar ran along his hip and he had scars on his left leg near his knee on the inside. She took a step into the room and inched through the foot of space between the wall and the bed to get a better look at his hip scar.

He'd had surgery all right. They'd sliced into his hip, just missing his ass cheek, leaving a pale scar a good four inches long that contrasted against his darker skin. The guy either liked to sunbathe naked or his heritage had to be something that gave him that tan-looking skin naturally. She tried to remember his last name but came up with a blank. She just remembered his first name—River.

He took up a lot of the bed and his toes were off the end of it. He had to be at least six feet tall. He wasn't as tall as Dale, who was six foot four, but he came close. Her gaze left the great sexy body on the bed and she took a deep breath. She saw he had a built-in, pull-out shelf that he used as a nightstand. Part of the mystery of why the guy didn't wake sat on it.

"Damn it," she sighed, inching further between the bed and wall.

She shook her head at the uncapped and nearly empty whiskey bottle and could smell the faint scent of it lingering in the small room. Brit lifted the full, open pill bottle, turned it in her hand and read the label. She was relieved when she saw it was a mild sedative. Her gaze flew to his back, watching it rise and fall for proof that he definitely still breathed. He hadn't overdosed accidentally by mixing his pills with alcohol.

Her gaze ran over his body again, making her swallow. She needed to get laid bad if staring down at this guy's naked backside turned her on, but in her defense, he was a fine male specimen. Scars and swollen knee aside, he was extremely fit. She stared at his long, jet-black hair, deciding it looked soft. Secretly she'd always been a sucker for buff guys with longer hair. She liked blonds though, but saw the definite appeal of the cowboy on the bed.

She inched back until she stood at the foot of the bed. She bent, gripped the sheet he'd kicked off, and hesitated for only a second to take one long, last look at his nice body before she tossed it across his midsection. The sheet landed to cover his ass. That helped her think clearer now that she didn't have to stare at it. Brit glanced around the room again and then decided she needed to wake him to assess how much pain he suffered and she needed to get a better look at that knee to see if he had any other injuries that she couldn't spot with him on his back.

"Um, River?" She spoke loudly. "Wake up."

He didn't budge. She shifted the folder in her arm to open it. She glanced at it. Her eyes drifted over him. *Yeah, definitely not in his sixties like my regular patients.* She studied

the paperwork, though there wasn't much there, just a single sheet that Dale had written out. She shut it and bent, placing it on the floor.

"Mr. Wind?" Her hand reached for the heel of his foot. "Mr. Wind?" Her voice rose. "Wake up!"

Her fingers curled around the heel of his foot. She grabbed the left one, not wanting to jar his swollen right knee. "Wake up, damn it. I don't have all day since I have a life."

When his body moved, she was relieved that he wasn't dead to the world after all. She squeezed his foot, knowing that sometimes physical touch could rouse someone. She knew that from personal experience but she pushed that thought back. She hadn't had to wake a drunk for few years now. It had been four years since her divorce.

The man stretched and she could only stare. His arms rose, hitting the wall while his back arched. She felt almost sorry that she'd tossed a sheet over his butt as his legs spread a little, the heel of his foot moving out of her hand as he moved them. His head turned, moving his hair from his face.

His eyes were still shut as she took in his profile. He wasn't exactly handsome. Rugged had to be the word that fit and his heritage was no longer a mystery. She should have guessed when she saw his full name—River Wind. It sounded kind of Native American but people named their kids stranger names. She had a Chinese friend named Betty Lou. He had a generous mouth. Full lips parted as he took a deep breath, his chest expanding.

"Mr. Wind?"

He jumped a little. Those lips curved downward as his head lifted, turning her way. His eyes opened to reveal very dark-brown eyes that looked a little out of it with confusion. Those eyes were framed with incredibly thick and long black eyelashes. His eyes were beautiful, even if he wasn't quite awake. *Bedroom eyes all the way*, she thought, feeling her stomach clench in response.

He blinked a few times as he focused on her. She forced a smile and cleared her throat before saying, "Morning, sunshine. It's after one in the afternoon."

The man stared at her openly but she didn't blame him. She was a stranger standing inside his bedroom. She wondered if he had a hangover. His eyes were open though, not narrowed as if the light hurt them and the room wasn't that dim. There was enough light for her could see clearly so he could too. She lifted a hand to give him a little wave.

"Hi. Are you with me or do you need some coffee? I can make some if you have it."

Slowly, the man moved. He pressed his hands on the bed to lift up. The sheet lowered dangerously to reveal the curve of his upper ass. If he wasn't careful he would lose it again. Her attention strayed there for a second before jerking up. He did have a fine ass. She met his gaze again.

She never expected that he could move that fast but in a heartbeat the guy sprang as if he were a panther. He pushed up, turned, and dived for her. A gasp was the only sound she made as thick fingers wrapped around her wrist and he jerked her hard. A

heartbeat later she found herself on her side across the bed with a naked man half on top of her. Inches above her hovered River Wind's face, his beautiful, dark gaze locked on her shocked face.

"Hello, baby. How the hell did I black you out? Since I can't remember, let's start over. You can refresh my memory of your name after I'm done fucking you."

Her mouth fell open and her mind refused to work for a second before his words sank in. She slammed her lips together, inhaling his scent. He smelled of some nice musky scent that she knew had to come from a bottle of cologne and pure male. She expected his morning breath to knock her out as his mouth inched closer to hers but he just smelled of whiskey. It wasn't unpleasant. She realized he was going to kiss her.

Brit got her hand between them right before his lips could touch hers. She gripped his lower face, her fingers covering his mouth, her palm curling around his jaw.

"No."

His eyelids narrowed as he studied her eyes. She couldn't look away from his beautiful, brown gaze. His mouth moved under her fingers. A hot, wet tongue traced the inner curve of her fingers. It was such a soft lick that it shocked and tickled a little. She jerked her hand away.

He grinned. "What? Was I that damn bad? If I'd known I'd pick you up, I wouldn't have gotten shitfaced. Give me a rematch and I'll make it all up to you if I let you down."

"I..." She swallowed. "I didn't spend the night with you. You and I, we've never had sex. Whatever you're thinking, think again. I'm Brit Sheril and I'm a physical therapist Dale Hass sent."

His grin turned into a frown. "Dale?"

"Yes. Do you want to let me go now?"

A black eyebrow arched as his gaze left hers. She watched him lower his attention to her body. She looked down and wanted to curse. She wore jeans with a black tank top. Since she'd ended up on her side when he'd yanked her down onto his bed it had pulled her shirt a little until the swell of her breasts were displayed nicely, thanks to her black pushup bra. Even the lacy center of her bra peeked from her shirt. Her focus lifted to watch a smile curve those lush lips of his.

She upgraded his looks instantly. With that grin he looked rugged and handsome. His mouth gave him a mean look until it curved upward.

"No. I don't want to let you go. I want to strip you down and fuck you. That would be the best physical therapy you could give me."

His words took her aback for a heartbeat or two as she stared into his eyes. "That's not my job."

"It could be. I could work you." His dark gaze lowered to her breasts again. "I could work you over and over."

"Stop that," she snapped. "Let go. I'm here to check on you. Dale said he heard you were hurt and I saw the swollen knee. Get the hell off me, Mr. Wind. I'm not some barfly you brought home. I'm a professional therapist who is here to assess your injuries, ordered to be here by my boss."

He took a deep breath, his chest close enough that when he did, his skin touched the swell of her breasts and made her aware of his warmth. She swallowed. Her body responded to him and it pissed her off. He had no right to talk to her that way and he sure shouldn't have yanked her into his bed.

"So you want me to pay you?" He frowned.

"Don't even. If you say what I'm afraid you're going to, just don't. I'm not a sex therapist. I don't fuck men for money but I've had a few jerks offer me that. I'll kick your ass."

A deep chuckle came from him. "You'll kick my ass? Baby, if you haven't noticed, I have you pinned down. What are you going to do? You look like you couldn't fight a strong wind."

"My name is Brit Sheril, not 'baby', Mr. Wind. Get the hell off me because I'm not amused."

"I could amuse you."

"You could get your whiskey-soaked ass off me."

His grin died and he grimaced while moving his face back a little. "Sorry. Do I smell bad?"

She hesitated. "Let me up. I'm here to assess your injuries. Is it just the knee?"

He blinked before he rolled back. Relief washed through her as she sat up slowly, inching away from him to rise to her feet. She turned around, instantly regretting it.

River Wind stretched out on his back watching her...with the sheet gone. Her focus flew down his body, unable to look away as she stared wide-eyed at him. She hadn't expected to see that.

He chuckled. "I'm really happy to see you."

Her gaze jerked away from the impressive hard-on. His thick cock had been circumcised and at that moment he seemed to be very turned on. The guy shaved his lower area. She couldn't miss that since his legs were spread enough to reveal everything to her. The guy had balls all right—shaved, heavy ones.

"I see that. Can you cover up, please? Morning wood isn't something I want to see."

"You said you wanted to assess me and you wanted to know where I hurt. There it is. That's where I'm aching." He scanned her body again as he lifted his arms, bending them behind his head to use his forearms for a pillow. "If you'd drop those jeans and climb on me, you could fix my pain real fast."

The sad part is, she thought, I'm tempted. The last guy she'd taken home had been a dud. Her memory skipped back five months to the wedding of a dear friend. Weddings were depressing when someone was thirty-five, single, and had no prospects. One of

the groom's friends had been blond, cute, and flirtatious. He'd also been a rotten lay, looked better in clothes than out of them, and hadn't been a tenth as tempting as the guy stretched out on the bed in front of her.

"There are condoms in the drawer built into the wall behind you."

She turned her head to glance at the drawers and a closet that were a little to the side of the door. She looked back at him. *Damn, he is fine looking.* As much as her libido was tempted, he had to be a saddle tramp, obviously used to getting his way with women and she'd seen his home. Hooking up with this guy would be a big mistake and she could lose her job. Not even fifteen minutes of the stud muffin on the bed would be worth that. She wasn't blowing the only employment she could find. With her past, no one but Dale would hire her.

"Where else do you hurt? I saw the knee. I'm definitely not helping you out with your..." She glanced at his erection. "So, are you hurt anywhere else?"

"My cock. My love stick. The joy toy. You can say it, baby."

"The name is Brit and if you keep it up, you can call me Miss Sheril."

"I can keep it up." He chuckled. "It's keeping it down that is the problem when someone as nice-looking as you is standing at the foot of my bed."

"You're a pig."

"Want to get dirty with me?" The insult amused him. "Oink, oink."

Sighing, she crossed her arms over her chest. "Look, Mr. Wind, I came here because Dale is worried about you. I'm not here for any other reason. He thought you were injured. If you don't want me to help you out with that knee or any other injuries you've sustained then I'm out of here."

"The only way you can help me out is by taking your clothes off."

"I tried but some people are just too stupid to take what is offered. Have a nice day and keep the ice on the knee. If you change your mind, give Dale a call. He'll send out someone else to help you." She turned and walked out of his room.

"Brit?"

She stopped, slowly turning around as he sat up. His beautiful brown eyes locked with hers. "I'll behave and I am in pain. My shoulder is screwed up too."

She took a step toward him, her gaze scanning his naked body and cringed at how much she wanted him. He had the best body she'd ever seen and that generous hard-on was definitely the biggest she'd ever seen. Brit was losing her mind. If she had a brain she'd flee. The sexy guy was trouble.

He smiled as she walked back into his room. She turned toward the closet and jerked it open to stare at his clothes. He owned a lot of jeans, a few jeans jackets, and enough flannel to make a few sets of sheets for his big bed.

"What are you looking for?"

"Some shorts."

"You want to get out of your jeans?" He chuckled. "You don't need any clothes."

She bit back a curse, reaching down to the drawers.

"The condoms are on the top to the left. Just lift the briefs."

She jerked open the drawer on the top and grabbed a pair of navy boxer briefs. She slammed the door shut, turned, and hit his chest with the underwear. He grabbed at them, a large, tan hand closing over the small piece of material.

"Put those on if you want me to stay. I refuse to continue this conversation with you naked. Didn't anyone ever tell you it's rude to point?"

His looked at his exposed lap. A grin curved his lips as his gaze met hers. He shrugged. "Tell it to him. He's just aiming for what he really wants."

Rolling her eyes, Brit crossed her arms over her chest again and stared at him. "Don't tell me you named it."

"All men do. I bet you named your girls."

She glanced down at her cleavage and then met his gaze again. "I did."

"What names did you give them?"

She smiled at him, sliding her hands up her waist to cup each breast. "This one," she squeezed it, "is Off. And this one..." she squeezed the other one, "is Limits. Put that together and you get what they are telling you." Her hands dropped. "Now get your cute ass up and put on some clothes."

He grinned. "I love feisty."

"Then you're really going to love me. Now get your ass up, put something on, and stop giving me a hard time." She wanted to groan the second the words were out of her mouth. Her gaze jerked down his body to that rock-hard erection. "No pun intended," she added quickly before she spun away. "I'm going to go retrieve my bag from the car. When I get back, I want something covering you from your bellybutton to your thighs."

He chuckled as she walked away. She had reached the door when he called out, "You could cover me from my bellybutton to my thighs."

She smiled. He was persistent in a cute kind of way. She turned and stared down the hallway at him. "Do you want me to make you hot, cowboy?"

"I sure do."

She winked. "Then I'll be right back." She'd give him hot all right. The cream she used to rub into sore muscles would heat him right up.

Chapter Two

"Damn it, that's not what I had in mind." River Wind gave her a dirty look, trying to inch away from her.

She grinned. "Man up, cowboy. You got hurt how?"

He glared. "Keep away from me with that shit. I don't like those creams. I know what they do."

"It's just a little white tube. It will help with the swelling and pain. It's just a little ole cream that is going to help you. You rode a bull, right? Most of Dale's friends are rodeo idiots."

His dark gaze narrowed and his lips weren't smiling anymore. "Idiots?"

"You heard me." She regarded him with a smirk. "How smart is it to climb onto a wild beast that is big enough to kill your ass if it gets you under it?"

"It's a sport."

"It's insane. Now lie down. I'm a trained professional and I'm certified to give you massages and I'm going to rub this into your knee. Dale told me your history and it's in your file. I'm sure you've had rubdowns before with some of the injuries you've sustained."

"Yeah. I've had them in the past and that's why you're not getting near me with that crap." He backed up into the corner of his bedroom with nowhere else to go. "So put it down."

A blonde eyebrow lifted. "Do you need a pacifier to suck on?"

Amusement lit his dark-brown eyes as they lowered to her chest. "The only nipple I want to suck is either Off or Limits."

She smiled. "Dream on. Now stop hiding in the corner. Don't make me come after you. If you think you're the only difficult patient I've ever had, think again. Have you met Dale's friends?"

"Met them hell, I was raised with them." He continued to frown. "I don't want that stuff put on me. It is all cool at first and then it starts to burn. Don't you have any pills I could take?"

"Well, that explains why you're ornery the way they are. No, I don't have pills and the cream works faster. It's just a little burning sensation at first but then it will help you. I'm good."

He smiled. "I bet you are."

Sighing, she tilted her head, staring at him. "Don't be such a baby and stop with the sexual shit. Do you really want to piss off the woman who is going to put her hands on

you where you're hurt? Now quit being such a pussy and man up. Get out of the corner or at least stick your thumb in your mouth so you have the whole two-year-old thing going on for you."

He took a deep breath, that broad chest of his expanding. "Your bedside manner sucks."

She grinned. "You just wish I sucked."

She couldn't believe she'd said that. Her grin died as she fought back a groan. Her attention managed not to dip to the front of his boxer briefs. She saw his eyes widen a little before they crinkled from his grin.

"That would motivate me to let you put that crap on me."

She ran her tongue over her lip. She wasn't above playing a little with the guy. She moved back from the bed into the hallway. Slowly, she lowered to her knees. She saw his eyes widen. She lifted her left hand, wiggling her finger at him.

"Come here."

His darkened gaze stared at her but he moved. He had to wiggle to get out of the tiny space he'd put himself into. Men never ceased to amaze her with the stupid shit they would do when they were horny. She licked her lips again, wetting them, as the man inched closer to stand in front of her, passion sparking his features.

"You'll do that if I let you rub the cream on my knee?"

"I have a life so I don't have all day to coax you out of the corner like some skittish kitten. Drop them, cowboy."

He grabbed the front of his briefs, jerking them down without hesitation, letting hard, aroused flesh spring free. He really did have a big cock. It was thick, hard, and red-tipped from need. It had to be the best one she'd ever seen, not that she'd seen enough to be a judge. She couldn't believe she had literally stooped to this level.

"Hands to yourself," she warned.

His eyebrows lifted. "Why?"

"Put your hands behind your back and don't touch me while I do this. I don't want to choke. You're pretty big."

While she spoke, she uncapped the tube. His attention focused on her face, not her hands. He put his arms behind his back, causing his chest to arch out a little. Brit lowered her gaze. *Damn, the man does have an impressive body*, she thought.

"Spread your legs wider."

He hesitated before doing it. She didn't go for his cock. She went for his inner thigh first. She ran her tongue along the sensitive skin, higher until her cheek brushed his cock. River sucked in air. Her lips turned to his hip, nibbling there. She'd lost her mind, she knew, but the guy was really tempting her to do something out of the ordinary. She'd never touched a stranger before and she had never thought she would either.

Pulling back, she gripped his briefs, which were trapped at his knees. She tugged and moved a little, pulling them down further to free up the swollen knee. Once she

worked in the medicated cream, allowed it time to numb him a little, she could massage the sore area. Just getting it on him though had to be tackled first.

"Legs together. Let's get these out of the way."

He moved. Her gaze traveled down his leg, fixing on his swollen knee when she curved a little around his limb while she pushed the material to his ankles with one hand. She released it to grab for a glove in her front pocket, donning it quickly, a pro at putting one on fast.

"Lift the left leg."

As he did it she squeezed a good amount of the cream into her gloved palm and wrapped it around his injured knee, massaging it into his skin gently just as he realized what she'd done. He cursed loudly when the medicated cream started to work, trying to get away. He fell back on the bed to land hard on his ass.

Getting to her feet, Brit grinned at him. "That wasn't so bad, was it?" She tore off the glove, careful not to touch the cream smeared on it.

Dark eyes watched her. "It's burning like a mother. You're not going to blow me, are you? You just wanted to trick me into putting that shit on me."

He sounded disappointed. Most guys would get angry over being tricked but not this one. It made her like him a hell of a lot. She knew the burning sensation he experienced faded as she watched his features relax as the cream soothed his injured knee and numbed it.

Her eyes lowered to the hard flesh sticking straight up. For five months she'd been alone. Five long, battery-operated months. He was so incredibly good-looking and his body was perfection. What were the chances, really, of ever coming across a guy who looked this good again? He was obviously a decent guy since he wasn't raging at her over being duped.

"Fuck it," she sighed. She reached for her shirt. "If you ever tell Dale, I'll kill your ass. He'll fire me. Got it? This never happened." She tore her shirt over her head. "Never. I'm a figment of your imagination."

He sat up. "I can live with that."

"I don't do strangers." She dropped her shirt to the floor, kicked off her slip-on shoes. "You better at least be worth me risking my job and hating myself tomorrow because I'm going to."

He climbed off the bed. He stood at least six foot one, she guessed as he looked down at her. "I promise you won't hate yourself. Not after what I'm going to do to you."

"Yeah, I've heard guys brag before. That's all it was."

He backed away from her, bent and yanked open the drawer to shove his folded briefs out of the way. She watched him yank out a box of condoms as she unzipped her jeans and tore them down her hips.

"You've never fucked me." His gaze held hers. "I know what the hell I'm doing."

Her eyes ran up and down him. A guy like him could have a lot of women and she figured he had. He probably knew a whole lot about sex. She hoped so since she'd decided to do something totally insane. She shoved off her panties last, standing naked at the door of his room. Her gaze rose to his.

"Okay, I'm not the experienced one. What do you want to do to me?"

He removed a condom and threw the box at the top of the bed. He never looked away from her eyes as he used his teeth to rip open the foil. She didn't look down but she saw his shoulders move as his hands rolled on the condom. In the next instant he reached for her.

She gasped when she went airborne. The guy had grabbed her and flung her none too gently on top of the bed, where she landed on her back. Staring up at him in surprise, she hoped she hadn't made a mistake by trusting the big guy. Her attention lowered to his condom-covered cock. He happened to be big everywhere and he could hurt her.

"Hey," he said softly.

She jerked her gaze up to his.

"I see fear and there's no reason for that. I'd never hurt you. Spread your thighs wide for me and grip your ankles to hold them."

She only hesitated a moment. He was a stranger who she'd never see again. Did it really matter if she exposed herself that intimately to him? *The hell with it*, she thought. She bent her thighs up against her chest and wrapped her hands around her ankles on the outside. She spread them open and exposed her pussy the way he'd asked.

His focus lowered. She watched passion grip his features, giving him rugged good looks. It turned her on more to watch him lick his lips as though he were seeing something he wanted really bad. He moved, his right knee hitting the bed.

She didn't miss the wince. She'd forgotten about his injuries. She released her ankles. "Your knee and shoulder—"

"I don't feel them right now." He put his other knee on the bed to bend over her.

His long hair fell forward, teasing her inner thighs. He dived face first right between her legs, totally shocking her. He gave no foreplay or warning before he just went for her pussy. Big, rough-textured hands gripped her at the junction of her thighs, spreading her sex lips open wide a second before a hot, wet tongue slid the length of her slit from pussy opening to clit and then back.

She jerked under him, surprised, before shock held her utterly still. His lips locked down around her clit. He sucked hard, his tongue sliding against the bud. The sensation of his firm tugs of suction with the force of pressure from his tongue were enough to make her cry out in rapture.

"Oh God," she moaned. "That feels—" She couldn't talk as more moans tore from her.

He had a merciless mouth. She writhed under him but he kept her pinned down, his hands not only keeping her apart for his teasing but he pushed down enough that his weight pressed her ass to the bed. She tried to buck but he was too strong, too heavy to lift. She could barely move in any direction.

The ecstasy became too intense. She squeezed her eyes shut and her hands frantically grabbed at her ankles again just for something to cling to. Brit threw her head back, mouth wide open, to let out a loud cry of pleasure as she started to climax hard. Her body jerked with each lash of his tongue against her clit.

She felt moisture flow from her. His mouth released her clit. Her body relaxed instantly except inside her pussy where she felt her muscles twitching still from the climax. The bed moved and hot-skinned, large-framed River Wind came down on top of her.

Her eyes opened in shock. The man had made her come harder than she ever had in her life. His dark eyes looked even darker to her as their gazes locked. He braced one hand next to her face, holding his weight mostly off her. She felt him nudge her pussy with the blunt head of his condom-covered cock a second before he started to push inside her.

A loud moan escaped her lips as the man pressed into her. She felt her body stretching to accommodate his thickness but he didn't give her time to adjust to him. He let his weight come down on her totally as he buried himself deep inside her pussy until his balls pressed against her anus. She enjoyed being full of one hard, aroused male. He sucked in a deep breath as he froze on her.

"Fuck, baby. You're so tight." His voice turned gruff. "I could come just by feeling you squeezed around me."

He moved, letting his other arm come down on the other side of her. His forearms braced next to her body and his hands gripped the curve of her shoulder to hold her in place. She stared up into a pair of sexy eyes, narrowed with passion. He bit his generous lower lip hard enough that it dented. He released it with his teeth and took a deep breath that made his chest move against her nipples.

"Tell me if I hurt you."

He withdrew almost completely from her body and then pushed back in. The sensation made Brit moan again. Her hands wedged between their chests. She gripped his shoulders, clinging to him. He spread his thighs a little, pressing the outside of his against the inside of hers. He used his knees on the bed for leverage and started fucking her hard and deep.

Brit turned her head to the side. Her legs moved, wrapping higher around his waist giving him freer access to her. He moved even faster. Her stomach quivered, her vaginal muscles clamping around his fast-moving cock, and her nails bit into his skin.

The guy could fuck like nobody's business. He felt good to Brit. He twisted his hips, adjusting the angle, as he drove in and out of her. Ecstasy washed through her as he

slammed against her G-spot. The sensation so good she wasn't sure she could take it. She also could feel a little pain but it happened to be the good kind.

River breathed hard, a few soft groans coming from his mouth. His head lowered so his mouth could fasten on the side of her throat. Teeth nipped her sensitive skin as he kept powering in and out of her body. She used her hold on his waist with her legs wrapped around him to move up to meet him as he drove down.

He suddenly released her neck and pushed up. One-handed, he braced his body, his hips never slowing the pace. He used his other hand to reach between them. Shock tore through her as the man pinched her clit between his index finger and thumb as he arched his back to reach her between their moving bodies. He tugged on her clit, rubbing.

Brit screamed as she came. Her climax hit her brutally, tearing through her body. Above her, River started cursing and groaning loudly. His hand tore away from her clit as he used both hands to brace his body up as he drove into her in jerking thrusts that slowed.

"Son of a bitch," he groaned when he stopped moving. He stayed buried inside her. "You just made my balls turn inside out."

Her muscles twitched around him as she shivered. Turning her head, she looked up at him. His features were flushed, his mouth parted, and his eyes narrowed. Sweat beaded his chest, upper lip, and forehead. His disheveled hair flowed freely past his shoulders. He had to be the sexiest sight she'd ever seen. Her muscles twitched around his cock again, causing her to softly gasp.

Slowly River withdrew from her body and she missed the feel of him instantly. She had nearly been fused to the man. He stared into her eyes as he separated their bodies, pushing away from her, almost like a pushup. He rolled then, away from her, to sprawl on the bed next to her on his back.

Brit turned her head to see River staring up at the ceiling with a frown curving his full lips down. He turned his head, meeting her curious gaze as they stared at each other. River moved first, tearing his look from her to sit up on the bed.

Brit stared at his broad back as he scooted down the bed and stood. She let her gaze drop, noticing again that River had an amazing ass. As he walked toward the hallway she saw muscles move in that fine ass, showing her he was really in shape. She saw him reach in front, heard him remove the condom, and then he turned into the bathroom.

What the hell had she done? The reality of it sank in. She'd just let a stranger go down on her and fuck her. She didn't know anything about the guy except he was a saddle tramp and a patient. *Shit!* She forced herself to move, almost jumping off the bed, her body feeling weak and shaky as she bent for her clothes. Her hands shook as she frantically tried to get dressed.

She heard water running in the bathroom sink, guessing he cleaned up. She knew some men did after removing a condom. She managed to get dressed but she couldn't get her shoes on fast enough. A naked River stepped out of the bathroom as she sat on

the bed to put them on, her knees too weak at that moment to support her. Movement as he stepped into the hallway made her jerk her head up.

River flashed a smile. "Damn, woman. That was incredible." His smile faded as he took in her dressed state. "You're leaving already? I thought we'd see if we could use up the entire box of condoms that I have left."

A speechless Brit gawked at him. She didn't do casual sex except for that wedding guy that had been a disaster. He'd called her for three weeks thinking she'd want a rematch of their one-night stand. She hadn't returned his calls once. At least River didn't know where she lived and he didn't have her cell phone number. She'd given wedding guy her numbers before taking him home with her, not realizing it would go that far.

"You okay?" His smile died. "I didn't hurt you, did I? You're not real big. My dad would have called you a little bit."

"I'm fine but I have to go." She was proud she got that much out.

The frown deepened. "So you're just going to fuck and run out on me?"

Her jaw dropped. *He so didn't just say that.* Anger sparked inside her. "Look, I didn't plan this. I mean...oh hell. I'm no good at this. I have to go."

"You mean you have to run away."

Her gaze lowered from his to the shoe gripped in her hand. She bent and shoved it on. She reached for the other one and put it on before she stood. Her head lifted. River blocked the hallway with his large, sexy, and very naked body. She swallowed.

"That muscle cream will help your knee. I'm leaving it here for you."

"My shoulder aches too."

She stared at him mutely.

"You're here to help me, right? Dale sent you? So help me. My shoulder really does hurt. Will you take a look at it?"

Her heart pounded. She wanted to flee but knew she couldn't. She nodded. "Have a seat. I can't see it if you're standing."

He stepped into the tiny room and almost walked into her. She stared up at him, realizing she didn't even reach his chin.

"No shit. I'd have to lift you for you to get a look at it."

She took a deep breath. "No short jokes, please."

A smile curved his lips. "Are you a little short on patience with the small jokes?"

"Very funny."

He inched closer until his chest pushed against hers. She gasped, instantly gripping his arms to keep from falling back as she stared up at him. He grinned down at her. At five foot two she was a little intimidated by the big man.

"You need to move if you want me to sit."

She backed up and bumped the bed with the back of her thighs. If she wasn't still gripping his arms just under his elbows she would have fallen onto it on her ass. She sidestepped him, releasing his arms. A chuckle from the man annoyed her when he sat down on the bed, spreading his thighs wide apart, and seemed oblivious that he was one hundred percent naked.

She darted a glance to his lap. He wasn't aroused anymore. He chuckled again, pulling her attention up to his face. Amusement lit his dark gaze. He reached up, gripped her hips and pulled her closer so she stood between his spread thighs, putting his face inches from her breasts.

"Look at my right shoulder. When I got tossed from the bull I hit it pretty hard on that side."

She could do this. She reached for his hair to discover the texture was as silky as it appeared. The strands lay in her palm as she brushed it back out of the way. Her other hand touched his arm just at the shoulder. She hesitated, her gaze meeting his.

"Can you tilt your head back? I need to lean in to get a good look."

He smiled but did it. He closed his eyes, letting his head fall back. She leaned into him to study his shoulder. Her fingers traced a swollen, bruised area, and she judged it had to be a few days old from the coloring. She ignored her fingernail scratches that were near the injury. She'd marked him during sex but hadn't drawn blood. She hoped they would fade within a few hours. She gripped the affected area, hesitating.

"This might hurt a little. I need to really feel to make sure it's not a serious injury so I have to dig in there to see if you did damage."

He took a deep breath. "Go ahead, baby. Do your worst. I'll just distract myself."

She frowned over his words but concentrated on his shoulder. Her fingers gently explored the swollen area, feeling for muscle damage. He tensed a little but didn't cry out in pain. That was good. She gasped a second later when he moved his arm, wrapping it tightly around her waist as his head lowered. He buried his nose between her breasts, nuzzling into the vee of her shirt.

"What are you doing?" She tried to jerk back but his arm tightened around her, locking her in place.

"Distracting myself." His voice muffled against her breast as he turned his head a little.

"Stop it." Her hands froze on him.

"Do your job," he mumbled as his teeth raked the side of her breast.

She took a deep breath. "It feels as though you're just bruised and you have a knot."

"Rub it out. I've had those before but no cream. Just your hands." His mouth turned. He open-mouth kissed the other side of her breast.

Her breathing rate increased. She nodded and tried to ignore his mouth but found it impossible to do, especially when his free hand reached up to grip her shirt and bra. He freed a breast with a strong tug, making her gasp.

River had her nipple in his mouth, suckling hard on her, and the sensation ran all the way down to her clit. His hand tore at her shirt, freeing her other breast. He pinched the other nipple between his finger and thumb. Brit's knees grew weak. If he wasn't holding her up by her waist she feared they would have totally collapsed under her.

He released her breast. "You aren't rubbing."

"Stop that. I can't think."

He chuckled. "Good. Rub my shoulder. I'm distracting myself."

"You're distracting me too."

"Rub my shoulder." He fastened his hot, wet mouth back on her breast. He sucked hard, getting a good grip on her while he worked her nipple.

Brit moaned. River could do amazing things to her. She forced herself to grip his shoulder and massage. She knew it had to hurt him. Considering what he did to her, she knew she was probably being too rough because she clutched onto him tightly. She decided it would be his fault if she caused him pain.

His hand left her other breast to claw at her jeans. She didn't stop him when he unzipped them and tore them down her thighs to her knees. He gripped the front of her panties next and with one strong tug, material tore. She was astounded, her hands froze, realizing he'd just ripped her panties off and tossed them away.

He released her nipple. "You stopped rubbing."

"Damn it, stop. I can't think. What are you doing?"

"This." He turned his head to her other breast. His hand slid between her thighs.

Her pussy was soaking wet when his fingers slid through her slit. She tried to spread her thighs but her jeans hobbled her. It didn't seem to matter because he pushed two fingers inside her pussy, pressing his thumb against her clit at the same time. He slowly started to fuck her with his thick digits, rubbing his thumb tightly against her sensitive bundle of nerves.

"Fuck," Brit gasped.

Her hips moved on their own without her meaning to wiggle against his hand. The feeling amazed her. Another moan tore from her. She didn't rub his shoulder anymore, instead her nails dug into his warm flesh, kneading it.

He released her waist. If she hadn't been hanging on to him tightly she would have fallen over. He leaned back a little. She saw his hand fist into the sheet on his bed. He jerked the sheet loose and dragged it toward them. She didn't know why he did that but she didn't care because his thumb drew circles on her clit. It felt so good she knew she'd come soon and she wanted to desperately.

The box of condoms came within reach. She watched him one-handedly tear into the box. Now it made sense why he'd just stripped his bed that way. He'd dragged the box closer by using the flat sheet. His mouth left her breast so he could tear the condom open with his teeth and then his mouth returned to her.

Her fingers went into his hair. She cradled his head as his mouth worked her nipple, nipping at it with his teeth and then suckling her. He shifted his lower body. River's thighs pressed against hers for seconds and then he stunned her by releasing her nipple as he jerked his fingers out of her pussy, his thumb leaving her clit. A protest tore from her lips in the form of a groan since she throbbed with the need to climax.

The groan turned into a gasp as River suddenly grabbed her waist with both hands. He stood, lifted her off her feet, and spun her around until she faced the bed but River wasn't between her and it anymore. He moved behind her.

He released her hips as he put her on her feet. One of his hands fisted in the back of her shirt while his other arm wrapped around her waist. She gasped as he forced her forward. Her hands shot out to brace on the bed as he bent her over where they stood. She saw his legs as he spread his thighs, putting his feet on the outside of hers.

He entered her from behind in one fast, hard thrust, his cock rigid and thick. His hand left her shirt. The arm around her waist lifted her a little, angling her better as he started to fuck her from behind in hard, deep thrusts that would have knocked her over if he wasn't holding her in his steady embrace. His other hand wrapped around her to dive between her thighs where he found her clit.

Moans tore from her as he pounded his hips against her ass, driving into her faster and causing havoc to her system. She couldn't tell pleasure from pain anymore. His fingers pressed against her clit, strumming furiously while he fucked her even faster.

Brit clawed the naked mattress with her fingernails, her eyes squeezed closed. She heard him panting behind her, the loud slap of skin hitting skin, and her broken cries filled the room at the overpowering rapture that built. Her inner muscles went nuts minutes later. A scream filled her ears and ecstasy gripped her as the climax tore through her so strongly she wondered if she would pass out or just die of a heart attack since her heart beat as though it would explode.

River shouted out. It wasn't a word, just a loud sound. He drove into her deep, his hips pressed tightly against her ass while he emptied his release into the condom inside her clenching body, still in the thrall of passion. His cock deep inside her felt similar to a clenching fist squeezing when he gasped over and over as more cum shot into the condom.

They stilled. Brit was horrified, knowing she'd been the one to scream. Her face flamed. She'd never screamed during sex in her life. Her throat actually hurt. She continued to pant, bent over his bed, with River's cock still buried inside her pussy. His arm remained locked around her waist, his motionless fingers still pressed against her clit. She could feel wetness down both her thighs from her release.

River chuckled. "If I let you go, are you going to run this time?"

"Shit. I screamed. Will your neighbors call the cops, thinking I'm being killed?"

That's the last thing she needed. The idea of the cops showing up and having to explain what had happened between them had Brit flinching inside. She'd die of embarrassment.

"Have you seen my neighbors?" He laughed. "The guy next door has enough weed in his place that he's living outdoors. The woman on the other side is a hooker. She's got men in and out all the time. Some of them like to spank her and make her scream out weird shit unless she's really screwing guys with the biggest dicks ever. Nobody is going to care if we get a little loud."

Relief swamped Brit that the cops wouldn't come. She didn't think much of his neighbors though. It was a good thing he had criminals living on each side of him under the circumstances.

"Are we going to stay this way all day?" She opened her eyes, staring at the old mattress, seeing that he needed a new one. She used one hand to shove her breasts back in her bra and tugged up the front of her shirt to cover them.

"Are you going to run? I happen to love fucking you. I'd like to do it again and again. What else are you doing today that sounds better than that?"

She silently cursed. "I won't run. Will you let me up now?"

He slowly withdrew from her body. She straightened, turning to stare at River Wind. The guy amazed her in bed. She'd never had a man make her feel the way he did. *Hell, I've never had a guy make me come the way he just did*, she thought. Their gazes met and held.

"You're staying, right?"

She nodded. "Sure."

He grinned. "Let's shower."

"Go ahead. I have to call and make some excuses to other patients."

"I am going to fuck you in the bathroom up against the wall."

She watched him bend over to grab up a condom from where they had spilled on the mattress after he'd torn open the box. She smiled. "Sounds fun."

He winked. "I'll wash your back if you wash mine."

"I'll be right there."

He turned and strutted naked out of the tiny bedroom the few feet to the bathroom. "I have to close the door or the water will hit the hallway. Just squeeze in when you're done with your calls and you're ready to join me." His sexy gaze met hers, a grin on his lips. "Hurry."

She kept the smile in place. "I'll be right there."

He walked into the bathroom and firmly closed the door. She heard water a second later. Brit yanked up her jeans and zipped them with shaking hands. She bent, grabbed her bag, and made a run for it.

She got to her car, slid behind the wheel and just tossed her bag on the passenger seat. Her hands shook as she shoved the key into the ignition. Her focus locked on the old trailer but River never came after her. She imagined him in the shower still waiting for his fuck of the day to come play.

She backed away and didn't relax until she hit the highway.

"What the hell did I do?"

She groaned. If Dale ever found out he'd fire her and she needed her job. He'd ordered her to get his friend up and about. She'd definitely gotten him "up" all right but she knew that was not exactly what the boss had in mind when he'd given her that order.

Chapter Three

Brit stared at her boss Dale, alarmed. "What?"

He frowned at her. "You heard me. Explain yourself now."

"I..." She panicked inside. He'd called her into the office first thing in the morning in a glowering mood, slammed the door behind him, and had nearly broken his chair when he'd slumped down into it hard, glaring at her.

"Damn it, Brit. I really put my neck out giving you a job and you damn well know it. The least you could have done was give me a warning."

Warn him? Shit. That double-crossing son of a bitch River Wind must have bragged to his friend that he'd seduced her yesterday. She knew it had been a bad idea, having sex with that saddle tramp. Heat flushed her features and she threaded her fingers together in her lap as she stared at the very irate Dale. She swallowed hard, trying to think up a way to explain why she'd fucked River.

"I..." No words came to her.

"His parole officer called me this morning to give me a warning. You should have just told me, damn it."

"Parole officer?" Shock tore through her. *River is on parole? Oh dear God*, she thought, *what did he go to prison for?*

"Yeah. They are releasing Kyle tomorrow."

Her heart nearly stopped inside her chest as terror gripped her, all thought of River Wind gone. *This is about Kyle.* She felt the blood drain from her face and softly whimpered. Dizziness weaved through her for an instant, threatening to make her pass out.

Dale stared at her and then cursed. "You didn't know?" His tone softened. "Well, shit. They didn't tell you? I thought they called you to warn you and you didn't see fit to tell me. He's getting out tomorrow. They are releasing him early for good behavior or some such shit."

"Oh God."

Dale shifted in his chair. "It's going to be all right, Brit. We'll handle this."

She shook her head as she stared at him. "I quit. This isn't your problem. I'm so sorry to leave you on short notice but—"

"Like hell," he snarled. "I took you on knowing the risks. I made a few calls while I waited for you to come in. I got you a new job that will last you a good month and it's on a ranch so he won't find you. I'm not telling anyone where you're going and I'm not

going to leave a paper trail so if he breaks into my office he won't be able to find out a thing."

Shock slammed through her as she just stared at him.

"I take care of my own," Dale told her softly. "We both know that bastard isn't going to last long on the outside and he'll do something stupid to fuck up his parole. I'd give it less than a month before he's back in prison so that's the plan. You're going to go to your apartment, pack a bag and..." He opened his drawer, reached in, and pulled out a piece of paper. "Go to this address but leave your cell phone in your apartment. These are old friends of mine and I have the home phone number there. Don't tell anyone where you're going and make sure you don't leave behind that paper or write it down anywhere."

Brit blinked back tears as she stared at her boss. "Why are you doing this for me?"

He took a deep breath. "Because I had a daughter once, you remind me of her, and nobody saved her when she needed it." He looked a little teary-eyed as he cleared his throat. "She got involved with the wrong crowd and I didn't know it because she lived with her mother out in Washington State. The police called to tell me she'd been killed by her abusive boyfriend. Now get your ass up, go pack your shit, and lose your cell." He stood and reached for his back pocket, pulling out his wallet. "Here's your pay for the next month so you have cash."

She was astounded. It took her a long minute to straighten on shaky legs as Dale shoved a wad of cash at her. His intense gaze locked with hers. "Remember, leave your cell phone, don't call anyone from the ranch, and whatever you do, don't use anything that can be traced back to you, like a bank card."

"I know the drill." She took the cash, not even checking the amount. "Thank you, Dale. I owe you."

"Survive this asshole and when he's locked up again just return to work for me. No more running away, okay? Strangers don't give a damn about you but I consider you one of mine and that means I watch out for you, little girl. Now get your ass to the Raine ranch pronto and stay there."

"What kind of patient am I looking at? I want to be prepared."

Dale hesitated. "Well, there really isn't one but you've got experience with horses and it's a horse ranch. They'll find something for you to do."

"Oh, Dale..."

"Shut up and get the hell out of here. They really do need the help and they owe me some favors, just like I owe them some, so we don't keep track anymore. They know you're coming but I didn't tell them anything about you, just that you needed to lie low somewhere, and to keep their mouths shut that you were on the ranch. They are good folks. You'll be safe there. Get going so you can arrive before dark. I want you safely tucked in at their ranch by nightfall."

Impulsively she threw herself against the big ole softy and hugged him around his thick waist. "Thank you."

He patted her back. "Get the hell out of here and I'll call you when that worthless son of a bitch gets tossed back into prison. Don't you call anyone, got it? I'll call you."

She nodded, knowing she wet his shirt with the tears that squeezed out. She released him and spun, fleeing his office quickly. She shoved the wad of money into her purse and left the outer office, not taking the time to even say goodbye to anyone. She drove to her sorry apartment and quickly packed two bags.

The instructions Dale had written out were clear. The ranch was located five hours away. She only stopped twice for gas, food, and bathroom breaks. She found the Raine ranch easily enough an hour before darkness fell. She couldn't miss the big sign. Turning onto the driveway she had to drive almost a mile before a large two-story ranch house came into view.

Nervousness gripped her about staying with strangers—people she knew nothing about—as she climbed out of her car. She hoped they'd like her. Brit knocked on the door after not spotting a doorbell. In less than a minute the door opened to reveal a pregnant blonde woman who smiled at her warmly.

"Hi. I'm Trina Raine and you must be Dale Hass' friend, Brit." The woman held out her hand. "It's nice to meet you."

Brit shook the woman's hand. "Thank you so much for putting me up."

"Hey, any friend of Dale's is a friend of ours." The woman ushered her in. "Come on in. I'll show you to one of the bedrooms. I will apologize now for the décor you're going to get but they are all men's rooms except the nursery my husband has painted and I doubt you'd want to sleep with teddy-bear walls." She chuckled, rubbing her rounded stomach. "We just found out we're having a boy and my husband Navarro is over the moon about it."

Smiling, Brit noticed the large living room had a warm, welcoming feeling to it. "That's great. Is this your first?"

"Yes for both of us. I'm sorry that Navarro isn't here. He and his brother Ryder are away until tomorrow morning. They had to pick up some new breeding stock. We breed and sell horses. Adam and Trip are around somewhere so if you need any help with your belongings I can call them on their cell phones. They don't live in the house but they have their own mobile homes on the ranch."

"I only brought two bags. If you show me where to put them I can get them myself."

Trina nodded. "Navarro and I live in the house with one of his brothers. His name is Ryder and watch out for him." She laughed, her gaze taking Brit in. "He's going to be after you big-time but just smack him down. He's harmless but a huge flirt." She led the way upstairs, down a hallway, and stopped in front of one of the closed doors. "This is another brother's room but he's never here and he doesn't come to visit so you can have it during your stay." She swung the door open. "I'd give you another room but Dusty is expected to show up this weekend and Drake, the other brother, well, he has a way of just surprising us lately."

"Wow. Are there a lot of brothers?"

"There are five in all, plus Adam and Trip, who are blood brothers to the Raines. They were all raised together."

Brit walked into the bedroom and her eyebrows rose as she stared at the large four-poster bed, heavy matching dresser, and the nightstands, all dark wood. The walls had been painted black and all kinds of cowboy stuff hung there.

"Sorry," Trina laughed. "I know it's bad. He is really into the cowboy way."

"It's fine." Brit turned to smile at her hostess. "It's great. Thank you."

Nodding, the woman smiled. "Make yourself at home. I'm going to make some soup. Are you hungry?"

"Please. If you give me ten minutes to bring in my stuff I'll help you."

"The kitchen is downstairs to the left. You can't miss it. Welcome to the Raine ranch."

"Thank you. Whatever I can do here, just tell me. I'm pretty handy."

"I'll let Navarro and Ryder figure that out with you, but again, I'll warn you about Ryder. He's in a band most of the year but he's been home for some months and well, he's a player. Just watch yourself with him. He's cute, he knows it, and he could charm a nun out of her habit."

Laughing, Brit nodded. "I got it but don't worry about me. I'm good at handling unwanted advances."

"Good." Trina laughed as she left Brit to stand alone in the room.

Brit studied the furnishings and sighed. This would be her home for the next month. It was a big room and the bed was monstrous in size. She glanced at it and then turned away and went back downstairs to her car. She took out her bags and carried them to the room. The dressers were empty but the closet was full of jeans, T-shirts, and a few jackets. She decided to just use the dresser as she quickly unpacked her things. She wasn't the kind of woman who used hangers anyway.

She found Trina in the kitchen with two large bowls of clam chowder and some dinner rolls. "I really appreciate this and I'll do the dishes."

"There's no need."

"I insist."

"Okay. I won't argue because I get worn out easily. I am finding that age and pregnancy don't mix well."

"You don't look old."

"I'm thirty-nine."

"Wow. I thought you were younger than me. I'm thirty-five."

Trina glanced at her hands. "Not married?"

Hesitating, Brit bit her lip.

"I'm sorry if that was out of line. I'm from California and my husband keeps telling me that people are more private back here and I have a way of asking questions that you probably consider rude."

Shaking her head, Brit smiled. "It's all right. I once married but I'm divorced now." Her smile faded. "It turned into kind of a nightmare marriage that went bad from the get-go and turned worse, then outright hellish."

"I'm sorry. Any kids?"

"God no." Brit shivered. "If I'd had a child, he never would have let me go." She hesitated. "I had to get restraining orders. He turned out to be really bad news."

"Damn, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up a bad thing."

"You didn't know so don't worry about it." She hesitated. Part of her wanted to confess why she needed to hide there but as she looked into the sweet face of the pregnant woman she changed her mind, not wanting to see horror on the other woman's expression. Fear that Trina would kick her out if she shared the entire story also factored into her silence. "It's all behind me now so it's all good."

"I'm glad. I met my husband last year. Maybe you'll meet a nice guy and try it again with the right man this time."

"Never." Brit shook her head. "Once was more than enough. I date occasionally but I never want to get too serious about a man again."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Me too," Brit sighed. What she didn't say was she knew she could never get remarried even if she wanted to. "So how did you end up in Texas from California? No offense but I hear the weather is much better there."

"My first husband died in a fire at work and I came here to start over fresh." Trina smiled. "And that's when I met the love of my life. Navarro is the best thing that ever happened to me."

"I'm sorry for your loss but glad you met your new husband."

"Thank you. I thought I'd never get over Ted's death but I did." She smiled. "Never say never when it comes to loving again."

They spent the next two hours talking, getting to know each other, and then Trina excused herself to go to bed early. She planned to call her husband to say good night and then go to sleep. Brit locked up the house, cleaned up their dishes, and then turned off all the lights.

Upstairs she got some of her belongings and walked across the hallway to the bathroom to shower. She just wore towel certain that her and Trina had the house alone for the night. Afterward, she walked back to her bedroom and quietly shut the door, though Trina's bedroom was far down the hallway.

She put on a hockey jersey that she enjoyed sleeping in. She brushed out her wet hair and glanced around the room. The room didn't have a television but there were a few books in the far corner. Putting down her hairbrush, she chuckled as she walked

toward them, wondering what the cowboy preferred to read. Shocked, she stared at the bindings of the books.

She read them twice and then laughed out loud. She pulled out the volume on women's anatomy and opened it, reading the list of chapters and laughed again, then shoved the book back. The cowboy had books on sex, women's pleasure spots, and "how to" books on pleasing women. The only book on the shelf not in that category was about horses, breeding, and horse doctoring.

She sighed and walked to the bed. She actually had to climb onto the tall bed. Whoever this guy was, he had to be tall, had a thing for learning how to be a great lover, and as she scanned the room, she decided he had masculine taste in decorating. If it was any more butch there would be some whips on the wall and maybe a mechanical bull in the corner. Lying back, she stared up at the black canopy. It took her seconds to realize the material stretched across the four posts looked suspiciously like leather. It just verified to her that the owner of the room really took living on a ranch a bit too far with his cowboy decorating theme.

Something silver caught her attention near the corner of a post. She frowned, sat up, and then stood on the bed to reach it. It looked as though a piece of shiny metal was tucked into the black material of the canopy. As her fingers brushed the cool metal it slid toward her and she gasped as the entire thing fell out and clanked against the bedpost to which it was anchored.

Handcuffs hung from a chain. She had to close her mouth, which had dropped open. The handcuff almost reached the mattress. The chain must be locked in place somewhere above the canopy, out of sight. She moved, walking on the bed to another corner, and reached up to feel in the folds. She felt metal. She moved the material a little and another handcuff fell out to hang by another thin chain.

"Oh my God!" She laughed.

She turned, walked to another post, and examined the corner. She found another hidden in the folds, but didn't mess with that one, just left it alone and walked to the last of the four posts. She reached up, this time not surprised to feel what she found hidden there. The guy had handcuffs and chains on each corner of his bed.

She managed to get the two fallen handcuffs and roll the chains up and place each back in their hiding places. This brother had a fetish for kinky shit to have that stuff attached to his bed. She was curious, wondering what else he was into. She got off the bed and then hesitated before dropping to her knees. She lifted the tailored bed skirt and peered underneath. She saw a duffel-size bag under there and reached for it.

It was heavy as she dragged it out slowly. She got it flat and found the zipper, eased it open enough to see handcuffs, a few whips, some things she couldn't even identify with Velcro and straps, and another smaller bag that she unzipped. Sex toys, still sealed in their wrappers and boxes, but each was clearly marked. Nipple rings, a cock clamp, and various vibrators in different sizes and shapes.

She sat there on the floor with the toys spread out around her and laughed. She laughed hard until her sides hurt. The guy was one kinky cowboy. She put it all back carefully and shoved the bag back in place.

“And I thought I was bad for keeping romance novels stashed under my mattress as a kid,” she whispered.

She laughed again as she got to her feet, shaking her head in amusement. She hoped the kid’s parents never found that shit. Maybe that had been the reason he didn’t come home anymore. If her parents had found that kind of stuff under her bed she could never face them again.

She turned off the light and climbed back up on the big bed. Pushing back the covers she found another surprise awaited her. Kinky Cowboy brother liked silky sheets. They were the good kind too—thick, expensive, and cool to the skin. She grinned as she slid between them. She’d always wanted a set of these sheets but had never dared buy them. She hesitated and then removed her jersey, placing it on the bed next to her, then lay down and pulled up the sheets.

She wiggled her naked body against the wonderful silky sheets. It was a great feeling to have her bare skin against them, even better than she’d imagined. Her eyes closed as she stifled a yawn. She was worn out and hadn’t slept well the night before after her encounter with the motor-home guy. She’d let a stranger fuck her, and worse, she’d enjoyed it. She could see River Wind’s face in her mind and she hated that the memory of him turned her on as her body responded.

“Damn,” she sighed, turning on her side.

She forced herself to think about anything but the guy who’d rocked her world. Eventually her body relaxed. She appreciated the incredibly comfortable mattress and the sheets were pure heaven against her skin. She yawned and finally drifted off to sleep.

* * * * *

She was disorientated when light in the bedroom woke her. She lay on her stomach and her leg brushed something soft when she moved it—silk slid against her thigh. She lay in a strange bedroom. Memory returned as she awoke more. *Is it morning already?*

“Damn,” a male voice almost growled. “Are you and Navarro fighting? Damn it, Trina. If I didn’t know that Navarro would kick my ass and castrate me I’d climb in there with you and show you what I do to women I find in my bed. Get up, sweetie, and get back into bed with your husband.”

Brit tensed, her eyes opening wide. That voice was real and he thought he spoke to Trina. They both were about the same size, with blonde, curly hair. She swallowed, afraid to lift her head to look at whoever shared space in the bedroom with her.

“Come on, pregnant mama. Get your cute ass out of my bed. I’m tired and I’ve been on the road far too long. If you don’t get up, I’m coming in there with you, Navarro be

damned. I won't touch you but he might not believe me if he wakes up in the morning and finds us in bed together."

Something about that voice... She frowned and then lifted her head and had to blink a few times to adjust to the bright overhead lights. She glanced at the bedside clock, saw it was three in the morning, and then turned her head toward the door.

Shock paralyzed her as she stared at a face she thought she'd never see again. A pair of equally shocked dark brown eyes stared back at her.

"You!" River Wind hissed.

Her mouth dropped open. "River?"

He was dressed in a pair of jeans and a tank top. His black hair had been pulled back into a ponytail but she had no doubt it was River Wind. Her mind went totally blank as she started into his stunned features, which probably mirrored her own. He blinked.

"What are you doing in my bed? What the hell are you doing in my home, Fuck And Run?"

She turned over and nearly lost the covers, barely remembering her nakedness. She grabbed at them but not before she probably flashed him a bare breast when she sat upright, gawking at him.

"Your home?"

He took a deep breath and then another one. "Yeah. This is my family home. What the hell are you doing here?"

"Did you call me Fuck And Run?"

"Yeah. It's what you did." He frowned. "I'm waiting to hear what the hell you're doing here."

"This is the Raine ranch."

"My real last name is Raine but I use my mother's name while I'm working. My older brother was famous and I wanted to make a name for myself on the rodeo circuit so I didn't want to be associated with him." He took a step toward the bed and then stopped. "Now tell me what you're doing in my house and in my bed."

"Dale sent me here."

They stared at each other for a long minute. She looked away from him to see a backpack on the floor by the closed bedroom door. He lived here, his real last name had to really be Raine, and she sat on his bed. Stunned didn't begin to cover her emotions.

"That fucking Dale," River finally cursed. "When I called him he told me I needed to get my ass home pronto. That bastard set me up."

"You? What about me? Did you tell him what happened between us?"

He frowned. "Hell no. Did you? Is that why he sent you to me? I'm not rich so if you're a buckle bunny, forget it."

Furious, she said, "You think I came here knowing this house belonged to you? You conceited bastard. I thought your last name was Wind. I wouldn't be here if Dale had said I was going to be visiting a family by the name of Wind. I had no idea – none – that you were associated with the Raine family."

"Then who is hurt? Who is your patient?" He crossed his arms over his chest.

"Nobody. I needed to get out of town for a while and Dale said he knew a family that could put me up so he sent me here to help them around their ranch. I know a little about horses."

Dark brown eyes narrowed dangerously and his lips twisted into a harsh frown. "So you say you're a physical therapist but you're here without a job? Are you a therapist or a horse wrangler? Make up your mind."

"What I am is out of here." She scooted to the edge of the bed and then realized she was naked, baring a leg first as she attempted to slide off the bed. "Fuck!" She froze, clutching at the covers, and turned to grab her jersey. It wasn't where she'd left it so her gaze scanned the bed frantically but she didn't find it. "Where the hell did you put my shirt?" Her head snapped around to shoot a glare at River.

"Me?" His black eyebrows shot up. "I just walked into my own room. I didn't touch your shirt."

Biting back another curse, she looked at the bed again—her shirt was not on it—then gritted her teeth. She took a deep breath before turning to face the man she'd hoped to never see again. He watched her, his arms still crossed over his chest.

"Could you please turn around and leave so I can get dressed? Give me a few minutes and I'll pack up my stuff and get out of your room. I'll leave the ranch while I'm at it. If I'd known this family belonged to you then there's no way in hell I'd be here. As for your 'buckle bunny' accusation, I know what they are and I think you rodeo guys are idiots, remember? I sure wouldn't want to chase you."

He didn't budge, instead his lips curved upward. "Sorry about that comment but I'm tired. I haven't been in the best of moods and I am surprised to find you in my room." He paused. "You pissed me off when you cut and run on me. You still owe me a massage and you are in my bed."

Her mouth dropped open as River toed off his boot, his hands going for his waist to lift up his shirt to show her his muscled, tan stomach as the material rose higher. He totally jerked the tank top over his head and tossed it to the floor as he removed his other boot. His socks followed.

"You did come all this way for a repeat and you did fuck and run on me so who am I to say no to you?"

"Are you kidding me? You think –"

"You followed me here knowing I'd agreed to go home, got here before I did, and helped yourself to my bed." He chuckled. "And here I thought coming to the ranch would be as boring as hell."

With a sense of disbelief, Brit watched the man unzip his jeans. If he thought she'd repeat her crazy behavior, he had a serious reality check coming his way. She refused to look down as he shimmied out of his pants, keeping her gaze locked with his.

Though she tried not to, Brit glanced down his body...and verified his nakedness. What a body he had. He looked just as good as she remembered, maybe even better, and his lower half was definitely "up" to climbing into bed with her.

She became momentarily distracted by a very thick, large, erect cock that pointed straight out toward her, a lot of tan, muscular flesh, and the kind of abs that made her want to lick them. Brit pulled her attention away from his body and glared into his face.

"If you try to climb into bed with me, I'll castrate you."

River grinned at her. "You could try, Fuck And Run."

"Stop calling me that!"

"You fucked and ran." He chuckled. "If the name fits..." He chuckled again, slowly inching toward the bed.

"I'll scream."

White teeth flashed. "I'm kind of betting on that since, if you don't, I should be ashamed of myself. I love hearing you howl out in pleasure, baby."

Panic hit as he closed the distance between them, slowly stalking toward her with a panther's grace. She blurted out the first thing that came to mind to try to halt his progress. She knew if he put his hands and mouth on her, she would be a goner. She didn't want to repeat having a one-night stand—though it had technically been daytime—with a stranger. She'd been out of her mind the day before and she wasn't going to ever make that mistake again.

"I'm not on the Pill and you don't have condoms."

His dark gaze narrowed. "I mean it, Fuck And Run. You flee this time and I'll chase you down now that I know you're a rabbit. There are always condoms in the house. I'll be right back."

She swallowed and forced a nod. He turned, butt-ass naked, and what a nice ass it was too, scar and all, on that firm, rounded ass cheek. She watched him leave. He seemed not to care if he did run into Trina without his clothes on as he closed the door behind him.

Brit moved fast, shoving off the covers, and ran around the bed. Her jersey had slid off the other side of the bed to the floor. She bent to jerk it over her head and then ran for the bedroom door. She knew damn well it had a lock since she'd seen it earlier but hadn't bothered to use it since she was alone in the house with just another woman. With a grin she, turned the lock and slid the extra bolt that had been installed on the door.

She fought a laugh as, half a minute later the doorknob turned, but the lock held. It jiggled again but didn't budge. River softly cursed from the other side of the door.

"Let me in, damn it. I'm naked out here."

"No way in hell. You can huff and puff but that's one solid door. That's the great thing about these old houses." She tapped on it to be sure, relieved at the solid-wood sound. "Real thick doors."

"Damn it, open it up now. This isn't funny. You have my clothes in there." He jiggled the handle again. "Let me in, woman."

Hurt washed through her. "You don't remember my name, do you? That's why you keep calling me Fuck And Run, baby, and now woman."

"I remember it."

She crossed her arms over her chest and leaned against the door. "I'll tell you what, River. You say my name and I'll unlock the door. Hell, I'll get on my knees and blow you for real this time. What's my name?"

"Son of a bitch," he growled. "Okay, you got me. I don't remember it but let me in to get my clothes at least."

"Good night, River."

She closed her eyes, keeping her back to the door. On the other side she heard him ground out a string of curses. She worried he'd try to kick the door in but then she heard something that made her eyes fly open.

"Hello? Nav? Is that you? Are you home?" Trina's voice drew closer.

"Son of a bitch," River cursed. "Fuck."

She heard bare feet pound as he ran, probably into one of his brother's rooms to find clothes.

Chapter Four

The son of a bitch didn't remember her name. Brit fumed while she showered early the next morning, washing her body a little too roughly but not caring. Did he sleep with so many women that he couldn't remember one name? It burned that it had to be hers he couldn't remember, though she'd just had sex with him the day before last.

He hadn't returned to try to get into his room last night because Trina had come looking and she'd heard him yelling at her to not come into Dusty's bedroom. That's where he'd fled to, probably to steal his brother's clothes. In minutes he'd met Trina in the hallway and Brit had listened to them chat for a few minutes. Trina seemed happy to have him home then they'd walked away to go to the kitchen for a middle-of-the-night snack.

The shower door was suddenly yanked open, the smoky-black, frosted-glass door creaking on its hinges, and it startled Brit so bad that she nearly fell. She spun around to face whoever had picked the bathroom lock to get inside.

River wore jeans and nothing else. His hair fell wet, just past his shoulders and he grinned down at her, letting his gaze take in every wet inch of her exposed body. She gasped, grabbed her breasts in her hands, and twisted her body sideways, lifting her leg a little to try to hide.

"Morning, Brit, darlin'." He winked. "You enjoy that there shower while I'm busy removing the locks on my bedroom door? Oh yeah," he chuckled, bringing up his hand from behind his back, shaking her key ring. "Try to leave without a car. You can have these back just as soon as I nail you." His sexy dark eyes sparkled with amusement as his gaze lowered. "And it will be soon."

"You son of a bitch, give me my keys right now." She couldn't lunge for them without letting go of her breasts.

He spun around, used his bare foot to close the shower door, and in seconds she heard the bathroom door slam as he left the room. Rage hit her hard. The bastard had her car keys and had thrown down the gauntlet to her while taunting her with them. She had to fight the urge to scream and punch the tile wall as she finished rinsing out the hair conditioner super fast. In minutes she dried off and dressed, then stormed out of the bathroom. She decided she might have to kill the bastard, take her keys, and leave right after saying goodbye to Trina, just the way she'd planned to do after discovering it was River's home.

He wasn't in the bedroom. She checked the doorknob first and sure enough, it had been replaced with one without a lock and the bolt had been removed, leaving two holes in the place where it had been, just mocking her.

She wanted to scream, stomp on the floor, and hit something. Instead she jerked the door open and headed down the hallway barefoot, in search of the bastard. She didn't care if they ended up having this fight in front of Trina but she figured he'd retreated downstairs to use his poor sister-in-law as a shield, mistakenly assuming that Brit wouldn't cause a scene. He'd discover his error real soon.

The smell of bacon, eggs, and biscuits greeted her on the stairs. It made Brit's stomach growl from hunger, though she was madder than hell. She followed her nose and headed for the kitchen, guessing that's where the asshole would be waiting for her. As she walked into the room she saw him standing in front of the fridge, bent over a little, peering inside. He'd put on a black tank top but was still barefoot. He'd taken the time to pull his wet hair into a ponytail that trailed midway down his back.

Trina was at the stove cooking but Brit ignored her. She moved straight for her target. When she stopped behind him she reached out and tapped him hard on his slightly bent back. As he rose she figured he'd smirk at her or something but when he turned around, he just stared down at her with raised eyebrows.

"Hi."

Rage boiled through her as she glared up at the tall bastard. *Hi? That is all he has to say for himself?* He wore an earring of a guitar on his left ear now and she frowned, not remembering ever noticing that he had a pierced ear. She turned her gaze from it to glare down at the front of his jeans pockets.

"Where are my keys, asshole? I want them now."

"I don't have your keys."

He sounded so innocent that her gaze flew up to glare daggers at him. It became obvious to her that he wanted to play stupid in front of Trina. Brit's temper hit the roof. She reached around him so she could grab the back of his jeans, leaning against his big body since he was wedged between the cabinet and the open fridge door he still gripped. Her hands cupped his ass where his pockets were but she just gripped firm flesh and no keys.

"Brit?" Trina gasped. "What is going on? What are you doing?"

Brit released his ass and stepped back to give River another glare. "Let me tell you something, you big son of a bitch. I'm not one to play games with and do you want to know what's great about being a physical therapist? I have strong hands." She kept her furious gaze locked with his wide, stunned-looking eyes as she curled her fingers around the front of his jeans with her right hand, getting a firm grip on a handful of man. She made sure she applied enough pressure to let him know he wasn't getting away from her without causing injury to himself but squeezed just enough to get her point across. "Give me my keys or I swear to God I'll castrate you just the way I threatened before."

The sound of jiggling keys came from behind her somewhere a second before a male chuckle reached her ears. Jerking her head around, Brit looked over her shoulder,

refusing to release River to stare at...River, leaning against the wall just inside the kitchen.

She gawked at the bare-chested River holding up her key ring, a wide grin on his face, as a pair of highly amused, dark, sexy eyes locked with hers.

"Looking for these, baby? Want to let my brother go now? By the pale expression and the grimace of pain on his face, I don't think he's enjoying you gripping him there."

Brit snapped her head back around to stare up at...River, who had grown pale, appeared to be in some discomfort, and continued to stare down at her in shock. She released him as she stumbled back a step, confused as hell. Her mouth opened but nothing came out.

A gentle female hand gripped her shoulder as Trina moved next to her to give the shirtless River a shake of her head. "What did you do, River?" Trina turned her head, her sympathetic gaze meeting Brit's confused one. "Identical twins, hon. The only ways to tell them apart are by talking to them or looking at the left ear. The one you grabbed is Ryder and he's got an earring. River," she jerked her head at the one leaning against the door to the kitchen, "hates needles so bad he refused to get one, thankfully, so I can tell them apart."

Turning her head Brit stared at Ryder as he rubbed the front of his jeans where she'd gripped him but he glared at his brother instead of her. "You pissed someone off again and didn't bother to let them know to check if it is really you before they strike out at you?"

River chuckled as he shrugged his bare, wide shoulders. "Do you know how many times I've gotten slapped for you at some rodeo after I run into some woman you met in a bar and never bothered to call? Hell no, I didn't warn her." He walked closer to his brother. "Besides, I didn't know you were home."

Brit remained too shocked to move as she watched Ryder release the front of his jeans as his identical twin reached him so they could bear hug. Instantly comparing them she realized that River stood just a tiny bit taller but body-wise they looked absolutely the same. Their faces were impossible to tell apart.

"Their hair is the same," Brit softly stated.

Sighing next to her, Trina nodded. "Weird, huh? They haven't seen each other in a few months but from what I hear they both like it cut the same and keep it at the same length."

They broke apart and River turned to face her. Her gaze darted back and forth between them, still reeling from the shock. She swallowed and then focused her glare on the bare-chested one.

"Give me my keys. Now that I know who to really go after it will be you who gets his balls torn off if you don't hand them over."

Ryder grinned. "She does have strong hands. It felt like a vise grip." He turned an amused look on his brother. "Who is she? She's cute but not our normal type."

"Keys," Brit interrupted quickly, stepping away from Trina to walk up to River to put her hand out, trying to stop him from saying something that would mortify her. "I'm out of here."

"What did you do?" Trina glared at River. "Dale Hass called yesterday morning and asked us to put her up for a month and damn it, we are. Don't be chasing off the only woman on this ranch because I am looking forward to having one to talk to."

River grinned. "I didn't know someone slept in my bed last night and I accidentally woke her up. She got rather pissed off at me and said she'd leave first thing this morning even though I left the room immediately. I swear I acted like a total gentleman, Trina. I took her keys so she wouldn't leave before I could show her that I wasn't some pervert who intentionally walked into her bedroom."

"You lying son of a bitch," Brit muttered.

River's eyes sparkled with amusement. "You want me to be totally honest?"

"Just shut up and give me my keys." She glared up at him, her hand still out.

He hesitated and then handed her the keys. She calmed as her fingers curled around them until he raised both his hands, showing them to her. She stared at them, saw grease smeared on his skin. Her gaze flew up to his.

"I borrowed your keys to pop your hood. You've got some engine trouble. It shouldn't take me more than a few days to order the parts you need. I didn't want you getting on the road to go back home until I was sure your car would make it."

"What did you do to my car?"

His grin spread. "I'm fixing it."

He'd done something to her engine and he blatantly taunted her with his actions. "You son of a bitch."

He chuckled. "Actually, my mother was a whore, so next time you feel the need, go with that insult."

That shocked her to silence.

Ryder sighed, turning his head to frown at his brother. "Did you have to tell her that?"

River shrugged. "I wanted her to be accurate. It's not as though it's a secret around here." He looked back down at Brit. "Are you hungry? I'm starving. Trina makes the best breakfasts."

"Fix what you did to my car."

He shook his head and inched around Brit to walk to the table. "I have to order parts."

Spinning to glare at the jerk, Brit watched him calmly sit at the battered table near the back door. He kept his back to her. She took a step toward him, her keys fisted in her hand, the urge to beat on the bastard so strong she didn't even bother to try to fight it. He deserved to get hit.

A hand snaked out to grip her arm, halting her, and Brit jerked her head around to give Ryder a startled look. He frowned at her and shook his head slowly, releasing her arm as quickly as he'd grabbed it.

"It's not worth it. You can't beat sense into his thick head. Trust me. We've all tried to before. I'll take a look at your car after breakfast and see if I can fix whatever he did."

Trina sighed loudly, bringing plates to the table. "Damn it, River. Can't you behave just once? You shouldn't be harassing our guest." She glanced at Ryder. "Where's Nav? I thought you said he'd be right along."

"He is dropping off the new studs to Adam and Trip. He dropped me off on his way there so I could shower. One of the new studs is an ornery son of a bitch that knocked me on my ass into some horse shit."

Laughing, River picked up his fork. "Nav should have waited for me to arrive and taken me with him. You and horses never got along."

Ryder brought more plates of food to the table. "That's why I am in a band. He might have waited but nobody knew you were coming home. I heard you got hurt. You okay?"

"Hell, you know me. The high prize money tempted me enough and while I won, the dismount got a bit rough. I'm good though." River didn't look at Brit once. "What happened this time to bring you home?"

Ryder sat, reached for a gallon of milk, and poured it into a glass in front of him. "Jeff had to be taken to rehab again."

"Shit. What got him drinking this time?"

Brit realized she wasn't going to win this argument and forced herself to calm down. She glanced at Trina, who motioned with her head for her to have a seat at the table. Brit set her keys on the table next to her as she sat as far from River as she could get, refusing to look at him but unable not to hear his conversation with his brother.

"He tried to surprise the wife when we got a last-minute gig near his home and she wasn't alone." Ryder sighed loudly. "I keep telling the guys that marriage and bands don't mix but they don't listen. He tied one on, got locked up after going back to beat the shit out of the guy who'd nailed his wife, and we bailed him out. We took him straight back to rehab."

"She wasn't a groupie on the move, huh?"

"Nope. She had a son from a previous marriage and had to keep a home up for the boy. We were only gone for three weeks on that tour but I guess she got lonely." Ryder shrugged. "The life is rough on couples."

"I'm glad you're both home." Trina sat next to Brit. "Nav is worried about me and likes to stay close to home all the time now. With both of you here, he can do that."

The back door opened and another brother walked in. Brit stared in amazement as she looked intently into his eyes. This brother wasn't as dark as the twins and obviously

part white with those blue eyes. He glanced at her and then his attention fixed on Trina. A wide grin transformed his handsome face into a look of sheer joy.

"Damn, I missed you."

Trina jumped up and ran into the man's arms, moving fast for a pregnant woman. "Nav!"

He lifted her from the floor, hugged her tightly, and planted a passionate kiss on her upturned lips. Brit gaped at their open affection as the guy's hands gripped his wife's ass and helped her lock her legs higher around his waist. He started to walk, still kissing her, and caressing her backside. They left the kitchen, out of sight.

Ryder turned his head to grin at his brother. "Get used to it and turn on your stereo when you go to bed." He chuckled. "I don't know what the hell they are doing to each other at night but it can get really loud."

River chuckled, his gaze fixing on Brit. "I like loud women. The louder the better."

She fumed, glaring at him. "Dream on, asshole."

"Um," River licked his lips. "I had a dream—"

"Shut up." She grabbed her fork and stabbed her eggs. "I mean it."

Ryder glanced at them and then surprise paled his features. "Shit. You two? Last night?"

"No!" Brit's blushed hotly.

River chuckled. "Couple days ago. Meet my physical therapist. She's good with her hands."

Embarrassment flooded Brit as she stared in anguish at River for telling that to his brother. He'd just admitted they'd had sex. Tears filled her eyes, which she blinked back hard then she stood, her fork clattering to the table. She ran from the kitchen.

She made it halfway up the stairs on her way to get her things when a strong arm wrapped around her waist and jerked her back into a hard body. A hand braced on the railing to keep both of them upright. She jerked her head around to look over her shoulder at River.

"Don't fight me on the stairs." He frowned. "What is wrong with you?"

"You told him."

The frown on his face deepened. "So what? He's my brother and I tell him everything. We're identical twins, closer than most brothers, and he figured it out anyway since he knows me too well."

More tears filled her eyes but she blinked them back. River saw them though, his stunned gaze widened and then narrowed.

"Your family is friends with Dale. He's my boss and he's going to be furious if he finds out I slept with you on the job."

"So what? If you think Dale is a saint, think again. He grew up on the rodeo circuit. I could tell you tales that would shock the shit out of you about that man, including the

fact that he blew a lot of his money on whores and some of the biggest sluts ever born. He liked his women fast, loose, and easy. If you think he's going to get his ass bent out of shape because you nailed me, you're wrong. He's the last person to ever judge anyone else when it comes to having sex."

"You don't understand," she lowered her voice. "He's the only one who gave me a chance after he found out about my past. No one would hire me but he did. He always tells us to never screw with the patients. He's going to fire me if he finds out and I won't be able to get another job. I can't take care of myself if I can't pay the rent or have enough money to even eat. I don't want to live in my car."

The grip on her waist eased as River released the stair railing but he refused to let her go. His hand slid to her hip, urging her to turn around. She hesitated and then moved to face him. With her standing a step up from him they were almost eye level as they stared into each other's eyes.

"Why wouldn't anyone hire you?"

She shook her head. "I'm not going to talk about that."

He frowned. "Are you an ex-con? Did you get into some trouble once? That's okay, you know. Everyone makes mistakes. Dale isn't going to fire you over this. Trust me. If he ever finds out I nailed you, he'll totally blame me for it. He'll believe I seduced you and he'd be right."

"I've never been to prison." She swallowed, careful of her wording to remain truthful. Prison and jail were two totally different things, technically. "I'm not an ex-con and you didn't sign a work contract that states you'll be fired if you sleep with a patient, but I did."

He grimaced. "He really makes you sign shit with that in it?"

She hesitated. "Have you ever heard of a guy named Larry Douglas?"

Understanding lit River's features. "Yeah. I remember that. He married one of Dale's therapists two years ago and she took him for everything he had. It got nasty in the courtroom when they divorced."

"She took advantage of that old guy and Dale blames himself because he hired her and sent her to Mr. Douglas."

"I remember. Larry had just turned eighty-five at the time and was senile as hell. That bitch drained his accounts faster than she could spend it."

Nodding, Brit sighed. "Dale told me. Now he has it in our work contract that we aren't allowed to get involved with any of his patients under any circumstance."

"But you fucked me."

Her face flushed again and she let her gaze drop to his bare chest, a mistake as she stared at his tan skin and wide chest. He was so attractive the urge to touch him grew too strong until she fisted her hands at her sides to keep them there. She nodded.

"Why did you then, if you knew it could get you fired?"

She glanced up and then back down at his chest. "I don't know. Temporary insanity maybe?"

He chuckled. "Maybe it's my bedside manner."

"Maybe it's because I'm lonely and you're hot." She wished she could take the words back but they were out there. He knew he was sexy as hell so it wouldn't come as a shock that she'd admit that to him. She just wished she could take back her confession of being lonely. "Will you let me go now? I need to get out of here."

His arm tightened around her waist. "You're not leaving, Brit. I disabled your car."

"Fix the car so I can go."

He slowly shook his head. "You came here to get a vacation, right? I'll talk to Ryder and he won't tell a soul. Trust me on that. He can keep a secret so you don't have to worry about Dale ever finding out about us." He took a deep breath and then his voice lowered into a husky tone when he spoke. "Let me take you to bed again. I want you and you want me."

"I want a lot of things but that doesn't mean I get to have them."

He grinned. "I'm right here and you can totally have me."

She couldn't help but smile back at him. The jerk could be charming when he spoke in that tone and his sexy eyes sparkled with amusement. His hand on her hip shifted to her ass, firmly cupping her there.

"I want to spread you wide open on my bed and eat breakfast."

Her nipples hardened. She swallowed, hating the way her body responded to the thought of River's face between her thighs and the wonderful things she knew his sexy mouth were capable of.

"You're here and I'm here. Don't overthink this. Turn around and let's go to my room."

She bit her lip, undecided. Her body wanted one thing but her mind told her what a bad idea it was. She stared into River's eyes, neither of them speaking for long moments. River's hold on her ass tightened and he drew her against his body until they were nose to nose, chest to chest. She could feel the warmth from his hot skin through to her thin T-shirt and against her skin where they touched.

"I could get addicted to the way you moan while I'm licking you." His voice grew husky as he whispered the words. "Let me take you to my bed, spread you out, and do what I want to you."

Her stomach clenched at the memory of River licking her clit. She squeezed her eyes closed, her hands curved around the top of his shoulders as her body moved closer to his. The hands gripping her ass lifted her a little higher, jerked her tight against his chest, and she gasped, her eyes opening when her feet left the stairs.

"Wrap your legs around my waist," he ordered, not waiting for her to obey his command as he started up the stairs.

I've lost my mind again, she thought but her legs still ended up crossed over the back of River's jean-clad ass. He made it to the top of the stairs and moved quickly down the hallway. He kicked his bedroom door closed behind them. He never paused once until he bent over his bed, allowing gravity to let her drop so she landed gently on her back on his mattress. She stared into his sexy, brown gaze.

"I have condoms this time in my back pocket and I stashed some around the bed." His hands slid out from under her ass to reach for the front of her pants, his fingers sure as he started to undress her. "You aren't going to get away from me this time, baby."

He unwrapped her legs and in seconds tore her pants down her thighs and legs. He just tossed them away, his gaze never leaving hers. His fingers slipped into the top edge of her panties. With a hard jerk he tore them away from her body. Brit gasped, shocked.

River grinned at her as he straightened, reached for the waist of his pants, unzipped his jeans and shoved at them to get them down his hips. He stayed between her spread thighs as he removed his jeans, socks, and briefs, just shoving them to the floor and stepping out of them.

"You can't keep tearing my panties off. I only brought a few pairs." Her focus lowered down his body to stare at his generous erection, proudly pointing right at her, showing how much he was turned on. "I'm not sure this is a good idea. I—"

River slowly lowered to his knees next to the bed, careful of the injured one, his big hands shoving under her ass to grip her there. He jerked her closer to the edge until she feared he'd pulled her too far so she'd slide off the bed. He bent a little lower, wrapping his arms over the top of her thighs, his hands delving between them to spread her sex wide open as he forced her legs apart. She gasped at the way he dived right in there with his tongue.

His tongue felt hot, wet, and firm when he licked her from slit to clit in one slow, teasing swipe. He hesitated and then his lips sealed around the sensitive bud there, sucking on her, not giving her a chance to catch her breath before he suckled her with strong tugs of his mouth.

Moans tore from Brit when he pinned her down and continued to tease and taunt her sensitive clit. The ecstasy that shot through her entire body from the small movements he made had her clawing the bedding and her hips rose as her body tensed. She knew she was going to come hard and fast. He was just that good. Her back arched, pressing her sex tighter against his seeking mouth and merciless tongue. Rapture exploded through her as she cried out River's name, bucking under him as she fought to breathe through the sheer bliss of her orgasm.

A soft groan came from River as he gently released her with his mouth and stood. Brit's eyes flicked open to stare up at the man who had just blown her mind with those swollen, sexy lips that were parted as he stared back at her. His hand rose and the wrapper of a condom slid between his teeth. He bit down, his wrist flicked back, and the wrapper tore open. He removed the condom and her gaze lowered to watch him

roll it on his hard shaft with both hands. He reached under her ass, lifting her just slightly until their gazes met, and then he looked down.

She followed his line of sight and held her breath as he adjusted her hips and tugged her even farther off the edge of the bed. He didn't guide his cock to her but rather her to him. The wide crown of it brushed against her clit and he lifted her hips a bit more until he pressed against the entrance of her pussy. He held there, frozen, waiting for something. Brit's gaze flew upward to his. The second contact was made, River moved again. He surged forward, breaching her and driving into her in one long, slow thrust.

His thick cock was so incredibly hard that she could understand the term "rock-hard". A loud moan left her parted lips as he stretched her, branded her body with his, connecting them. He froze again, making her want to protest.

"Brit," he said softly. "Just because I didn't remember your name doesn't mean I would have ever forgotten you. What happened meant something to me because this thing between us is special."

Her mind let his words linger there as she tried to make sense of them. River pulled back, nearly withdrawing from her body completely until the head of his cock hesitated at the mouth of her pussy. He drove back into her hard, fast, and Brit lost the ability to think as nerve endings awoke. River's hands were big and gripped her ass cheeks hard as he started to fuck her deeply, his powerful hips bucking against her.

Animal sounds filled Brit's ears along with the sound of their bodies slapping together and she realized she made those sharp, choppy sounds. River pounded against her body, forcing her to take him at that fast speed. She could only clutch the bed, be vocal about her pleasure, and her mind blanked out the ability to do anything but concentrate on the pending climax that was building. Her body tensed, she could feel him grinding in and out of her pussy as her vaginal walls clamped around his cock.

"Oh fuck," he groaned. "Come for me, baby. You're so tight I can't hang on much longer."

It was as though River ordering her to do it became the last nudge she needed. White-hot rapture had her screaming out. It felt too intense, too earth shattering for her to take. She sucked in air, her body jerking and twitching violently as she rode out his climax too. He groaned loudly, uttering soft curses, slowing the hard fucking to a gentle rocking motion until he just held her.

They were both panting. Brit looked up at River, amazed that the man could do that to her body but also a little embarrassed because she realized the whole house must have heard her when she'd come both times. River didn't blush. He winked at her.

"If you try to fuck and run this time, I'm going to chain you to my bed and I can do it. Am I clear?"

She panted, out of breath. "I heard you." It didn't mean she'd let him carry out his threat though. She needed to get away from River.

Chapter Five

"I can't face those people." Brit glared at River. He had the nerve to laugh at her embarrassment. He stood near her at the moment, a gleam of amusement in his eyes. "I want you to fix whatever you did to my car so I can get out of here."

"Those people are my family and why the hell don't you want to see them?"

"They had to have heard us."

The grin spread. "Is that a problem? We'll hear Nav and his wife. That's just the norm in this house when women are present."

"Well, it's not my norm. And how many women come here?"

He inched closer, reaching out to grab her waist but she stepped back, avoiding it. "Jealous?"

A snort rose. "Not at all."

His hand shot out when she wasn't expecting it to grip her arm. "Come on. You can't hide out indefinitely and besides that, I'm hungry for food now."

"Damn it." She dug her bare heels into the area rug and tried to stop him from dragging her but it was a wasted effort. "You big bully."

He laughed again, threw open his bedroom door, and turned. "Are you walking or going downstairs over my shoulder? Your choice."

"I don't like you."

River laughed again. "You liked me a hell of a lot a short time ago and you're going to like me a hell of a lot more later when we get back into my bed."

"Prick."

He just laughed, pulled her out into the hallway and toward the stairs. She lifted her chin, advanced on her own, but inwardly fumed. He could be really controlling but she couldn't hate him for it. He wasn't a brute and he wasn't hurting her. She heard voices come from the living room. At the bottom of the stairs River turned in that direction.

A blond man sat in an easy chair facing Navarro and Trina on the couch. Three pairs of eyes turned to the couple who walked in. Brit forced a smile at Trina. Trina's blonde eyebrows rose and her attention focused on the grip that River had on Brit.

"Why are you pulling my new friend around?" Trina leaned against her husband's side. "Nav, honey, teach your brother some manners."

The blue-eyed older version of River chuckled. "I tried my best but, babe, it's a lost cause."

Shaking her head, Trina carefully got to her feet in an awkward technique that her husband helped along when he gripped her ass to give her a boost. Trina chuckled and then headed for the kitchen. She paused on the other side of River.

"I hope to hell you're not the donor. I don't want this kid coming out all grabby. Play nice or you can sleep in your motor home."

Confusion rushed through Brit as she watched Trina wobble away. She looked at River and he winked. "We don't know whose sperm ended up being the winner that got her pregnant."

Her jaw dropped as her mind tried to make sense of what he'd said. A male voice drew her attention.

"Don't look at me though. I wasn't involved with that."

Brit's head whipped around to stare at the big blond with light blue eyes. His hair was a little shaggy and curly. He winked at her and stood. He glanced at River and then stepped closer, holding out a hand.

"I'm Trip. I live on the ranch but I have my own place. You must be Brit. I promised Dale I'd look after you."

She jerked out of River's hold and gave the man a firm handshake. His palms were rough, calloused, and she liked his open expression instantly. She also noticed how handsome he was.

"Nice to meet you. You know Dale Hass?"

"Everyone around here knows Dale. We all go way back."

She released his hand. "I see."

Trip grinned, giving her a once-over. "Did that letch hit on you? I can see Dale doing that. I got the impression he's taken with you."

"No." She shot him a dirty look. "Dale has been really nice to me but not that way."

"So how did you meet him?" Trip turned, sat back down, and watched Brit closely. "He's protective of you."

"I work for him. I'm a physical therapist. I..." She paused. "I met him five months ago and he offered me a job." She wanted to leave it at that, not wanting to inform them that she'd met him at a women's shelter where she'd been living. "He's an amazing person."

"Dale? Amazing?" Navarro laughed. "I've heard him called a lot of things but never that unless he paid someone to say it."

Brit glared at Navarro Raine. She didn't care if she was in his house. "Don't you dare insult Dale. He's been a father figure to me and gave me a job when no one else would. He's a wonderful, caring, sensitive person."

"Whoa, baby," River chuckled. "Hold your horses. My brother didn't mean anything bad so calm down. It's just that we know Dale as a loud-mouthed, hard-drinking man who used to go into bars and offered jobs to women to—"

"Don't," Trip cut in. "Dale obviously treats her as if she's family and if he wanted her to know about his old days, he would have told her."

River tensed and then softly cursed. "She kind of looks similar to Mary. I just realized. No wonder he's protective of her and hides his past."

"Is that his daughter who died?" Brit guessed. "He told me I remind him of her."

"Yeah." Trip stood. "I better get back to Adam. He's going to be pissed if he has to pick up that hay without me." He paused, giving Brit a smile. "Watch out for River there. He's kind of pushy and naturally an ass. Don't take his shit."

"I resent that." River chuckled. "I work hard at it so there's nothing natural about it."

Navarro stood. "I'm going to go help Trina find a snack." He left the room.

Brit processed all she'd learned. She stepped back and looked River. She studied him. His smile died as he watched her.

"What?"

"You slept with Trina?"

His dark eyebrows shot up. "No. You know my balls are still attached since you've seen them. If I touched Nav's wife, he'd remove them." He paused. "A bull gored Nav's nuts and he's sterile. When they decided to try for a kid, he called on his brothers, me included, to donate our sperm. We all did and Trina got artificially inseminated. It worked and we have no idea which sample the doctors used."

"So you could be the father of her baby?" she asked, shocked.

He frowned. "Nav is the father. We all look alike and Trina has blue eyes. If the baby turns up with them, it's still a mystery whose sperm worked."

She just stared at him.

"Nav and our oldest brother have blue eyes but the rest of us have dark brown, like our father. Ryder and I have a different mother than my other brothers do. She was Cherokee and our father Apache. Navarro, Drake, and Dusty share a Dutch mother."

"Does it bother you?"

"Having different mothers? Not in the least."

"I meant, that it could be your biological child?"

He frowned again. "We don't think of it that way and you shouldn't either. Nav was always there for us growing up. Their mother died when they were young and my mother took off when Ryder and I were infants. Our father became an alcoholic and while Nav isn't the oldest, he grew to be the father figure in our lives. He's done everything for us and we'd do anything for him. I looked at a magazine and had some private time in a room at a clinic. That's it. That baby is theirs, he's the father, and that's the end of it."

Brit nodded. "I think that's really great of you and your brothers to do that."

He shrugged. "They both deserve happiness and a baby is important to them."

A thought struck her. "Do you have any kids?"

He shook his head. "Nope. I'm careful to always use protection. I had a scare with a girl once and that was more than enough for me. I sweated that one bad."

"Were you really young?"

He paused. "I'd just turned nineteen."

"I take it that it wasn't someone you wanted to have a baby with?"

He took a deep breath, watching her closely. "I barely knew her. She showed up here a month after I nailed her, claiming she thought she was pregnant but didn't have the money to pay for a doctor. She'd taken a grocery store test and it came back positive. I never sweated so much in my life when I took her to see our family doctor. It turned out she wasn't and I never forgot that feeling in my gut. I've learned to be damn careful."

"'No glove, no love' is a good motto."

He nodded. "What about you? Do you have any kids? I guess we never got around to this. How about ex-husbands? Do you have any of those?"

Something inside Brit froze up and she had to swallow the lump that formed in her throat. If she told him she'd been married, would he ask a lot of questions? She stared into his eyes.

"Those aren't hard questions." He studied her. "Kids? Ex-husband?"

"No kids but I've been married. I don't want to talk about it." She decided to go with honesty. "It's not a happy story and it's over."

His dark gaze narrowed. "Okay. How old are you?"

"Thirty-five. How old are you?"

"I just turned thirty-two."

"Shit." She had never slept with a younger man before.

"What?" He grinned. "It's only a few years but I guess I could technically call you my old lady."

"You wouldn't do it twice," she threatened. "I don't like that term."

Amusement sparkled in his dark eyes. "I'll keep that in mind, baby."

"I'm not fond of that one either."

"Fuck And Run it is then."

She closed the distance in one big step, gave him a dirty look, realizing again how tall he was when she had to tilt her chin to stare up at him. "I really hate that one."

An arm slid around her waist as he pulled her against his frame. "I know. You should see how cute you are when you get mad." He lifted his other hand and his fingertip brushed the side of her mouth. "You have a little line right here."

Brit opened her hands on his chest and pushed but River didn't let go. She shook her head at him. "Release me."

"But I like you." He laughed again. "A hell of a lot. I'm getting hard just touching you. You do things to me."

"I'm going to do bad things to you if you don't let me go. You need to go fix my car so I can leave."

"It's not happening. Trina said you're here for a month. I wasn't planning on staying that long, just a few weeks, but we'll see how we do. If it's working out between us I'll stay as long as you're here."

"Why does that sound like a threat to me?"

He threw back his head and laughed. His arm around her waist slid lower and one big hand firmly cupped her ass cheek. He squeezed, holding her securely. His head lowered until their gazes met again. "The only danger you're in from me, Fuck And Run, is me not letting you out of my bed."

"Stop calling me that, damn it." Her fingers lowered, sliding down the front of his shirt. She could feel pure, hard male through the thin material. The guy had muscles and she slid her fingertips over them on her way to the waist of his jeans. "You want to be nice to me."

"Really?" His grin died. "What do I get if I am?"

Her hand grazed over his hip and one hand slid between their bodies, had to wiggle a little but she rubbed the front of his jeans where she discovered that he hadn't been kidding about her making his cock hard. She could feel the outline of his rigid sex and rubbed him through the denim. The hand on her ass squeezed again and River softly groaned.

"That feels good but it would be a hell of a lot better if I were out of these jeans. Let's go back upstairs."

"Fix my car."

"No."

Her fingers lowered, gripping him under his cock. His body tensed and the look in his eyes turned a little cold. "Play nice, baby. I saw what you did to my poor brother. You don't want to hurt me, do you?"

He didn't tear away from her hold or try to grip her hand to remove it as she stared up at him. She gently rubbed his jeans where his balls were. "I don't want to hurt you but I do need my car. I want to leave."

"Why? You were going to stay here a month so do that. I would like to share my bed with you and you really like me." His face lowered and he went nose to nose with her, a breath from touching her. "I want to do a thousand things to you. Let me."

Brit knew she would lose this argument. He was just too sexy and she instantly reacted to the look in his dark gaze and the feel of his body against hers. She got wet just hearing him talk that way. He wasn't her type—too crude, too young, and way too hot looking but she'd married a man who had been her type. That had turned into a nightmare.

"You're controlling and I don't like that," she said honestly. "I'm also leery of getting involved with anyone."

"I'll try to put my caveman tendencies away. I promise not to club you and drag you away by your hair to toss you over a rock and fuck you blind." He chuckled. "Wait. I take back that last part. I might fuck you that way but not on a rock."

She smiled, unable to resist. "I bet a lot of women have slapped you. It might account for some things if you were hit hard enough."

His hand on her ass moved, inching downward. Brit gasped when his fingers slid between her thighs, lifting her a little higher, forcing her on tiptoe when he gripped her by the vee of her pants.

"Actually, most women find me irresistible."

She bet they did. The guy was undeniably sexy and he had those bedroom eyes that reeled her right in. She took a shaky breath. "River?"

"Yeah?"

"Let go."

He shook his head as his fingers started to rub the seam of her pants against her clit. She shifted her hold on him to grip his waist to keep her steady when her legs turned wobbly. Her eyes closed and she bit her lip, her face pressing against his chest. She inhaled his wonderful masculine scent and bit back a moan when he continued to tease her with those wonderful fingers.

He nuzzled the side of her throat, using his nose to move her hair aside and then his hot lips brushed her sensitive throat. She shivered, her nipples tightening instantly, and gripped him harder. River's tongue licked upward to just under her earlobe and his hot breath made her shiver. His fingers continued to rub against her clit and she couldn't hold back anymore when she softly moaned.

He pulled his mouth away from her skin. "Let's go upstairs or I'm going to turn you around, yank down your jeans, and fuck you right here."

Brit's head jerked up. "You can't. We're in the living room."

A black eyebrow arched. "I don't care who the hell sees but you might. I just want inside you."

"That's not even funny. You wouldn't really—"

She gasped when he suddenly tore his hand out from between her thighs, her feet leaving the floor as he lifted her around her waist and took four quick steps forward. Brit found her body turned in his arms so she faced the back of a black leather recliner. Hands shifted on her body and she looked down to see him tearing open her jeans. She tried to grab River's hands but the man was fast. He jerked her pants down, taking her panties with them as he hooked them with his thumbs, and air hit her body.

"Stop!"

"Shush." He chuckled. "If they hear you yelling, they are definitely going to come back in here to investigate what I'm doing to you."

River pushed his hips against her, trapping her body against the chilly leather and his rough-textured jeans. Brit wiggled against him, trying to get free but he bent forward, pinning her tighter, forcing her over the chair. She had to toss her head to move her hair out of the way as she twisted to look over her shoulder at him. She wasn't amused when she saw him tearing open a condom with his teeth.

"Damn it, River," she hissed. "This isn't funny. Someone could walk in and...damn it. Let me go."

He backed his hips away but kept her pinned over the chair with his chest. She put her palms flat on the chair and tried to push but he was too heavy to lift up. She heard a zipper. Her heart raced and she realized he wasn't joking. He had the audacity to grin at her and wink.

"I'm going to fuck you, Brit. Right here and right now."

"Someone could walk in. You can't just—"

"Be quiet or we'll have company." His hand slid over her bare ass and slid between her thighs. "You're so wet and ready for me. You might protest but your body is turned on as hell."

I'm going to kill him. His fingers slid through her slit and she didn't have to be told that her body responded to him. The proof smeared downward as he found her clit and rubbed against the swelling bud. Pleasure became instant for Brit and she squeezed her eyes closed and bit down hard on her lip to bite back another moan. He possessed super-talented fingers and when he applied just enough pressure she found it impossible to think. All she could do was feel every up-and-down motion he made that had her body aching with need to come.

"You're so hot, sexy." River nuzzled her head with his cheek and his hand pulled out from between her thighs.

Brit realized she scratched the leather with her fingernails. Her cheeks burned with embarrassment that he'd gotten her so mindless while playing with her clit that she'd momentarily forgotten where they were. She tried to push her chest up but then suddenly River's condom-covered cock pressed against her pussy and he entered her in one long, deep drive of his hips.

A moan tore from her as sheer ecstasy jolted through her at the sensation of his thick, hard cock waking all those inner nerve endings. Her vaginal walls trembled around his shaft, her nipples tightening even more, and then all thoughts fled as he started to withdraw and slam back into her.

She clawed at the leather again as River fucked her hard and fast, pinning her tighter over the chair. His hips shoved her higher so she lifted on her tiptoes, her pants trapping her legs together, and their harsh breathing mingled as River picked up the pace even more. The chair made a creaking sound, but she didn't care—she could only feel River. He adjusted his angle just a little, one hand sliding around her hip to get between her and the back of the chair, and his fingers pressed against her clit. He fucked her harder, driving in deeper, skin slapping skin as his hips hit her ass.

The climax built. Brit tried to think but lost that battle from the sexual bombardment that River put her body through. She gasped in air, her muscles tensing, and a hand clamped over her mouth right as she came. She cried out against River's palm, rapture searing through her from his cock straight to her brain. His hand jerked away from between her thighs and he gripped her hip in a nearly bruising hold as he lowered his head, his mouth clamping down on her shirt at her shoulder. He jerked hard, his hips pressing tight against her ass, his entire body drawing taut, and groaned against her shoulder as he came.

They were both breathing hard. River stilled on her, just holding her, their bodies pressed so tightly together that she found it hard to take deep breaths with his weight holding her over the chair. He relaxed on top of her, their bodies melting together in the afterglow of great sex. His hand released her mouth in the same instant that he released her shoulder. A chuckle had Brit opening her eyes.

"Fuck, that was hot."

The voice sounded similar to River's but it wasn't close to her ear. She was confused for a second because she could feel his breath fanning her neck. River's entire body tensed again from its relaxed state and understanding dawned. Her eyes widened as her head whipped around to stare at Ryder Raine, leaning against the wall about six feet away, his arms crossed over his chest.

She froze, unable to even move, breathe, or think. River's identical twin brother watched them. It looked as though he'd been there for a little while by the way he had his boot crossed over his ankle, and as she stared into his dark gaze, she knew that look. River gave it to her every time he wanted to fuck her.

"Damn it, bro," River spoke softly. "Not cool."

Ryder tore his gaze from Brit to study his brother. "I take it we're not sharing her? I'd totally love to feel her around me too."

Brit was horrified as it all slammed into her. Ryder had been watching her have sex with his brother and he'd said "share" as if that were something they did or had done. She couldn't move for a moment and then she started to fight to get out from under River.

He cursed again, withdrawing from her body and easing his weight off her. He didn't glance at her, instead glaring at his brother and shaking his head as he just jerked up his pants, not even bothering to remove the condom in his haste to cover up.

As soon as he backed away, Brit jerked up her pants, feeling her underwear rolled wrong and not all the way up her hips but not caring. Her hands shook so bad that she couldn't get the zipper up. She spun away, stumbled, and tried to flee but River grabbed her arm. Her gaze jerked to his and she saw he still looked really angry.

"I didn't see him or hear him come in," he explained softly.

Brit jerked away and fled. As she nearly ran from the room she heard one of the brothers cursing viciously.

"Goddamn it, you son of a bitch."

She didn't hear the rest as she ran up the stairs. She made it to River's room and closed the door, managing not to slam it. It was her turn to viciously curse when she attempted to lock the door but then remembered that River had removed the locks. She spun away from the door and grabbed her stomach.

"Oh God." She fought the urge to be sick. Memories of her past bombarded her, terror too. Was River more similar to her ex-husband than she'd thought?

"I have to get the hell out of here," she softly whispered.

In a panic, she started to throw her belongings into her bag. With or without a car, she had to leave. She didn't care if she had to jog to the road and hitchhike home. At least she knew what she'd face going back.

* * * * *

"Why?" River glared at Ryder.

"I thought you wanted to put on a show. You are the one who likes to perform in front of a stadium." A chuckle escaped from Ryder. "Although you riding that little blonde is a lot more interesting to watch than you trying to break your back on a bull. She's a hell of a lot hotter too."

Anger spiked in River. "She's skittish enough, damn it. Did you have to mention we share women? Did you see her reaction? She wasn't turned on. It horrified her."

Ryder shrugged. "There's always a first time. Why don't we go find her and introduce her to the wonderful world of tag team? She'll enjoy the hell out of it."

A bad cramp hit River's stomach and his hands fisted. The idea of Ryder touching Brit left a bad taste in his mouth and filled him with rage. "Not happening. You go near her and I'll deck your ass."

Ryder studied him for a long moment. "It's like that, is it?"

The hesitation was short. "Yeah, it is." River took a deep breath, his anger seeping out. "There's something about her, bro. I just can't get enough of her and she makes me feel things I never have before. Even when she's pissed at me, I just want to hold her."

"Then you better go find her. She had that look your bulls get when they buck you off. She's going to run for the nearest gate out of this place."

A curse tore from River as he spun. "Stay the hell away from her, and if you hear us having sex, walk away." He moved quickly for the stairs, taking them two at a time. Brit wasn't going to fuck and run on him again.

Chapter Six

The bedroom door hit the wall hard and Brit spun around in fear. River walked into the room and slammed the door behind him. He crossed his arms over his chest, his gaze settling on her bag she'd just zipped closed, and a frown curved his lips downward, showing his displeasure.

"I didn't know he'd come in."

"It doesn't matter." She looked away. "I'm leaving. You can either fix my car or I'll hike out. I don't care anymore. I'm out of here regardless of how I leave." She bent and grabbed her bag. "Move out of my way."

His hands dropped to his sides. "No."

Shock rolled through her as she straightened. "Excuse me?"

"That was unfortunate. He shouldn't have walked in there and watched us. He should have turned away when he heard we were busy but I can't change what happened."

"I can't stay here."

"You keep saying that but you're not leaving."

"Watch me." She tried to walk around him.

River turned as she passed him, one arm sliding around her waist while his other hand grabbed the strap of her bag and tore it from her hand. She gasped in outrage as he lifted her from the floor and then she was in the air. Her body bounced as she landed on his soft mattress and then two-hundred-plus pounds of male pinned her down.

"Get the hell off me." She glared up at his face.

"Has anyone ever told you that you have a temper?"

"Yes and it's always deserved, you Neanderthal. You can't just go around grabbing women and flinging them onto your bed."

A grin flashed, revealing his white teeth. "Why the hell not?"

"It's wrong and you can't make me stay. Raine, get the hell off me."

He shifted his leg and kicked one of the bed posts hard. She heard a noise and turned her gaze from his to watch one of the chains fall down the post and hit the bottom of the bed. She darted a look back to his face to see him still grinning at her.

"I can keep you and I warned you that if you attempted to leave again I'd chain you to my bed." He chuckled. "I like being on you."

"You son of a bitch! Don't even think about it."

"I told you," his grin died, "my mother happened to be a whore."

He kicked the other post and another chain fell. She swallowed hard, a little fear rising. She didn't think he'd really hurt her but she was pretty sure he really would cuff her to his bed.

"I want to leave."

"I want you to stay." He took a deep breath. "I'm sorry, Brit. I know you're upset. I saw the look on your face downstairs when we were caught in the act but I'm not letting you run."

"You can't really keep me here, River. I want to leave. I'm sure everyone in this house knows we've done each other and Dale will find out. I really do need my job. The best thing I can do is get out of here before there's more damage done. I might be able to explain to Dale that it was just a tiny little loss of my sanity with all the stress I'm under."

"It's not happening. You're here for a month and that's how long you'll stay. I'll handle my family and Dale won't hear a peep about us. Your job is safe."

Frustration rose inside her. "Why won't you let me go? I want to leave."

"You don't really want that." He slowly shook his head. "You're scared for some reason, spooked like some skittish mare, but guess what? I'm a horse wrangler." He grinned. "It's my job to tame them."

"I'm not a horse."

"And I'm happy about that." He chuckled. "I've never wanted to mount one of them the way I do you."

"Not funny."

His grin faded. "Why are you so determined to run away from me and this attraction between us? We have a month to spend together and I'm willing to stay here. If you think I do this often, think again. I usually hit it and run, to be honest, but you're different. I actually want to get to know you and spend time with you. If anyone should be packing a bag and running away, it should be me."

"I'm not pinning you down."

"You couldn't if you tried. Talk to me. Why do you want to leave so bad?"

She looked away from him to stare at the headboard above her head. She hesitated, refusing to meet his gaze. "I became trapped in a hellish marriage and I don't want to ever get involved again. Is that so hard to understand?"

His body tensed over hers. "Did he abuse you?"

She met his furious gaze, studying his features, seeing pure rage there. The idea obviously really affected him.

"Yeah. He was a real piece of work, all right?"

"You don't seem the type to take that kind of shit."

She turned away, staring at the bedding next to her face. "I'm not. I tried leaving but it got pretty complicated."

"You don't seem to have a problem with trying to leave me and I haven't hurt you."

"I don't want to talk about this. I left my past behind and it's not something I want to rehash."

"That's too damn bad. If this guy is such an ass, why did you marry him?"

"I'm not talking about this."

"We're not moving until you do. I don't care if we miss lunch and dinner or if we have to stay this way all night. Tell me what this guy did to you and why you ended up with an asshole."

Hot tears threatened to spill so she blinked them back, still refusing to look at him. She swallowed the lump that formed. "I didn't know how he was at first. He kind of pretended to be something he wasn't, married me fast, and then his true side came out."

"He hit you?" River growled the words.

She nodded once, confirming his suspicion. "Yeah. He became a hitter. I tried to leave, even filed charges with the police, and did all the things they tell you to do. It wasn't enough. I even got a restraining order."

"But he wouldn't let go? He charmed you back?"

Oh hell, she thought. She finally met River's gaze, seeing bafflement in his expression. "He had some family money, okay? He hired lawyers I couldn't afford to pay to keep fighting the divorce and he made sure I never had access to a dime. He turned very controlling that way. He paid for everything and only gave me small amounts of cash if I needed to buy something. He had the restraining orders tossed with his fast-talking lawyers and then he'd come after me. Every time I got hired at a new job, he intimidated them with his family money and connections to get me fired. He got me tossed from every apartment I found. He scared me and made threats, always making sure I knew he'd rather see me dead than without him. I went back because I had no choice. He never made idle threats."

River's anger turned to shock, the emotion clear on his face. "Fuck."

"Yeah." She took a shaky breath, proud she'd said it all without crying. "I survived hell until I managed to finally get away for good."

"You're divorced, right? I can't see that big of an asshole letting go easily."

"I am legally divorced." She hesitated. "He didn't agree to it but the judge saw it my way."

"He leaves you alone now?"

"No." She shook her head. "There are restraining orders in place and he's supposed to stay far away from me. The truth is that Dale heard my ex-husband would be showing up in town and he sent me here where I'd be safe."

River's dark gaze locked with hers and he looked furious as they studied each other. "You're definitely not leaving, baby. I'd never hit you. I might be an ass about some shit but know that, okay? I'd never hurt you."

"I know." At least her gut told her she could believe him and River definitely wasn't anything like Kyle. "I'm not afraid of you."

"Good." His body relaxed over hers. "I am a bit controlling but only about sex. You're not running away from something we both feel. I'd carry your bag out to your car for you if I honestly thought you weren't attracted to me."

She couldn't look away from his beautiful eyes, seeing honesty there. "It's just not a good idea for me to get involved with anyone. I'm going to be totally honest here, okay? My ex-husband is dangerous and if he ever found out I slept with you, discovered who you were, he'd do everything in his power to make you suffer for it."

"I don't give a shit."

"You would if he ever came after you."

"I'd kick his miserable ass. I hate to break this to you but I've gotten into quite a few disagreements with other men in my time. I can more than handle myself in a fist fight. Women might like me but men rarely do."

She ignored his attempted humor because this wasn't a time to joke around. "I'm not talking physical. You could totally take him in a fight with one hand tied behind your back. He'd smear your name and spread nasty rumors about you, maybe even about your entire family."

A loud laugh came from River as he grinned. "I'm a Raine."

"What does that mean?"

"It means everyone knew my father as the town drunk and my mother as a whore. What the hell could this guy really say that is worse than the truth? I grew up with folks looking down on us so, in their opinions, there's not much lower us Raines can get. Guess what? We don't give a damn. My brothers and I are tight, our family is all that matters, and nothing that anyone could say would hurt us because it's probably already been said a thousand times."

She hesitated. "He's dangerous, River. He's crazy and I don't want you hurt. I don't want you in the middle of the war I have going on with him."

"It won't be a war and I won't be in the middle since you're safely tucked away on the ranch. This guy won't find you and you aren't leaving."

River made it sound easy but he had no idea how insane Kyle could become. She wished it were that simple. She knew she'd be safe as long as Kyle couldn't find her and she'd left no way to link from her life to the Raine family. She'd covered her tracks and knew Dale would look out for her back home. He knew what kind of sneaky bastard her ex-husband could be and wouldn't leave anything to chance.

She debated on telling River the rest but then discarded that idea. He didn't know her well enough for her to tell him all the sordid details. She bet he'd be happy to release her and let her go though, if she did reveal exactly how she'd gotten away from her ex-husband.

"So you're staying, right?" His leg moved and he kicked one of the dangling chains. "If not, I'm really going to secure you to this bed." He grinned. "I'm almost hoping you say you still want to leave. I have this fantasy about having you staked out and fucking you into submission. Being on top of you sounds like the best way to spend a few days if that's how long it takes."

How could she resist him? *I can't*, she admitted to herself. He was too handsome and his beautiful eyes sparkled with amusement. She'd told him enough that he knew she came with trouble but he wasn't fleeing. A lot of men would, not wanting that kind of baggage attached to a new relationship. Of course he wasn't offering a real relationship, instead it would be more of a sexual romp that would last a month, but still, he wasn't escorting her to the door to get her out of his life faster.

"I'll tell you what," she said softly, "I need to eat. I'm starving, but then I'll let you use your chains on me."

Lust burned in his gaze as he licked his lips. "Damn, baby. You make me so fucking hot. I'm hard again. Are you trying to kill me?"

She hid her flinch at his question. "No but I am really hungry. Hold that thought."

"Okay. It wouldn't be right to starve you when I know damn well you're going to need your energy for what I have in mind." He winked and then rolled off her body. He got to his feet and held out both hands to her. "Let me help you up since I put you there and then I'll treat you to a Raine steak sandwich."

She leaned up and put her hands in his so he could pull her carefully to her feet. She hesitated. The sandwich comment had her remembering when Ryder had spoken after he'd watched them have sex.

"What was that about you and your brother sharing women? I haven't forgotten that and since we're about to leave your room and we'll probably run into him, I want to assure you I'm not into that shit."

His grin died instantly and something in his gaze grew a little chilly. "You have a past and so do I. Ryder and I grew up with people thinking the worst of us. It kind of made us a bit wilder than most boys. It was a bad-boy reputation we were more than happy to help along."

"So you did share women?" Something inside her turned a little cold at the thought and she tried to free her hands.

River invaded her space when he stepped into her, going body to body with her, until she had to look up at him. He kept a tight hold on her hands, refusing to release her. "If my brother were to touch you I'd kick his ass and I told him that. We haven't done it in a long while and definitely won't with you. I can't put my finger on why but no other woman has ever affected me the way you do, Brit. I've never wanted a woman more and I feel strangely possessive of you."

She again saw honesty when she stared deeply into his dark eyes. "Okay. I just wanted us to be on the same page."

"We are. I'm not sure what is between us but it's strong."

Brit suddenly grinned. "I can tell you exactly what's between us. You're hard again and digging into my stomach."

He laughed. "Food first, then fucking. I'm a great cook and I make the best steak sandwiches in Texas."

"That sounds really good. I could eat a horse right now."

He laughed. "Cow, not horse. I love them too much to ever put one on a plate." He released one of her hands, stepped back, and then tugged her as he started to walk toward the door. "Come on. I really want to get you back up here as soon as possible."

Brit dreaded running into River's family. He might tell her it would be no big deal but she wasn't accustomed to sleeping with a guy around his family. It made it worse that she didn't really know the Raines and worried they might think less of her for jumping into bed with River.

The downstairs was silent and empty as they entered the kitchen. River flashed a grin and released her hand. "They must be napping."

"Your brother takes naps?"

"No. Nav and Trina are probably in bed fucking but I didn't want to say that. Ryder is probably hitting up Adam and Trip for a poker game."

"Do you need any help with lunch?"

"Nope. Just have a seat and let me show you my kitchen skills." He grinned. "I was taught by the best."

"Your father cooked?"

The comical look on his face answered that. "Uh, no. Mary taught us boys how to cook."

"Who is Mary?"

A sad expression filtered across his face. "She was Adam and Trip's mother. My dad hired her after my mother left. She raised us until she died of cancer. We were still in high school when she got sick. It broke our hearts."

"I'm so sorry."

He turned away from her to open the fridge. "Thanks. It tore us all up pretty bad, watching her fight and be in so much pain for so long. It also became the last straw with my father." He pulled out something wrapped white paper and moved to the stove.

"Your father?"

"He slept with Mary almost every night. She loved him, and had for years, but he never treated her right. He always cheated and lied to her, she'd find out, but she stayed for us boys. When she grew sick, my Dad became even worse to her. He barely came home and he avoided her. In the end all of us stood outside her bedroom door and told him we'd kick his miserable ass if he tried to leave her side so he held her while she died. I guess that counts for something. She left this earth the way she wanted to go."

Brit remained silent for a few moments, taking it in. "That's good that you did that for her," she finally said, not knowing what else to say.

"Mary never deserved someone like my father, no one did, but I've been assured he wasn't always that way. I guess that's something. He died less than a year after Mary did."

"I'm sorry."

He shrugged, keeping his back to her as he fired up the burners and placed a cast iron skillet on the stovetop. "We had Nav and us boys were always close. Mary gave us a woman's touch and of course she brought Trip and Adam into our lives."

"That's good."

"Yeah." He nodded. "They actually changed their last names to Raine before Mary died. She wanted them to belong to a family and not be left alone in this world after she passed on. I think she wanted to marry Dad but he refused. She was a good woman."

The silence in the kitchen was only broken as River added two steaks to the pan when it got hot enough. The smell that filled the room made Brit's stomach grumble. River glanced at her a few times, smiling, and pulled out a bag of chips from the pantry.

"Let me help." Brit stood. "I'm used to doing all the cooking."

"You could grab the steak sauce from the fridge. I wouldn't mind a tall glass of milk either. The glasses are in that cabinet to your left."

It was a comfortable companionship as Brit moved around the kitchen. She'd never had a man cook for her before. Her husband had been old school all the way. Women cooked, kept a tidy house, and he hadn't lifted a finger to do any of the household chores. It reminded her once again of all the differences between River and the kind of man she'd married.

Ten minutes later she swallowed her first bite of River's steak sandwich. "This is amazing. Thank you."

He winked. "Hold off on that amazing word until you see what I'm cooking up for you in my bedroom." He lifted his milk. "Eat up. You're going to need your strength."

Chapter Seven

Brit suffered a little nervousness when she stripped out of her clothes, knowing River stood just feet away, watching her closely. She lifted her gaze, met his, and the intense look she saw there had her pausing. He studied her with a purely carnal gleam in his eyes.

"I won't hurt you." His voice turned husky.

"I've been tied up and it wasn't a fun experience for me."

He cocked his head to the side, watching her with narrowed eye. "Your husband?"

"Ex-husband, and yes." She tried to push back the awful memory that surfaced.

"You weren't afraid before."

"That's because you distracted me."

A slow grin spread his sensual mouth. "Trust me, Brit. I promise you're going to enjoy the hell out of what I do to you. Your pleasure is all I have in mind."

"Mine, huh?" She relaxed, moving again to free herself from the rest of her clothing. "What about yours?"

"Seeing and hearing you does wonderful things to me."

She believed him. She turned to face his bed and her gaze landed to the books she'd seen earlier—the sex books. He'd done a lot of research on sex and she could believe he'd been a good student since she knew firsthand what he could do to a woman's body. She climbed onto his bed naked and rolled over, going to the center where she thought he'd want her. Her attention locked on River, watching him undress.

His body looked really firm, his muscles pronounced under that tan, sexy skin—an incredible man. He shed his jeans and she licked her lips at the sight of how aroused he could get without even touching her yet. His cock stood proud and jutted outward from his body. When he moved toward her it slightly swayed with each step. His knee hit the bed and the mattress dipped slightly before he reached for one of the chains he'd kicked loose earlier. His gorgeous eyes burned with lust.

"I'm going to bind your ankles and wrists. You'll have a little wiggle room but not much." He didn't look away from her as he maneuvered to grip her ankle, adjusted her leg so it spread open and her toes pointed toward the bedpost. "You'll have some room to move your legs. That way they are easier to adjust when I'm playing with you."

Brit really liked the idea of him doing that. The man had a real talent for knowing how to touch her to get her really turned on and hot. "Okay."

The cuffs were lightly padded on the inside so when one encircled her ankle it was comfortable even though he adjusted them tightly. She wiggled her toes, feeling no

pain, and nodded at him. River grinned and moved to lock her other ankle into another cuff.

He crawled up the bed along the edge and hit the post. The chain and cuff fell downward and then he secured her arm. In minutes he had each of her limbs restrained, leaving her sprawled out and open. She moved on the bed, realizing that she could freely move them at least half a foot in each direction.

"I can adjust them so you couldn't move but I want you to learn to trust me first and then we'll see if you're ready for that."

"Okay."

He got off the bed and Brit tensed. "Where are you going?"

He bent, reached under the bed, and she knew the answer. She heard the bag move on the floor and held her breath for a second as he pulled out his sex toys. Her heart hammered and she took deep breaths, trying to calm her libido, which suddenly flared to life. The zipper sounded loud in the room as he opened it.

"I have a few things I'm going to use on you."

She silently wondered what items he'd get out, not willing to admit that she'd snooped through his bedroom. Minutes later he rose, smiled at her, and started to set objects on the edge of the bed. She had to crane her neck a little to see and her eyes widened.

"That's a big vibrator."

He chuckled. "Not really."

"I have a bullet one so yeah, that one is big."

He lifted it. "It's six inches in length and an inch in diameter. I'm bigger so I know you can take it since you take me."

Her nipples hardened and her vaginal walls quivered. River moved between her spread thighs, holding it up for her inspection. It was black and curved a little at the tip. He held up a small vial of lube. His focus locked on it as he used his teeth to twist the cap off and coat the vibrator tip generously. He put the cap back on the lube and then dropped it next to his leg. His gaze lingered between her thighs.

"Spread open for me a little more."

She wiggled a little and bent her knees, moving them as far apart as the chains would allow. He flipped the switch and the sound of the vibe had her tensing a little but then she relaxed.

River rubbed the tip of the vibrator against her slit and then just pushed it inside her slowly but didn't pause until it was firmly seated. She gasped, not expecting that. She'd assumed he'd play with her clit first to prepare her but as the vibrations strummed through her vagina she couldn't exactly complain since the stimulation had her aching.

He moved on the bed and reached for a small black box that Brit hadn't investigated. She watched him open it, a grin spread across his lips, and then he withdrew something he kept hidden from her in his curled palm.

"What's that?"

"Something a friend of mine brought back recently from a trip overseas."

"What is it?" She lifted her head, attempting to see through his fingers.

A chuckle came from River. "It's a tiny vibrator. Hold real still, baby."

Brit had no idea what he'd do. She couldn't see when he lowered to crouch between her thighs and his hair fell down, making a curtain of silky strands that tickled her lower stomach. His finger touched her clit and then she frowned as something pinched the little hood directly above it. The small sharp sensation made her hips jerk in response and then something cold touched her clit. She could tell it had to be some sort of metal. The next second she cried out in shock as vibrations hammered her clit strongly.

"Oh God."

"Feels good, doesn't it?"

She stared into his eyes, having a hard time not closing her own, and bit her lip hard. The sensation became stronger and pleasure nearly overwhelmed her. River watched her and then softly cursed.

"You're so responsive that I'm sure you're ready. You've got a sensitive clit, don't you?"

A moan was the only answer Brit could manage. She was going to come hard and soon. The sensations of both vibrators were too much, overloading her system. River softly cursed, grabbed the lube, and looked down. She followed his gaze and watched him coat his cock generously with the slippery substance. He just tossed the lube off the bed and lunged forward to grab another small black box with his ungreased fingers.

A motor came to life and Brit found herself suddenly lifted by the chains. She realized the sound came from above, that he had some kind of electronic lift/pulley system hooked to those chains. Her body rose a few feet from the bed, holding her open, and then the ones on her ankles moved. The chain actually slid along the top corner of the canopy frame to the side of the bed, forcing her legs to spread open further. Her stunned gaze fixed on River.

"It's okay." The motor cut off and he inched closer then shoved pillows under her back to support her weight. "You're just at the right height." He hesitated, dropped the remote, and picked up another one.

Brit couldn't talk, the level of rapture too great to do anything but moan louder when the vibrator inside her pussy throbbed harder. A sheen of sweat broke over her skin and she knew the only reason she hadn't come was due to the shock of being moved. Now that she was suspended and no longer astounded by his hidden lift

system, she could focus on those wonderful vibrations. She closed her eyes, unable to keep them open any longer.

"Easy," River groaned. "Nice and slow."

She didn't understand what he meant until his lubed cock brushed the crack of her ass and then slid across her anus. She experienced a moment of fear but the pleasure was too intense, drowning out everything else. As he slid the crown of his cock there, rubbing her, it shot new sensations straight to her brain. It became too much. Brit threw her head back, crying out loudly, and started to climax hard. Rapture tore throughout her body as River pushed into her ass slowly.

Brit cried out at the extra sensation but she couldn't differentiate pleasure from pain since the strong vibrators were dragging her climax out, her body jerking with each explosion of sensation inside her. River softly cursed, pushed against her ass, and then slowly rocked his hips to work his cock deeper into her a little at a time.

"Fuck," he roared out as his hands gripped her hips.

Brit opened her eyes in time to watch River throw his head back. He looked as if he were in agony from the way his eyes squeezed tightly closed, his mouth was open, and his features were twisted. He trembled violently, his grip on her shaking them both, and then his head dropped forward as his eyes opened. She saw total bliss in his sexy gaze.

He reached between them and turned off the vibrators, gently removed them, and dropped them on the edge of the bed. Brit's tense body went lax. She hung limply from the chains and sweat coated her body. River remained inside her, connecting them. They both breathed hard.

"Goddamn. I am almost embarrassed at how fast I just came but you feel too good."

"You could have warned me you were going to do that."

"You might have said no." A smile spread his lips. "I wanted to come inside you at least once without a condom and it was fifty times better than I imagined." His smile faded. "I don't suppose you'd consider getting on birth control, would you? I'd give anything to fuck you all the time without one. I have to keep up with the testing requirement since I compete at rodeos sometimes. They run full panels. I'm totally clean from sexual diseases."

Brit hesitated. "I'm on the shot but I like double protection."

"You told me you weren't on the Pill." He frowned.

"I lied. I wasn't about to allow you to touch me without a condom."

Something akin to anger tightened his expression and then River slowly withdrew from her body. "I see." He definitely sounded angry. "I'm sorry I asked."

Something was obviously very wrong. River grabbed the remote and turned on the motor to the chains again, lowering her to the bed and pushing the pillows out from under her. He refused to meet her gaze the entire time as he freed her from the cuffs, and then started grabbing up the used sex toys.

"Why are you so angry?"

He kept his back to her while he placed the toys on the dresser, yanked open a drawer, and withdrew a pair of dark-gray sweats that he jerked up his legs. Brit sat up on his bed and drew part of his bedspread over her body to cover her breasts and thighs. He slowly looked over his shoulder at her, his gaze shuttered.

"I've never asked a woman to get on the Pill before because I never trusted one enough to have that kind of faith in her that she wouldn't try to get knocked up on purpose. When my standings were good in the rodeo a lot of women used to beg me to ride them bareback but a lot of those women were looking to get knocked up for the child support since the money would be pretty good if I won. I never took that chance though."

"I'm flattered." She meant it.

"Right. That's why you said no. I'm good enough to fuck but just as long as it's not too intimate, right?"

"I didn't say that. Everything we've done is very intimate, River."

He growled a low curse and grabbed up the used sex toys and headed toward the bedroom door. "I'll be right back. Don't move."

She watched him go, slamming the door behind him, and she sat there bewildered. His fury stunned her and she had no idea why he reacted that strongly. Just because she took the birth control shot didn't mean she couldn't get pregnant—nothing was one hundred percent effective. Doubling up on protection was better. The last thing either of them needed was an accidental pregnancy. Minutes later River stomped back into the room and returned the clean toys to his bag. He shoved it under the bed after zipping it closed.

"I'm going for a horseback ride. Why don't you take a nap or something while I'm gone? Dinner will be in a few hours." He spun away, moving for the door.

"River?"

He paused but refused to look at her. "What?"

"Come here, please?"

He slowly faced her. "What, Brit?"

"Why are you so angry? Please talk to me and tell me what's going on in your head. I married a moody guy and he would just take off on me. Show me how different you are from him by telling me why you're so ticked off."

"That's a cheap shot."

"What was?" She tried hard to appear innocent.

A grin spread River's mouth. "You're a brat, do you know that? You're trying to egg me into talking or you're implying I'm of the same cloth as your ex-asshole."

"I want to know why you're so hot under the collar just because I like double protection. Sometimes the shot fails and I'm afraid of what would happen if it did. I'm a mess and so is my life. I can't raise a baby alone and we don't exactly share matching

wedding bands." She paused. "Not that I'm looking for that because I'm not. I'm just saying we don't need to take that risk in our situation."

His tense shoulders relaxed and he to the bed and sat on the end of it, watching her. "So that's why you don't want me to ride you bareback? You're afraid your shot will fail?"

"Yes. Why else would I want to use double protection?"

Something in his dark gaze hardened. "Because I'm a Raine."

"Okay. And what is that supposed to mean?"

"A lot of women in these parts think my brothers and I are great for a good time but nothing on the long-term side of things. They especially don't want us sharing more body fluids with them than absolutely necessary."

"So you assumed I didn't want you to come inside me because people are dumbasses around here?"

River laughed. "Something like that."

"I'm not from around here."

They studied each other for a long time.

Brit spoke first. "If it means so much to you then we could do it but I want you to know that if anything goes wrong, don't blame me."

"I wouldn't do that."

"Okay."

He smiled. "So no more condoms?"

"I guess not. You're worth a risk or two."

"So are you."

"I'm sure it will be fine though. I mean, I know not to take antibiotics and stuff that will nullify my shots. I read the pamphlet carefully since kids aren't in my plan right now. I'm not exactly sexually active often but still, I didn't want to end up pregnant."

"I'm not ready to be a daddy either. Maybe in a few years that will change."

"Okay then."

River held out his hand to her. "Come on. Let's shower. We're both sweaty and I like the idea of soaping you up. I still want to fuck you against a shower stall."

"That's dangerous. We could slip and fall."

He laughed loudly, pulled her to her feet, and released her hand. "I like to live dangerously."

"Right. You like to climb on the backs of bulls."

"I do." He handed her one of his T-shirts. "Just wear that. I don't have a robe but you'll be covered."

Brit put on his shirt, which fell to her thighs, and followed him out of his room to the bathroom across the hallway. They didn't run into any of his family. River locked the bathroom door. He reached for the bottom of her shirt.

"River?" The male voice that called out sounded just like him.

River sighed. "Hold that thought." He turned and unlocked the door, opened it, and stepped out into the hallway, his body blocking the opening. "What?"

"Trip, Adam, and I are going to the bar in an hour. We thought you might like to take Brit out. You game?"

He looked over his shoulder at Brit. "Want to go out to have some drinks and eat the best ribs in Texas?"

"That sounds good."

"Count us in. We'll meet you guys there." River backed into the bathroom and firmly shut the door. "I guess we're just showering but later I'm going to nail you against that tile wall."

"I'll let you." She winked at him, stripped out of the shirt, and then bent over to turn on the water, showing him her ass.

"Tease."

She wiggled her hips a little. "That's teasing."

"You're going to get it later. Now hurry up. When they say an hour, that's what they mean. I know you women feel the need to do your hair and makeup."

She laughed.

Chapter Eight

The bar happened to be packed with people. Loud country music throbbed through Brit's ears the second she walked inside on River's arm. He'd driven them there in his truck but they planned to meet the others there. Her grip on him tightened a little and he glanced down at her, amused.

"No need to be nervous," he said loud enough to be heard over the noise. "We're going to have fun."

"I didn't expect this many people," she stated honestly.

"It's rodeo season and Thomas, the owner, has satellite service and a few big-screen televisions that will have all the events showing. Everyone within fifty miles will be here to watch them and to bullshit with their friends and neighbors."

Great, she thought sarcastically. She'd envisioned a quiet small-town bar, having a few drinks with River and his brothers, and maybe talking him out onto an empty dance floor for a couple of songs before eating a meal together.

Trip, and a man who looked similar enough to him to be his brother, sat at a corner table and waved. River spotted them and moved that way, leading Brit behind him but his hand on hers kept her arm laced with his. River motioned her to scoot in so she did, finding herself nearly hip to hip with the blond man she hadn't met. He grinned at her and held out his hand.

"I'm Adam and you must be Brit." His gaze traveled over her quickly and then he shook his head at River. "You had to get to her first, huh?"

River sat down on the other side of Brit and grinned while they ordered drinks. "Deal with it. Brit and I knew each other before I returned to Hailey. She became mine before we ever reached the ranch."

"You suck." Adam chuckled, took a sip of his beer, and then met Brit's curious gaze.

"It's a long story but the short of it is, all the best women end up with Ryder or River before poor Trip and I ever lay eyes on them to get a chance to snag them first."

Trip snorted. "But we end up with them last." He winked at Brit. "When you're tired of his ass feel free to come see Adam or me. We're more into long-term relationships."

Something in River's expression tightened. "Knock it off."

Trip drank shots of something dark, which he downed in one gulp each time. "I'm just being honest with the lady. You aren't known for sticking in there with one woman for longer than a weekend. I'm just letting her know when she's ready for something more lasting, I'm available. You did warn her, didn't you?"

"You really want to talk about someone sticking around for long? How is your wife?" River's tone turned icy cold.

The shot glass slammed down on the table hard and loud as Trip glared at River. "Asshole."

"Leave her alone. She's special to me." River glared back at his adopted brother.

Trip stood. "I'm going to go play some pool."

"That wasn't cool," Adam sighed. "He's hurting."

River hesitated. "He just pissed me off." He turned his head, meeting Brit's wary gaze. "I told you I have a past and part of that was becoming a bit of a drifter when it came to women but this isn't some weekend thing between us. I mean that."

"I didn't ask for more." Brit didn't look away from him as the waitress dropped off drinks. She wrapped her hand around the soda she'd ordered. "You're the one pushing for a month, not me."

Adam laughed. "Uh-oh. Has River finally fallen for a woman who isn't falling all over him first?"

"Shut up, bro." River kept his gaze on Brit. "We'll discuss this at home in our room."

"Okay."

Adam shook his head. "We've got to do something about Trip."

River turned his head and Brit followed his gaze. Trip stood at the bar slamming more shots. The big blond swayed a little as he stumbled and then definitely showed his drunkenness when he staggered toward the back corner where the pool tables were set up.

"He's been drinking every night since she left." Adam watched Trip every unsteady step of the way. "And every night I'm here driving his ass home, having flashbacks of Dusty. Maybe we should throw him into rehab too, as a preventative measure. He's on his way to becoming an alcoholic."

River frowned and then turned his head, talking to Brit. "He married some woman he fell hard and fast for but she left five days later. It devastated him. He believes he loved her and now she won't take his calls or tell him why she ran off."

"And she had him served to go to court to have the marriage annulled. It turns out her daddy is some bigwig Washington political type who is pulling strings to get it done super fast." Adam looked disgusted. "It really hurt his pride to find out she's rich and he thinks that's why she left when she saw his mobile home. He's proud."

"It's a fine home." River's sounded angry. "He worked hard to save up the money to buy it. It was backbreaking work to clear that hilltop to level it for his home."

"She probably thought she'd live in the ranch house." Adam sipped his drink.

River frowned. "Why the hell would she want that? When I settle down, I'm sure as hell not going to live there. I want my own place without brothers underfoot. I envy Dusty for getting his own place."

Adam shrugged. "You know how it goes. They hear how big the Raine ranch is and a lot of women assume we have money."

"Yeah." River glanced at Brit. "Navarro's first wife happened to be the same way. She thought he had big bucks but the truth is, we just do okay. The second she figured it out, she made his life a living hell until they divorced. We have a lot of land but it's been in our family for a few generations."

"We work hard at keeping it too." Adam sipped his beer. "Where's Ryder?"

"Hell if I know. His truck was gone when Brit and I came downstairs. I thought he'd be here by now. We'll order dinner when he arrives."

Adam leaned over the table a little. "Did you hear that Morris Decon died late last night? The news is all over town."

"Fuck," River gasped, paling slightly. "I hadn't heard. Do you think Ryder knows?"

Adam shrugged. "Hell if I know."

"Who's Morris Decon?" Brit glanced between the two men.

River leaned in. "He used to be one of the town's biggest assholes but he also happened to be the father of the one woman my brother loved. Morris Decon ran with a bunch of racist bigots who think anyone not wall white should die. You can imagine how thrilled he had to be when his daughter hooked up with my twin."

Adam nodded. "She left town, just blew out of here and left Ryder without so much as a 'fuck you very much'."

"It tore him up," River added. "Morris' death might shake him a little in the memory department."

"That is horrible. She just left without saying why?"

"Yeah." Adam nodded. "Broke his heart and then some. He was never the same."

"Bitter," River agreed.

"I'm sorry to hear it." Brit wondered silently if Ryder's old girlfriend was a woman he and River had shared but she wasn't about to ask, not really wanting to know.

"I'll go apologize to Trip, even if he asked for it." River scooted to the side of the booth and stood, taking his beer with him. He gave Adam a knowing look. "Don't hit on Brit while I'm gone." His gaze slid to her. "If he does, smack him upside the head. I'll be right back."

She nodded. "I'll be here."

Adam bumped her with his shoulder, drawing her attention. She turned her head and looked up at him. He smiled. "He really likes you. He usually runs from commitment and trust me, a month is probably the most committed he's ever been."

"Thanks?" She wasn't sure what else to say or exactly how to reply to that kind of statement.

"So are you a big rodeo fan?"

"No." She looked away from him to watch River make his way across the bar. He stopped a few times to smile and talk to other men. "Not really."

"I could explain what is going on if you want to learn."

She gave Adam her full attention again. "Thanks but I'm very familiar with it. I just don't enjoy watching the events. It's a long story."

"We have some time."

She smiled tightly. "It's not a good story I want to share."

"Ah. It probably involves a man then."

Her smile fell. "Good guess."

"You hooked up with a rodeo bum?"

"No."

"But someone tied to it in some way?"

She nodded, feeling decidedly uncomfortable. "I learned more about the sport than I ever wanted to know. How do you like living in a small town?"

"Changing the subject, are you?"

Her smile returned in a flash. "Yes."

He smiled back. "I can respect that. Sometimes it's as boring as all get out living in Hailey but I know everyone, good or bad, and for the most part I get along with the locals. I work too much and don't have a lot of free time to ponder my life choices. I left for a while but then returned. I'm not sorry I did. I missed my brothers, not that many of them are around all that much."

Brit arched an eyebrow.

"Drake is the oldest and he's an attorney in Dallas. He's been visiting home more often recently though since he got divorced. I can't say I'm sorry about that. He married this real snooty type, kind of cold and bitchy. Navarro is solid and he's a homebody so I get to see him all the time. River used to travel the rodeo circuit until he got hurt and now works with horses, just not ours." He paused. "Ryder is in a band and they travel a lot unless the bookings dry up or one of the members needs time off. Dusty is in town but he tends to hole up with his new friends for weeks at a time so yeah, I wish they were all around more. You'll get to meet all of them eventually if you stick around. Of course Trip used to be solid. He and Navarro have always run the ranch."

"Where did you go when you left here?"

"Here and there." He shrugged. "I—"

"Britney?" a familiar male voice interrupted.

Something inside Brit froze for a second and then her heart pounded hard. She stared up in alarm at a face from her past. Brad Pillow hadn't changed much in the four years since she'd seen him last. What had brought him to Hailey was a mystery and a nightmare. Fear gripped her, making her mute, as she gaped up at him in horror.

"I knew it had to be you." Brad grinned. "The hair is longer, you've lost weight, but I'd recognize you anywhere. You still have the prettiest blue eyes I've ever seen."

She couldn't breathe. She had to force air into her lungs when her chest started to burn and her face tingled hot but it took her seconds to get it past the lump in her throat. She took a breath and then another but still couldn't form words. Brad Pillow stared at her, waiting for her to say something.

"You know her?" Adam glanced at Brit, then frowned at Brad. "I'm Adam Raine. I—"

"He just met me." She scooted for the edge of the booth to put distance between herself and Adam. "I'm on my way to Dallas and stopped in here for a meal. It's a long drive from New Mexico. That's where I've been living," she lied. She stood on shaky legs that she prayed would support her weight. She trembled and her fingers curled into fists at her sides to attempt to hide that fact. "It was good seeing you but I need to get back on the road again. I have a job interview there in the morning." She darted a terrified look at Adam. "Thanks for the conversation, mister." She tried to inch past Brad when she faced him again.

His hand grabbed her arm and he frowned, not allowing her to move around him. "Kyle is out and he's looking for you."

A moan rose in her throat but she managed not to utter it. She fought the urge to tear her arm out of the loose hold and bolt for the door. "I'm aware. I don't want anything to do with him. I'd appreciate it if you didn't mention seeing me or telling him I'm on my way to Dallas."

Brad had light green eyes and they narrowed while he stared down at her. His hold tightened a little. "What kind of friend would I be if I did that?"

He wasn't her friend, he was Kyle's. The two had grown up together, run in the same circles, and had gotten into some of the same bad habits. "Please, Brad? Just let me go."

He cocked his head. "I don't think so. Not unless you want to persuade me." His gaze lowered to the top edge of her shirt where the swell of her breasts began. "I always did envy him when he found you under that rock. Watching him with you made me wish I were the one touching you."

Bile rose. She knew exactly what he offered. Blackmail. If she let him touch her, he wouldn't tell Kyle he'd seen her. Brad had always given her the creeps with the intense way he'd watched her sometimes. She'd suspected he was interested in her more than he should have been, but he had never hit on her for fear of Kyle's rage. They might have been close friends but her ex-husband had an insane possessive streak when it came to men touching his wife. His thing had been showing off what he had, making sure others envied him, but never allowing them too close.

"Let me go," she whispered.

"Is there a problem?" Adam stood, leaving the booth.

Brad frowned and turned his attention on the other man. "No. Britney and I are old friends. We're going to go get acquainted again." He looked away and turned, his hold on her arm tightening. "My truck is right outside. We're going for a drive and have a talk. We'll catch up while we discuss old times."

Her mind tried to work around the terror that filled her. Should she go with him and then escape outside? Make a scene in the bar so he couldn't take her? He took a step and pulled her, making her numb legs stumble. A hand grabbed her other arm and jerked her back.

"You're not taking her anywhere." Adam shook his head, glaring at Brad.

She looked up at Adam. He held on to her arm but his focus was fixed on Brad. He frowned deep enough that lines crinkled the corners of his mouth and his eyes had narrowed dangerously.

"Release her," Adam demanded. "She doesn't look willing to chat with you."

Brad turned to face him. "Britney is none of your concern. Stay out of this."

Adam shook his head. "Take your hand off her or you and I are going to go get acquainted outside in the parking lot." He paused. "I'm a fighter, not a lover, when it comes to men."

Frustration was an easy emotion to read on Brad's face as he studied Adam. "I'm not going to fight with you. You're putting your nose where it doesn't belong." His chin lowered and he glared down at Brit. "Tell him how much he doesn't want to get involved, Britney. Mr. Raine here has no idea how nasty Kyle can get."

Brit knew a threat when she heard it. Adam had said his name and Brad had caught it. He'd tell her insane ex-husband she had spent time with Adam Raine and he'd come after him. Her mouth went dry. Her terrified gaze flew to Adam.

"It's okay, mister. Just sit down. I'll go with him."

Adam frowned at her, searched her eyes, and then nodded. His fingers released her arm. "Fine."

Brad smirked in satisfaction that he'd won and turned away, took a step, and his hold on Brit tightened when he tugged on her arm.

"Hey!" Adam called out.

Brad turned his head but never saw the fist coming until it slammed into his jaw, causing him to fall to the floor. Brit gasped when she was jerked forward by his tight hold on her arm but she didn't land on top of him. A beefy arm hooked around her waist and yanked her back, tearing her free from Brad's grip. She found herself locked against Adam's body until he gently lowered her back to her feet.

"Are you all right?" He stared at her with concern.

Her mouth opened.

"You just made a big mistake," Brad yelled, fighting to get to his feet.

Adam gripped Brit's hips, lifting her as she gasped, and spun her around. Her feet came down on the booth seat. The hands left her and she twisted her head just in time

to see Adam turn back to take on Brad. Brad took a swing with his fist but Adam ducked, plowing one of his own into his opponent's stomach.

Brad made a loud sound when the air was forced from his lungs and his body was thrown backward. He hit a table, landed on his back, and beers were knocked over. Glass broke and the voices in the bar silenced until only music could be heard.

"I don't know where you're from," Adam said loudly. "But we don't manhandle women in Hailey."

"Damn it," the bartender shouted. "Don't break up my bar. Take it outside, Adam!"

Brad rolled to his side and clumsily staggered to his feet. The music died, the room going eerily silent except for the sound of beer running off the table to splatter on the floor. He glared at Adam, rubbed his lower stomach, and then roared out something that wasn't even a word as he lunged forward.

Adam tensed before they both slammed into the table inches from Brit. She flinched, lost her balance and fell back but the wall stopped her from tipping over. She saw Brad pull back his fist but Adam caught it, then they rolled so the table creaked loudly but didn't crash to the floor. They wrestled, both struggling to free an arm to punch each other.

"I said take it outside!" the bartender shouted again. "Do you hear me? Don't bust up my tables."

Movement drew Brit's focus from the fight to the person who walked up behind the combating men. River grabbed Brad and lifted his body to pull him away from Adam. He pinned the slightly smaller man's arms behind his back.

"Knock it off," River ordered in a gruff voice. He frowned at Adam. "What the hell? You know to fight outside. What happened?"

Brad struggled but River had a good hold on the man and he pulled him off balance to force Brad up onto his toes. Adam straightened, running a hand through his blond hair, and took some deep breaths.

"He tried to force Brit outside with him."

River's head turned and his angry gaze pinned Brit where she stood. "Are you okay?"

She nodded. "I just want to leave, mister." She really hoped he caught on and didn't say anything that would give their connection away. Fear for River's safety had her trembling. "I just stopped in for a meal and now I'm out of here." She inched along the wall and then carefully got down from the seat. She kept her eyes on River and then fled for the door, not missing his confusion. "Please keep hold of him until I drive away," she called out over her shoulder before quickly going for the exit.

The sun had gone down when she burst out the door of the bar and she quickly turned for the parking lot. She saw the ranch truck and headed for it. She'd wait there. It wasn't as though she could grab a taxi in the small town, certain it didn't boast one,

and she sure couldn't walk back to the ranch. She would get lost. Worse, if she walked Brad might find her on the road. She shivered over that concept.

She opened the passenger door, glad that no one locked their doors in Hailey, and climbed inside. She huddled low on the seat, scooting down until she was sure that Brad wouldn't spot her when he came outside. She heard the bar door bang loudly as though someone had kicked it open. She peeked up a little over the dash and sure enough, Brad stormed out. She ducked and held her breath. Minutes later she heard an engine roar to life and a vehicle left the parking lot in a hurry. She guessed that Brad had taken off after her in hopes of catching up with her on the road.

Seconds later someone yanked open the driver's door and she gasped, staring at River. He froze, his expression thunderous, and his lips pressed tightly together in anger. He only hesitated a second before he climbed in. He muttered something she didn't catch, jerked the keys from his front jeans pocket, and then started the truck.

"Do you want to tell me what the hell that was about?"

"Please get us out of here," she pleaded.

"Are you going to sit up?"

"No."

He turned his head, stared at her with narrowed, suspicious eyes that were still angry, and then he faced forward, throwing the truck in drive. Brit stayed down, worried that Brad lurked out there, driving around searching for her, and didn't want him to spot her inside the truck clearly marked with the painted side doors that said Raine Ranch.

"I want answers, Brit." He paused. "Or is it Britney?"

She could hear rage simmering in his tight voice. She sighed. "I told you I have a past. That man knows my ex-husband. I need to leave when we get to the ranch, River. You have to fix whatever you did to my car."

"It isn't happening. You're staying."

"Damn it!" Frustration rose and some of her fear drained away. "He knows Adam's last name, which is yours too. I can't stay. It would be..." She closed her mouth.

"It would be what?"

"Dangerous, River. Stupid too. I won't put your family in jeopardy, and if I stay, if that guy tells my ex-husband he saw me here with Adam Raine and he finds me at the ranch..." She swallowed the lump that formed. "I have to go."

The silence in the truck grew uncomfortable as River drove. Minutes passed. He finally spoke.

"When we get home we're going to talk and you're going to tell me everything."

Shit, she thought. It definitely would be one conversation she didn't want to have.

Chapter Nine

"Eat and talk," River demanded, slamming a plate with a ham sandwich down on the table in front of Brit.

Brit licked her lips, wetting them, and watched as he stiffly sat in the chair across the table from her. They were alone in the kitchen and so far she hadn't seen any of his other family. She didn't want to share her story with anyone but she knew she at least owed him an explanation.

"When I said I had some familiarity with horses, I meant it. My father owned a horse stable in Northern California. I worked with him growing up. We boarded a lot of them that people didn't have time for. The money wasn't that good but we got by. I saved and put myself through college to become a physical therapist. It took longer but I did it."

"I bet your father is proud."

Pain sliced through her. "He was." She fought tears and won. "I moved to Nevada to work at a children's hospital but Dad had a harder time holding on to the stables without me there to help out. After a couple of years, he decided to sell it. I had a few weeks of vacation time so I came home." She paused. "Kyle, my ex-husband, and his father showed up interested in buying it for some company I assumed they worked for."

"So that's how you met the asshole?"

A grin flashed. "Yes. He was handsome, blond, funny, and really down to earth. I liked that about him. His father bought the stables and I returned home. A week later Kyle showed up at my apartment saying he couldn't live without me. To make a long story short, he swept me off my feet, add in a few drinks and it being Nevada where you can literally get married in the blink of an eye, and I woke up with a hangover and a new husband."

Dark eyebrows rose. "That's fast."

"Yeah. I freaked out but Kyle acted really happy about it. He talked me into giving it a try, and to be honest, I wasn't on the birth control shot back then. With my work schedule I never dated and I figured with my bad luck I'd gotten pregnant. Stupid move on my part but I agreed to at least see if we could work it out. A few weeks with Kyle and I realized I'd make a mistake."

"Not a great lover?"

She hesitated. "He drank."

"Alcoholic?"

"I didn't know at first because he hid it but yeah, he had a serious problem. I thought I could fall in love with him but he became a different person when he got drunk. The sober Kyle had a fun, loving personality but after he drank he turned into this brooding, dark man."

"I know a little something about it."

She studied him.

"My brother and father."

"Right." He'd mentioned that about his father. "Your brother too?"

"You haven't met him yet. He is recovering and off the booze now but yeah. He and Dad were drinking buddies."

"I'm sorry." She adjusted in the chair, getting more comfortable. "Every time I got to the point where I wanted out he'd beg me to stay. He promised to get help."

"They tend to make those gestures but don't follow through on them for the most part."

"Yeah. That summed up Kyle." She looked away from his dark gaze and studied the table instead. "Only it wasn't just the drinking." She lifted her eyes to meet his. "Everything he'd told me turned out to be a lie. He not only had a drinking problem but his so-called job didn't even exist."

That had River's eyebrows lifting.

"When Kyle and his father bought the stables he'd let me believe they worked for the company that purchased it. I discovered they were the owners. My husband turned out not to be so poor." She blew out a breath. "You have no idea how shocked I felt. I mean, we lived in a dive of an apartment, he drove my car since he didn't have one in Nevada, and he had millions of dollars."

River's mouth dropped open and then he closed it, frowning. "Millions?"

She nodded. "Loaded. He gave me this sob story about how women chased after him for his wallet and how for the first time in his life he knew he was with someone who actually loved him since I hadn't had a clue about his wealth."

"I bet that helped."

"Wrong. It hurt me deeply that he had lied to me from the get-go. I found myself married to a stranger. I almost wished the truth hadn't come out. Everything changed. He said there wasn't a reason to lie anymore and I needed to go home with him. It turns out his master bathroom ended up being bigger than the entire apartment we'd spent the first year of our marriage living in."

"That must have been better at least."

"No." She frowned at River. "My dad raised me pretty basic. Suddenly I found myself thrust into this life I hated. Have you ever been to some stuffy rich-guy club? I stuck out like a sore thumb. His friends were rude, their wives downright vicious, and Kyle hadn't been easy to live with but he became unbearable at that point."

"So you divorced him?"

"I tried. It was the first time he hit me. We got into a screaming match and he told me Marthums don't divorce."

River's eyes narrowed. "Did you say Marthum?"

Brit's heart did a little flop in her chest as she hesitated and then nodded. "Yeah. Kyle Marthum was my husband."

The chair hit the floor as River launched to his feet. One hand ran through his hair while he paled, staring at her with a horrified expression on his face. "Kevin Marthum's only son? That Kyle?"

River worked in the world of rodeo. She'd known that and figured the name would be familiar but she hadn't expected his dramatic reaction. Miserably, she nodded, watching him.

"Fuck." He let his hand drop. "They back all the rodeo stars, the pros, and finance most of the big competitions. If he bought your father's stables, he did it to convert it into a training camp. He has dozens of them for his favorite riders."

"I know that now."

Dark eyes closed, River's hand dropped to his side, he took a deep breath and then his eyes opened again. "It's a good thing I'm not on the circuit anymore." He frowned. "Your ex-husband would make sure I never competed again." He paled again. "Damn it, Brit. I work a lot of those shows. They could have me banned as a wrangler."

"I have been telling you that I need to leave and that Kyle could make your life hell."

"But you didn't tell me who he was, damn it." Anger flashed in his gaze but then it faded. "It doesn't matter. I'm just a bit stunned." He bent, gripped the chair, and righted it. He stared at her. "It doesn't change anything."

"Have you lost your mind? I just told you who he is. I warned you that he could make your life hell."

"I understand that." River sighed. "I'm still not fixing your car or letting you leave." He sat again in the chair. "Tell me the rest of it."

"There's not much to tell," she lied. "He had a lot of money. I filed for divorce, he hired attorneys who blocked the motions, and he did a lot of shitty things to keep us married."

His eyes narrowed again. "Brit..."

"Fine." She nodded. "It turned ugly, all right? He did everything to try to stop me, including ruining my name after he circulated some awful lies about me. I couldn't get a job, no one even wanted to rent me an apartment, and he started stalking me. The police wouldn't arrest him. He had all that money, convinced them I had lied about everything, trying to get more of a divorce settlement from him, and they bought it. I had to live with my dad and Kyle did a smear campaign from hell until my father ended up having a heart attack from the stress that killed him." Pain sliced through her. "Kyle, in effect, killed my dad with his bullshit and refusal to let me divorce him."

"I thought once you filed for divorce, that was it."

"So did I until his attorneys filed motion after motion to stall the courts. I would show up only to be told the date had been postponed and told to hire a lawyer. I never had access to a dime of Kyle's money so I couldn't afford one. He made sure of that."

"I'm sorry."

He looked it too, Brit acknowledged, staring into his sincere gaze. "I have to leave. He'll find out I'm here and he'll do or say horrible things to get back at me. He does that, River. Anyone who helps me, tries to protect me, he goes after too. I had a few friends who put me up after my father's death. Kyle spread rumors that they dealt drugs until I left their houses. I wasn't about to let him ruin them the way he did my father and me. I don't want that happening to your family either."

"Is that what he did with your father? Made people think he dealt drugs?"

Anger burned through her. "No. Worse. I said my father raised me alone. My mother died in a car accident right after I turned five. Kyle spread it around that my father had killed her. You know, put her in the car and drove it off the hill where she'd lost control of her car. My father loved my mother, he never would have hurt her, but it didn't stop Kyle from making those nasty accusations. It destroyed my father that his neighbors and friends looked at him with suspicion and it broke his heart to even consider the possibility that anyone thought him capable of something that horrific. He never remarried, didn't date, even when I was in my teens and tried to set him up with some single moms of my friends. He always told me no one could compare to my mother in his heart and it wouldn't be fair to any woman to live in her shadow." Tears slipped out. "And Kyle made up those horrible things just to get back at me for refusing to come home to him. He targeted my father for giving me a safe place to live."

"Son of a bitch," River muttered, leaned across the table, and grabbed hold of Brit's hand. "He must be one hell of an asshole."

She used her free hand to wipe away her tears. "Kyle is a bastard, River. He'll say or do anything to punish anyone who stands in his way of making me pay for leaving him. They have this family history of no divorces and it's almost as if his entire honor depends on it remaining that way for him. I managed to get away and he won't ever let it go. He's spiteful and he's not right in his head. I need to leave."

"It's not happening. Let him make up anything he wants. We've weathered some bad rumors as Raines. Nothing he could say or make up would sway me from being with you."

"Then you've lost your mind." She jerked her hand away. "He's also dangerous when he drinks. He can grow violent in a snap. Trust me on that. I know."

"I told you he doesn't scare me. I'd kick his ass."

"What if he shows up with a gun? You can't fight a bullet. He did that once. He showed up with a shotgun at a friend's home I stayed in. He threatened to kill me if I didn't get into his truck. He's unstable and he's really angry right now." She paused, bit her lip, released it, and then locked gazes with River, knowing she had to tell him more

to make him understand. "He served four years in prison and I put him there. He just got released. Do you understand? He's spent that time thinking of ways to get revenge on me. Whatever you think you may be facing, you have no idea how bad it can get, but I do. You don't want any part of this mess."

He paled slightly but then nodded. "So he's probably really bent out of shape. I got it. What did he go in for?"

She refused to tell him. It was still too painful to share and she didn't want him to know what had been done to her. She'd left that part of her life behind and wanted to keep it there.

"It doesn't matter and I don't want to talk about it. The point is that he isn't the type to take responsibility for the actions that landed him in prison. He blames me and he is going to show up here. I have no idea how bad it will get but I can guess pretty scary. That's why Dale sent me here. He thought I'd be safe if Kyle couldn't find me. He will though, now that his friend saw me and heard the name Raine. It's just a matter of time before he comes."

"Then I'll be waiting and ready."

"You're insane if you don't let me go."

River suddenly grinned. "I guess I am a little nuts." He winked. "About you."

"Damn it, I'm being serious." Frustration poured through her. "Aren't you hearing me when I say it's dangerous?"

Something turned cold in River's eyes, the spark in them dimming until she nearly got a chill from the icy look. "I'm not a pussy cat, Brit. I can handle your ex-asshole and you will be safe here. We'll take a few precautions. If he shows up we'll be expecting him. I'll have a talk with a friend of mine in law enforcement and it will get handled."

She stared at him, mute, astonished that he refused to understand how dangerous Kyle could be.

"What about your sister-in-law? If you're going for macho bullshit, think about her. She's pregnant."

A frown marred River's mouth. "Trina and Nav have been talking about taking a mini vacation. They wanted to go to Houston to visit my brother. Now would be a great time. I can take over for Nav, do his chores, and I will keep you glued to my side." He flashed a grin. "Not a bad thing in my book and you can show me what you've got with horses."

"I need to go so he follows me away from your family."

"You need to stop harping on that and give it up, baby. It's not happening." He slowly stood. "I'm keeping you real close to me until you're no longer in danger." His gaze fixed on her breasts. "Real close."

Frustration burned. "Sex with me isn't worth this much trouble, River."

"I happen to disagree." He held out his hand. "Since you're not eating anymore, let's go upstairs. I distinctly remember you and I have a date with a shower wall."

She hesitated. "Nothing good is going to come of me staying."

He chuckled. "Say that when I'm buried inside you." He gripped her hand, tugging her to her feet. "Go up ahead of me. I have a few phone calls to make and then I'll meet you in the bathroom."

* * * * *

River waited until he was certain Brit had gone upstairs to walk to the phone on the wall. It still stunned him that she'd been married to Kyle Marthum. He wasn't about to tell her that he'd met the asshole more than a few times when he'd been active in the rodeo circuit. Imagining her with that pompous ass was hard for him to do. The guy had been a snob, arrogant, and now he knew he'd been abusive to a wife he never deserved.

"We have a problem," he said softly into the mouthpiece. "I need you to get Nav and Trina up to your place and I need you here."

"What's the problem?" The man he spoke to instantly sounded tense.

"I need a favor, bro." He paused. "I'm dating the ex-wife of Kyle Marthum. She's not telling me the whole story but she said he just got out of prison and he's got a hard-on for revenge against her. She's staying at the house. Dale sent her to us to hide but we ran into someone she knows. She thinks her ex is going to make trouble. She claims he's dangerous and with the amount of fear I saw in her eyes, I tend to believe it. His father is a real piece of work too. Can you do anything?"

There was silence on the other end of the phone. "I'm on it. I'll get Nav and Trina out of there. We don't want anything happening to that baby."

"Damn straight. I want them clear if this turns into a mess."

"I'll show up with all the information tomorrow and will call in a few favors."

"Thanks, Drake."

"That's what brothers are for."

River hung up, relieved that had been easier than he'd hoped for. He made a few more calls to his brothers, giving them a heads-up. He wanted everyone alert on the ranch in case trouble by the name of Marthum arrived. Anger burned in his gut. No one was going to hurt Brit. He wouldn't allow it.

It wasn't Kyle who really worried him, but Kevin, his father, had a reputation for being a real vindictive son of a bitch. The man doted on his only son. If Brit really had put his precious boy in prison then the man was the one to watch out for. He'd heard stories about Kevin Marthum ruining lives of the men who had screwed him over.

Dale answered his cell phone on the second ring. "Is Brit all right?"

"How'd you know this call was about her?"

"Ryder?"

"Close."

"River, what are you doing at the ranch?"

"You said my family wanted me home."

"You never listen or do what you're told. Is Brit all right?"

"Yeah. She's fine. Why did you assume this was about her?"

"I saw the caller ID for the ranch. Your brothers call me on their cell phones, not the house line."

"What's her story, Dale?"

The other man remained silent.

"Damn it, I want answers."

"She'll tell you if she wants you to know anything about her private matters."

"I know some of it. She was married to Kyle Marthum, he's recently been released from prison, and she's afraid he's coming after her."

"Yeah. She's got a reason to be afraid. That's why I sent her to your family. Nobody is going to get to her out there."

"What's the whole story, Dale?"

The other man sighed. "If she wanted you to know she'd tell you. You're calling me, which tells me she hasn't made it any of your business."

River hesitated, not wanting to get her fired but he needed to make it clear that everything about Brit was his business now. "She's mine, Dale. She's scared, some asshole is after her, and I want to know exactly what kind of threat she's facing."

"Shit. You keep your hands off that woman."

"Too late. Answer my questions."

"Son of a bitch," Dale raged. "She's not some rodeo tramp, damn it. She's fragile and not your type of woman. I never should have sent her to you boys. She's too pretty. I should have figured one of you would try to jump on her. Damn it, River! I—"

"Need to shut up and take your mind away from where you're heading," River intervened. "She really matters to me and I know she's special."

That seemed to calm Dale. "Okay. You need to get your answers from her."

"I'm calling you."

"Damn. Okay. Kyle was always an asshole. He did some bad shit to her and that's all I'm saying. He's set on getting her back and he'll really hurt her if he gets his grubby paws on her."

"That isn't happening."

"Damn straight."

"How'd you meet her? Let's start there."

"I donate money to some women's shelters. I dropped off a check and I recognized her."

"She worked there?"

Dale hesitated. "No, River. She lived there. They may have locked Kyle up but they couldn't charge his father with shit. Kevin's made it his mission to terrify Brit. He found her about a week before I ran into her. He'd made some threats and she knew she'd be safe at the shelter. They protect women there, their locations are secure, and she had nowhere else to go. She had no idea I knew who she was but hell, I was a guest at some parties Kevin threw. It was big news when Kyle brought his new wife home. She didn't remember me but there were a lot of people at those things so that's no surprise. I'd heard what happened and I offered her a job, knowing full well Kevin couldn't bully me into firing her. He's made a habit of doing that. No one else would hire her or they'd fire her as soon as Kevin got a lead on her again. I paid her in cash to help her hide and it didn't leave a paper trail. I even had a friend rent her an apartment that is off record. I've tried hard to keep her off the radar."

"What did Kyle go to prison for?"

"That's Brit's story, River. I won't tell it. It was bad shit though. She's lucky to be alive. I don't care how much money some folks have, it don't mean they aren't animals."

"I need to know—"

"Then ask her yourself. I swore I'd never share her story and I keep my word. Just keep her safe." He paused. "And if you hurt that girl, you're going to need a doctor to remove my boot from your ass." Dale hung up.

River's gaze lifted to the ceiling when he hung up the phone. Brit was a sweet woman, vulnerable even though she tried to hide it, and the idea of any man hurting her ripped right through his gut. He'd never been so hung up on a woman and wasn't sure how deep his feelings ran, but she meant a hell of a lot to him. No way would he allow her to run away. He'd keep her safely at his side where he could protect her.

River's jaw clenched along with his fists. He wasn't letting her run. He forced his feet to move, his body to relax, and flexed his jaw to loosen it up. Keeping her safe had become his priority. As thrown off as he felt with his strong attachment to her, he wasn't going to worry about it now. He'd just go with it, see where it led, and worry about how deep his feelings went later.

He heard the water in the bathroom going when he paused in front of the closed door. His cock hardened instantly just imagining what he wanted to do to her. The smile came next. Brit made his blood boil. He couldn't get enough of her. It wasn't just sex. The sound of her laugh and the sparkle in her pretty eyes left him feeling gut punched every time.

Brit waited naked in the shower stall when he shut the door behind him and locked it. He reached for his shirt as he toed off a boot. She opened the door, already wet, and that smile of hers made his cock instantly hard. His fingers twitched to touch her. She wiggled one of her little fingers at him to motion him to her and he knew in that moment that she could totally wrap him around it with no effort at all.

Oh hell, he thought. I'm in love.

Chapter Ten

Brit laughed, her hands on her jeans-clad hips, and shook her head. She watched River brush off his jeans as he struggled to his feet in the horse stall. His sheepish grin made her laugh again.

"So what was that about you saying you were some super horse wrangler? I thought that would mean you could ride."

"I can." He shook his head in mock disgust, deeply amused. "Brownie here is mad at me for being gone so long. He's got a pissy attitude."

"He just threw your ass off him. Maybe you shouldn't try to ride bareback."

"He is showing me how displeased he is that I haven't ridden him in five months."

She released her hips and carefully approached the mustang that blew out air and sidestepped away from her. Her attention fixed on him.

"Easy, Brownie. If you really want to make him mad, let me climb on you."

"Hell no." River kept his voice low, all traces of humor gone. "No one rides him but me. He'll buck you off."

"The way he just did you?" She smiled and flashed him an amused glance. "What do you mean, no one rides him but you?"

"He won't allow it. He was born wild and got injured. This rescue outfit caught him and decided to put him down after he tried to kill anyone who got close enough to try to treat the nasty infection. I bought him from them to save him. I transported him here and had to tame him a bit just for him to not take a chunk out of me while I doctored his leg. We think a wolf bit into him. It took me months to get him to let me ride him but he refuses to allow anyone else to."

"And you haven't been home in five months?"

"I know. Don't give me that look. My brothers take real good care of him, he's got plenty of running room on our ranch, and he likes his freedom."

"I'd buck you off too if you neglected me for that length of time."

River chuckled. "I promise I'll ride you many times every single day."

Brit decided not to comment on that. She focused on the horse instead, opened up her hands at her sides, and approached him slowly. "Easy, Brownie. Good boy. I won't hurt you."

"Hon, back off. He isn't tame. I'm really the only one he puts up with. I don't want him to hurt you."

"Did that mean ole River take off and leave you?" She ignored River, stepping closer to the horse. "It's okay." She started to hum a lullaby.

Brownie tossed his head, his wary gaze fixed on her, but he let her inch close enough to lift her hand in front of his nose so he could take a sniff at her. He danced a little where he stood but he didn't move away.

"He could bite." River's voice was closer behind her and softer. "Back up, Brit. I mean it."

She kept humming and then rubbed Brownie's nose. He froze but didn't try to snap at her. Her hand inched upward, petting him, and then she reached for his face with both hands to rub by his ears.

"Damn," River muttered. "He's letting you touch him."

"I'm good with horses," she whispered. "I bet he'd let me ride him in five minutes or less. He's a big ole puppy of a horse. He just wants some love and attention."

"So do I." River stepped against her body and wrapped one arm firmly around her waist. His other hand lifted, petting Brownie's neck. "He likes you."

"I have that effect on stubborn males." She turned her head, smiling up at River. "As you know I also get that same reaction from jackasses."

His hand on her stomach gripped gently. "Watch it or I'll see if you're ticklish."

"Not near a skittish horse you won't. It'll scare him when I scream."

"I wouldn't have to tickle you within an inch of your life if you didn't call me names."

"If the personality fits..."

"I'm a bit mule-headed, I admit, but a jackass?" He winked at her. "Really?"

She smiled, looking back at the horse. "No. I just like to tease you."

The sound of a vehicle made Brit tense. She instantly feared it could be related to Kyle. Last night she'd tried to talk River into fixing her car but he'd adamantly refused. Under threat of chaining her to his bed to keep her there, he'd made it crystal clear she wouldn't be leaving the ranch. Half of her had been relieved, terrified of being alone, and not sure where to go. Returning to her apartment would be the fastest way for her ex-husband to find her. The other half of her had been frightened. The thought of Kyle hurting River or anyone in his family made her want to leave.

"It's just my brother. I'm expecting him. Sorry. I should have said something over breakfast this morning when we said goodbye to Trina and Nav before they left for Houston."

"Which brother?"

"Drake."

Confused, Brit released the horse and turned in River's hold to frown up at him. "I thought your brother and sister-in-law were visiting him?"

"They are going to stay at his house but he came here. He's doing some work for the family."

"He's a lawyer, right?"

"Yeah."

Brit suddenly remembered that Trip was in the process of obtaining a divorce. "Oh. Right. Trip."

River nodded. "Yeah. He is helping him."

She relaxed.

"Where are you?" The voice was deep and sounded a bit like River's.

"In the fourth stall," River called out, keeping hold of Brit as he turned to face the open door.

Drake Raine didn't look anything like Brit imagined he would. She'd pictured him in a suit, considering his occupation. He looked a lot like Navarro with his piercing blue eyes and jet-black hair but he kept his cropped hair short to his head in spikes. She had to keep her mouth from falling open from the shock of seeing his black leather biker jacket, the leather chaps he wore over dark blue jeans, and her gaze ended on a pair of kick-ass black leather boots.

"Where's your Harley?" River's arm tightened around Brit.

"At the house. I didn't want to drive it on our shit roads." Drake flashed perfectly white teeth. "I borrowed one of the ranch trucks to come out here since they are already dusty as hell. I could barely see out the windows. Don't you guys ever wash them?" His attention fixed on Brit. "Hello."

"In your riding gear?" River chuckled. "Nice. This is Brit. Brit, this is my oldest brother. Drake's really a lawyer but he's a weekend biker wannabe."

Drake raised a tan hand and lifted his middle finger. "I ride my bike everywhere unless I go on a date or it's really crappy weather." He winked at Brit. "It's nice to meet you." His gaze lingered on River's arm around her waist and then shook his head. "Already grabbed her up, huh? Some things in this family never change."

"Excuse me?" Brit frowned.

Drake grinned. "You're pretty." He winked. "With us Raines it's always about who has the best luck."

She wasn't sure how to take that. River chose that moment to speak. "Trip is going to be happy you're here to help him with those divorce papers."

Drake's smile faded. "I see."

"Why don't we go back to the house and then you can call him and let him know you're home."

"Sure." Drake glanced at Brit. "Nice meeting you, darlin'."

"What is it about this family and nicknames?" She shook her head as she pointed to her chest. "My name is Brit." She shot a glare at River. "Not baby, not darlin', or any other term."

"She *really* hates it when I call her fu—"

Brit elbowed River hard, silencing him. "Don't even say it."

He laughed, winking at her. "I was going to say feisty."

"Sure you were." She rolled her eyes. "Behave."

Drake laughed. "Do you know River at all? You may as well expect the wind to stop blowing. It comes that natural to him for his mouth to get him into deep shit."

"It's a family trait," River chuckled. He winked at Brit. "I won't say what you think I was about to."

"You were going to say it."

He had the nerve to laugh. "Guilty."

"Let's get to the house. I missed breakfast and I want out of these chaps. Damn, it's hot out here." Drake turned, walking away.

Brit watched the oldest Raine swagger out of the stall. He had a really nice ass. The arm around her tightened.

"Were you ogling my brother?"

She turned her head and grinned up at River. "You all pretty much have the same body type." *Big, muscular, and impressive*, she thought. "I was just noticing."

He laughed. "You can notice all you want but remember whose bed you belong in."

She turned to face him, her arms lifting to grip his broad shoulders. "The bed that has chains hidden in the canopy. That's hard to forget."

He grinned. "You liked them."

"I like you." It was getting easier for her to admit that. She knew she was getting too attached to River and when he wasn't a part of her life anymore, she would miss him. Sadness swelled at the mere thought of when it would come time to leave the ranch and the man who was becoming someone important to her. Fear came next at realizing it would seriously hurt when that day came. She was falling in love with him, had to admit that, if she wasn't already there. "I'm not interested in your brothers."

"Good. I'd hate to have to kick their asses and if one of them tried to flirt with you that's what I'd do. You're mine." His other arm wrapped around her as the sound of an engine flared up outside. "We should get out of here and go back to the house. Drake gets testy when he skips meals. It's never a good idea to have a hungry shark on the loose."

She smiled. "I bet it's convenient to have a lawyer in the family. Has he ever had to bail you out of jail?"

"Just once." He chuckled.

"What were you arrested for?"

"Underage drinking when I was seventeen." He winked. "It's not on my record since I was a minor but man was Drake pissed. He was still in law school and it embarrassed him."

Brit was relieved it was something that minor. "I am ready for lunch."

"I'm ready to eat too." His gaze lowered to her chest. "Just not for food but yeah, let's go." He released her and stepped back, glancing at the horse. "I'll be back later, Brownie."

The horse snorted. Brit laughed, walking out of the stall with River right behind her. He opened the truck door for her and helped her in. She flashed him a grin of thanks. He did small things like that for her. Opened her doors, held her hand, and just treated her as if she were special to him. Watching him walk around the truck, she reflected on just how different he really was from her ex-husband. The way River had announced she belonged to him should have caused a feeling of terror. It was something Kyle had told her often, instilling that fear, but with River, she just felt happy when he said it.

I'm in deep shit, she thought, staring at River when he settled behind the wheel. He turned his head, catching her expression, and frowned.

"You okay? You look a little pale."

"Yeah." She reached over and rubbed the top of his thigh. "I'm actually great."

His large hand settled over hers and he squeezed gently. "I won't allow anything to happen to you."

"I believe that," she said honestly.

"Good." He released her hand, threw the truck in reverse, and backed away from the barn.

* * * * *

River watched his frowning brother pace Nav's office. His fingers drummed the desk and his gaze slid to the closed door. Brit was making them lunch. She'd offered, and he'd agreed since he really wanted to hear what Drake had found out. He turned his full attention on his brother.

"How bad is it?"

Drake stopped and faced him. "Kevin has it out for that woman in the worst way. Word is that he's got feelers out everywhere and if she pops up on the radar he's got men he pays who automatically go fuck up her life. They make sure she gets canned from any jobs or tossed from where she's staying." He paused. "How invested are you in this woman?"

River leaned forward, his hands fisting in front of him. "Very."

"That's what I was afraid of. I don't know how much of it is true but according to my sources she's got a drug habit, went after Kyle for his money, and set him up to go to prison."

"I don't buy that." River had no qualms about it being bullshit. The woman he'd come to know wasn't the type.

"I didn't either at first." Drake sighed and then moved closer to bend over the desk. "I had you turn on the computer for a reason." He grabbed the keyboard, turned it his way, and started to type. "This is going to be hard for you to see. I'm just warning you."

River wasn't concerned until a website loaded and he saw the content. His breath caught and then rage hit him as he jerked his gaze to Drake. Drake met that dirty look with a frown.

"You sure you want to see this?"

"Why are we on a porn site?"

Drake hesitated. "Watch." He clicked the mouse and then backed up across the room to lean against the far wall, putting as much distance from his brother as he could get in the small room.

River stared as a video loaded and then his gut tightened at the grainy video of a party that someone shot with a shaky hand camera. He recognized a few faces from his days on the rodeo circuit. One face caught his attention. It was Kyle Marthum holding a beer, standing with some of the Marthum-sponsored riders. Some of River's hardest competitors when he'd been bull riding stood shoulder to shoulder with Brit's ex-husband.

"Here's to the man of the hour," Kyle laughed. "I knew you could take first place."

The rider grinned, annoying River instantly. Boyd had been an asshole, an egomaniac, and had a crappy sense of sportsmanship. Every time they went against each other and Boyd won, he'd go out of his way to rub it in.

"Hey, Kyle?" someone shouted. "Your wife is coming down the stairs."

Kyle's face turned red and he released Boyd and pushed through a few men. The person with the camera followed into a large entryway and a curved stairwell of an obviously really nice house. River was stunned when he saw Brit. She wore a sexy white teddy, her hair was tangled and wild, and she staggered on the stairs, barefoot, gripping the railing with both hands. The outfit was so tiny it left nothing to the imagination.

Kyle shoved men out of his way. There had to be thirty of them, all men who worked for the Marthums, if River had to guess. Kyle stormed up the stairs.

"Damn it, Britney," he raged. "I told you to stay in our room. You just can't do it, though, can you? You got to put on a show for all the boys."

It was obvious Brit was really drunk as she swayed, her chin lifted, and she tried to grab her advancing husband. Her arm never even came close to touching him. Kyle cursed, bent, and threw his wife over his shoulder. His hand smacked her ass hard when he straightened with her dangling down his back. The red handprint was easily seen since the teddy barely hid any part of her ass.

"You want to party? Fine." Kyle turned on the stairs, facing his guests. He grinned. "You know the rules. Nobody touches." He walked down the stairs.

The cameraman laughed. "Someone get me a beer."

Kyle walked into a room, men followed, and so did the camera. Kyle none too gently dumped his wife, ass first, on a pool table. Brit nearly fell over but Kyle gripped her shoulder, holding her up, and laughed loudly, glancing at his guests.

"You aren't the only ones who like to ride in front of an audience."

River felt sick as he leaned back in his chair. He watched Kyle tear his shirt off and then push Brit onto her back. She didn't do anything but stare up at her husband. Her hair partially hid her face but there was no doubt it was her. Kyle tore off his belt. Men started to chant encouragement, crowding in closer. River recognized one of those men as the asshole who'd fought with Adam at the bar. The men watched as Kyle reached for his wife. Brit tried to roll over but Kyle just grabbed her hips, pulling her closer, and tore at the thin lace that barely kept her covered to reveal her entire naked lower body. When Kyle leaned over his wife, River's hand moved faster, grabbed the mouse and shut off the site right before Kyle entered her.

He sat there feeling sick. Kyle had taken his wife in front of his friends on a pool table and Brit...

"I know. I watched the entire thing. He did her on the table, then threw her back over his shoulder and took her upstairs to their room. His friends were laughing about what a drunken pill-head his wife was but hot." Drake's voice stayed soft, a mere whisper. "There were a few other videos. Same shit. He's throwing a party for some of their guys and he did her in front of them."

River stood. "I've never seen her messed up."

"You barely know her."

"I'm going to go talk to her."

Drake sighed. "Okay."

River walked out of the room, feeling anger build. It wasn't directed so much at Brit but the fact that he'd seen her with her husband. Kyle was an asshole who fucked his wife in front of a crowd of men. What kind of bastard did that? A memory flashed of some bars River had been in when he and his friends had partied with rodeo bunnies. He'd had sex in public with women plenty of times. The fact that it was Brit who'd been put on display was what really pissed him off.

The smell of bacon teased his nose. Brit turned at the stove, removing the cooked strips, and met his gaze. Her smile spread instantly, lighting up her face. He stared into her eyes as he came to a halt, seeing pure innocence and sweetness there. This was the woman he'd come to love. The drunken mess of a woman in that video wasn't in front of him.

* * * * *

"I was about to call you and Drake." Brit noticed River had an odd expression on his face. "BLTs all around." She waved toward the island where the other plates waited. "Just let me make these last few sandwiches and we're ready to eat."

"Brit?"

Something in his tone alarmed her. His voice sounded gruff. She turned to face him, staring at him, and her gaze darted down his body to his clenched fists at his side. She jerked her attention back to his face and saw the tense line of his mouth and the resulting crinkles there.

"What's wrong?"

He blinked. "Did you know you're on the internet?"

"The internet?" She shook her head. "I don't even own a computer. I've wanted one but they aren't exactly in my budget but one of my coworkers keeps telling me I'm missing out on a lot."

River paled a little. "You don't know, do you?"

"Know what?"

He sighed and walked around the island slowly, approaching her, then stopped close enough to touch her, but he didn't. "Someone taped some of Kyle's parties. They loaded some of them up on those internet porn sites."

Her knees collapsed as her mind reeled at the implications. She would have fallen if River hadn't grabbed her, held her up, and jerked her into his arms. Her eyes closed as nausea rolled through her stomach and bile rose.

"Oh God," she moaned. Hot tears welled behind her closed eyelids and she clutched River's shirt.

"You looked pretty drunk." River held her tightly. "It's all right."

"I wasn't drunk." A sob came out and she got control of her body, her legs taking her weight. "I was drugged."

River's entire body tensed against hers. "Drugged?"

She nodded into his shirt, unable to look up to see his face. "Drugged." She fought hard to not totally lose it. "Oh God. It's on the internet? The prosecution swore all those tapes were destroyed after the trial. They promised." She opened her eyes, hot tears spilling out. "They promised. They—" Her voice broke.

She fought not to throw up at the horror of what River said and what he must think of her. Somehow some of the tapes had ended up on the internet for anyone to watch. River had obviously seen them since he knew and had told her. She pushed away from him, struggling when he tried to keep hold of her, but he released her when she fought harder.

Brit stumbled when she turned and grabbed for the counter to hold her trembling body up. "I have to call the district attorney's office. They have to take them down. They have to—"

"Brit?"

She closed her mouth and reached up to wipe at the tears that ran down her face. She still couldn't face him. She didn't want to see the look in his eyes if he'd seen those tapes. She'd watched them once, had to, and they'd made her sick to her stomach,

literally. She'd held a trash basket and lost her breakfast watching the evidence they had against Kyle for his trial.

"Talk to me, baby."

"It's not what you think," she whispered. "I swear."

"Tell me what happened."

She didn't hear anger in his voice or disgust. He just sounded a little sad. She wiped at more tears, straightened her shoulders, and it took every ounce of courage to turn her head and look over her shoulder to stare at him. She noticed his features were a little pale and his mouth was still set in a grim line. His beautiful dark eyes met hers and they watched each other.

"When my father died, Kyle knew I'd never go back to him. He'd killed my father with those rumors he'd made up as sure as if he'd reached in my dad's chest and torn out his heart. I hated him and he knew it." She fought down a sob. "He grabbed me when I left a grocery store. He had two men with him and they held me while he gave me a shot. I fought but then I felt lightheaded until I passed out."

River crossed his arms over his chest and nodded. "Okay."

"I don't remember anything really but bits and pieces. He hired a nurse to keep me drugged." More hot tears slid down her face. "One day the nurse had some family emergency, I think her husband was in a car accident, and she forgot to give me a shot. I could think clear enough to actually escape since the drug has dissipated. Kyle caught me sneaking out the back door of the kitchen. I grabbed a knife and stabbed him. He nearly died. I left him bleeding on the floor, ran out the back door, and I made it to the house next to ours—Kyle's," she corrected. "I had them call the police. They came, I told them what had happened, and they believed me since I had needle marks all over me. They launched an investigation while I was in the hospital. They found enough evidence to back what I was saying. The nurse had been lied to. All the doctors' reports and the prescriptions for the drugs Kyle had her giving me were forged."

Rage was an easy emotion to read on River's face as he stepped closer to her. Brit turned to face him, leaning her hip against the counter, and held out a shaky hand to stop him.

"I'm—"

"Let me finish, River."

He froze and then nodded. His hands fisted at his sides again but he stayed back. "Okay."

"They found tapes. Kyle did things to me in front of his friends. In front of groups of them." She fought down another sob. "I don't remember. I am so grateful that I don't." She shook her head. "I was too drugged and some of the drugs he used cause memory loss. But, judging by the tapes, he never let anyone else touch me, he was super possessive, but he was sick enough to want to put me on display for them in some twisted attempt to have them envy what he had."

"That fucking bastard is dead," River snarled.

"I had no idea what he'd done to me," she whispered. "I saw the tapes and...oh God, River."

He took a step toward her. "It's okay."

She frantically shook her head. "No, it's not. They used those tapes to show how vile he was, how drugged he kept me, and he was sentenced to eight years in prison but they've only made him serve four since he's out now. I testified against him to the judge. The nurse testified against him. The nurse said I'd get out of bed sometimes and try to leave the house. He'd shown her faked doctors' reports that I was bipolar, had suicidal tendencies, and was aggressively violent without the drugs. He convinced her I'd hurt myself and everyone around me if they didn't keep me completely docile and make sure I didn't escape. Everyone at the district attorney's office swore those tapes would be destroyed. You're telling me anyone can see them? See what he did to me?"

"I'm on it," a deep voice stated from the doorway, startling Brit.

She jerked her head and watched Drake spin around and walk away. Her gaze drifted back to River.

"Drake will make sure those videos are removed and someone is going to be in deep shit for those tapes being leaked."

Mute, Brit stared at the man who probably thought a lot less of her now. Those tapes were horrific. Kyle had done degrading things to her and she hadn't even fought back, too out of it to realize what was happening to her. River would never look at her the same way and it shattered her inside.

"It's okay," he whispered. "Let me hold you. You're shaking. I didn't mean to hurt you. I just wanted to know the truth. If I'd known it was going to upset you this much I wouldn't have said a word." He took a step closer.

"This changes everything between us, doesn't it? That's why I didn't want to tell you. I didn't want you to know."

"Damn it," he growled. "No. This doesn't change a damn thing." He moved forward, closing the distance, and pulled her into his arms. He held her tightly against his chest. "It's all okay, Brit."

"It's not."

A hand rubbed her back. "I can handle you yelling at me easier than tears. Damn, Brit, don't cry. You're going to shred me to pieces. I can't take seeing you in this much pain. The only thing that's changed is, instead of just kicking your ex's ass, now I want to kill him with my bare hands."

Her arms wound around River's waist, holding tightly to him, and she relaxed against his tall frame. "I was afraid to tell you. I didn't want your pity or for you to feel disgusted."

He sighed. "Women sure get stupid ideas sometimes."

She laughed. "Sometimes."

His arms tightened. "Shit."

"What?" She lifted her head.

His eyes looked grim. "No wonder you reacted so damn badly when Ryder saw us having sex."

Her gaze dropped to his chest. "Yeah. Kyle had a thing for having people watch him."

"I'm nothing like him. I don't want anyone to see you naked but me."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"It's going to be okay. So that's what Kyle went to prison for?"

"Yes. He tried to make it sound as if I were a drug addict and a boozier but the nurse had kept all the paperwork he had given her. They traced it all back to doctors who had never heard of me or Kyle. He'd forged everything, even the prescriptions for the drugs he used to keep me a prisoner. He had a damn good attorney who had a lot of the charges tossed but they were able to prove enough to get prison time. He cut a deal for eight years in order to keep most of the nasty details out of the papers and save his father the embarrassment of a public trial. I agreed to the lesser charges because I didn't want everyone to see those tapes."

"I really hate your ex-husband." One arm unwound from her waist to reach up and cup her face. "Nothing has changed between us." He didn't look away. "I am so sorry that happened but you're an amazing woman, you're strong, and we're not going to allow that bastard to win in any way, shape, or form."

Hot tears spilled down her cheeks.

River wiped them away with his thumb. "Did you hear me about how I can't stand to see you cry? I want to kiss them away." His face lowered and he kissed her forehead. "And you know if I put my mouth on you we won't be eating those sandwiches you just made. I'll take you to bed to kiss you all over."

The smile came easy. "Eat first, then sex. Is that our new motto?"

He chuckled, brushing his lips over hers, and then straightened up. "It should be. I'm all for it."

Chapter Eleven

Brit couldn't ignore the nervousness she experienced when River closed his bedroom door later that night. Drake had decided to stay a few days, hang out, and be on hand in case Kyle showed up. She paused at the bed, turned, and met River's dark gaze. Her fingers locked together in front of her.

"I should have warned you that my brother is a shark about poker too."

She smiled. "It was only pennies or I'd have had to take out a loan."

He chuckled, crossing the room, stalking toward her with a grin. "We could never beat him."

"I'm not that good at playing."

"No one is, against Drake." He stopped just feet from her. "Ready to get naked with me?"

She decided to be honest. "I'm a little nervous."

"Why?" Surprise etched his handsome features.

"You saw those tapes and I'm afraid that it's going to make you—" She gasped when River's hand snaked out, grabbed her arm, and he jerked her hard against his body.

"I didn't watch all of that tape and it was just one. Nothing is different between us."

"I'm not a victim. I'm a survivor." Her chin rose as she stared up at him. "I went to counseling."

"I'm glad you got help dealing with that shit. I don't think of you any differently and there's no reason to be nervous, Brit. Nothing has changed between us. I still want to strip you bare, fuck you until you scream my name, and I think you're the sexiest damn woman I've ever met."

Warmth spread through her body. "I think you're the sexist man I've ever met."

"I knew you couldn't resist me when I woke up to find you standing in my bedroom."

The laugh bubbled up. "I still can't believe I let that happen."

His hand released her arm to slide down and he gripped her ass with both hands, molding her to his hips when he spread his thighs enough to level them out in height. "I'm irresistible."

"And not conceited at all." She chuckled.

"Not me." He brushed his lips over hers. "I'm just a simple country boy."

"With hidden chains in your bed canopy and a ton of sex books on your shelf."

He turned his head and nibbled on the side of her throat. "It's boring living on a ranch sometimes." His tongue teased her earlobe and his hot breath tickled her. "I wanted to know as much about women as I did about horses."

"I think you studied enough to ace any test." Her fingers slid into his long hair, loving the feel of the silky tresses. "You know how to turn me inside out."

"It's only fair since that's the effect you have on me." River lifted his head, stared into her eyes, and then released her as he backed away. "Get out of your clothes."

She didn't hesitate. They stripped quickly, tossing their clothes on the floor, and then their gazes met again. River's traveled slowly down the length of her and she fixed her attention on his hard cock, pointed right at her. River moved closer.

"Ever sixty-nine?"

She hesitated. "No. I know what it means though."

He got on his bed, rolled onto his back, and stretched out. His muscles flexed when he did, making Brit appreciate every gorgeous, sexy inch of pure male beauty laid out before her. He reached for her.

"Want to try it? I admit, I want your mouth around me as much as I want my mouth on you. I need to be on the bottom though and my knee is acting up a little. The swelling went down and I'd like to keep it that way. I want my hands free instead of bracing my body off yours so I don't crush you."

She moved forward, climbing onto his big bed with him. She would try anything with River. He'd shown her so much pleasure and he promised to give her more. Her tongue darted out to wet her lips, eager to start.

He helped her ease her body over his, facing away, and scoot into position. He adjusted her knees over his shoulders as they lined up. Brit's attention focused on the hard flesh jutting up between River's partly spread thighs. She wet her lips again, one hand bracing on the bed while the fingers of her other hand curled around the base of his shaft.

He spread her thighs wider and she glanced over her shoulder, seeing him yank a pillow down under his head to tilt his face higher so she could feel his hot breath fanning her sensitive, bared skin. He gripped her inner thighs, backing her up just a little more before his thumbs spread her sex apart to give him freer access.

Her mouth parted as she faced forward again, lowering her head enough that her hair fell over River's thighs. Her tongue swirled around the slightly reddened crown of his cock. River groaned in response.

"I love your damn mouth."

Instead of answering, she took his cock inside, sucking on him lightly, teasing him. He groaned again loudly and then the flat of his tongue pressed against her clit. She froze at the sensation that rocketed right to the pleasure center of her brain. She realized at that moment that it would be tough to concentrate on him when he was touching her.

I can do this, she thought. She tried to block out the feeling of River's tongue when he started to move it back and forth, causing a delicious amount of awareness as her clit swelled with need.

Her mouth worked River's hard shaft, sucking and licking, taking him deeper when she bobbed her head up and down. She noticed the faster she moved on him, the more aggressively his mouth tormented her. He sealed his lips around the stiff nub and sucked hard. She moaned loudly at the jolt of rapture tearing through her and clamped her lips tighter around his erection.

She was going to come and she knew it. She tore her mouth away, afraid she'd bite him. Panting, head hung low, her body vibrated with sensation. River stopped a second later. His breathing had become labored as well.

"You okay?"

The ache between her thighs hurt, her need to come that strong. "I'm going to come. Don't stop."

"I'm about to go too, Brit. Damn, your mouth makes me ache."

"Me first, then you." She turned her head. "I won't risk my teeth near you when I do."

"Got it." He chuckled. "Newbie."

"Shut up and suck on me again. That feels amazing."

"I know. No need to tell me how good it is." He lifted his head, wrapping his full lips around her sex again, and his tongue pressed tightly against her throbbing clit. Brit tensed, held completely still, and released River entirely to claw at his bedding when his tongue quickly slid up and down again, rasping against her.

"Yes," she panted and then cried out loudly as ecstasy sent her to climax. Her muscles twitched hard, another cry coming from her when two of River's fingers suddenly stretched her pussy when he entered her fast and hard, fucking her with them. The climax drew out and she thought she couldn't take the intense frenzy of the added sensation but then he stilled when she stopped twitching from the aftermath of coming.

"My turn. I'm dying."

He released her thighs and his hips arched, lifting his cock closer to her lips. She opened up and took him deep into her mouth. The hard flesh had no give, showing her how close he was to his own release. His hands gripped her calves and his hips rocked gently, not forcing her to take more but meeting her up and down motion as she sucked on him.

The hold on her tensed, the only warning she got, a second before River came hard. His body shook under hers as the taste of him flooded her mouth. She swallowed over and over, milking him gently, loving every second of knowing how she could affect him. His hands loosened and he pulled his hips hard against the bed, almost totally leaving her mouth.

"Stop! You're going to kill me."

She chuckled and eased him fully out of her mouth. "I know the feeling."

"Smart ass." He laughed and then did something totally unexpected.

Brit gasped when he rolled them, totally surprising her as her back hit the bed. River turned around, caging her under his body while he settled down on top of her nose to nose now. He grinned while he nudged her thighs apart enough to fit his hips. He didn't allow his chest to crush her down but she found herself definitely pinned.

"We'll have to keep doing that one until you feel secure enough to come with me in your mouth."

"I see." Her arms wrapped around his shoulders. "I liked that."

"Give me about five minutes to recover and I'll show you something else you're going to like."

Brit stared into his beautiful eyes and realized how deeply she loved him. She hadn't meant to allow it to happen but there was no denying the way her heart pounded a bit faster when she looked at him, the soft, warm feelings she experienced when they touched, which far surpassed just physical response to the great sex they shared. He'd touched more than her body. He'd crept right into her heart and now he owned it.

River smiled. "What are you thinking?"

"Nothing worth sharing," she lied.

"Really? You have this dazed but slightly frightened look." He shifted his weight a little, slid down her body a few inches, and got more comfortable. "You're safe with me. I'd never hurt you."

She wished that were true but when they parted, it was going to break her heart. "I know."

"Do you?" His fingers played with her hair. He adjusted his elbows and braced his weight, giving his hands more freedom. "You don't look so convinced. I swear I'd never hit you or do anything shitty."

That drew a smile from her. "You mean like sabotage my engine?"

"That wasn't me. It was my evil twin." Amusement twinkled in his dark gaze. "I have one, you know. You've met the bastard."

"I caught you with grease on your hands and you admitted it quite blatantly."

"Oh yeah." River winked. "It was worth a shot that you might believe that one."

"You're bad, blaming your poor brother."

All humor left his face. "I'd never hurt you, Brit. I'd never hit you or force you to do anything you don't want, well, besides stay here, but that's because I want to make sure you're safe."

Sincerity was an easy thing to recognize in his intense gaze. "I believe you."

"Then what was that look for? Don't tell me it's nothing. What were you thinking about? I thought maybe my sudden movement scared you but that wasn't it, was it? I'm pretty good at reading people."

Inhaling, she took a deep breath. Indecision had her faltering but then she decided to go with the truth, at least partly. "I realized how much I like you. I don't want to get attached to anyone, I'm so screwed up a relationship is the last thing I probably need, and you're not the relationship type even if I were willing to give one a try."

Understanding dawned. "I'm scaring the crap out of you, huh?" He chuckled. "I'm under your skin."

"You don't have to look so damn happy about it."

"I am." His leaned his face forward until their noses brushed. "You scare the crap out of me too, Fuck And Run."

Her fingers squeezed his shoulders. "That's not funny." She still smiled.

"I love seeing that flare in your eyes when I call you that."

"That's anger."

"No, it's not. You think I'm cute."

"I think you're an ass."

Another chuckle rumbled from him. "But a cute one you can't resist."

Brit wrapped her legs around his hips and rubbed her heels on the firm, rounded ass he spoke of. "It *is* the best one I've ever seen."

"Let's stop worrying about where we're heading and just enjoy being together."

Her fingers slid upward into his silky hair. "You make it sound so easy."

"I know. It's getting complicated but I don't give a damn. We're together, we're happy when we are, and that's all that matters."

She nodded. "For now."

"Yeah." River shifted his hips and lifted them slightly. His cock had hardened and he pressed against her, slowly entering her pussy. "Speaking of now..."

Brit softly moaned, tilting her hips upward to help him slide deeper inside. The feeling of River sinking deep inside her body made nerve endings come alive. "You feel so good."

"So do you. So wet, so welcoming and tight." He withdrew a little and settled down more firmly between her spread thighs. "So right. So mine. You feel like heaven without the condom. Thank you, Brit. Damn, this feels amazing. You have no idea how much I wanted to know how it would feel with nothing between us."

"Move faster." She wiggled her hips to urge him on.

"Slow and easy." His mouth lowered to hers and he brushed his full lips against her seeking ones. "I want to make love to you this time."

He took possession of her mouth fully when his tongue slid past her lips, exploring her slowly, savoring each moment. He didn't kiss her the way he had before. This time

he took his time. His hips leisurely rocked, moving his cock inside her torturously with shallow motions that teased and made her ache for more.

When he broke the kiss, they stared deeply into each other's eyes. The pleasure blurred as River heightened her passion until the smooth flow of their bodies rubbing together had her panting hard and bucking against him faster, trying frantically to reach release.

River lowered his head and his hair teased her shoulder as his hot breath fanned her neck. Brit's eyes closed as his mouth parted and teeth bit down on the top of her shoulder where it met her neck. The nip he gave her was the last straw. The climax gripped her as she cried out his name, her nails digging into his skin. River groaned against her and his cock jerked inside her as he came.

"Heaven, Brit. That's what you are to me."

Brit knew she would be in a world of hurt when it was time to leave as she clung to him while trying to catch her breath. River was an unforgettable man, one who would haunt her after they parted and she only had the ghost of his memory to keep her company in bed. She wouldn't admit it to him but she couldn't lie to herself. The man had not only gotten her addicted to him physically but she had fallen hard for him emotionally.

* * * * *

A noise woke River. He opened his eyes to the darkness. Brit slept soundly in front of him—her slow breathing assured him of that—curled on her side in a ball with his body curved around hers. He lifted his head from the pillow, listening for the sound that had roused him. He figured it had to be Drake moving around since Ryder had gone fishing with Trip and Adam. Drake was known to be an insomniac.

One of the floorboards in the hallway creaked. He relaxed, knowing it was his brother walking around. His head barely touched pillow when his bedroom door swung open. He tensed. Drake would never just enter his room, especially not when he knew damn well there was a woman in his bed.

Light flooded the room and he blinked rapidly to adjust to the harshness of being momentarily blinded.

"You fucking bitch," a slurred male voice accused.

River sat up fast, his arms untangling from Brit, and he stared in shock at the man standing just inside his bedroom. It had been years since he'd seen Kyle Marthum but that was definitely him holding a shotgun pointed directly at the bed.

Brit jerked awake and gasped, her body tensing next to River. "Kyle." Brit's voice shook with fear.

River didn't even glance at her—he focused on the gun. The son of a bitch had come after Brit and he'd broken into the house somehow. Moving very slowly, he inched his

hand toward the top of the bed, under the pillow. His heart raced and his eyes narrowed.

"You whore!" Kyle bumped the wall as he stumbled a foot forward. "You get out of that asshole's bed right now and put something on. We're leaving. You're coming home with me."

"Kyle, please put the gun down." Brit's voice broke. "Please? I'll go. Just don't hurt anyone."

When hell freezes over, River thought. *No way is Brit leaving with that lunatic.* His fingers reached the curve of the mattress and slid around it, feeling between it and the bed frame. He touched metal and wrapped his fingers around it. He hoped Drake had heard Kyle yelling and had woken.

"Did you think I'd ever let you go?" Kyle trained the gun on Brit. "I'll see you dead. How many damn times do I have to tell you that before you believe it?"

Brit tried to move away from River so he reached out, gripped her hip, and pulled her back, holding her where she lay. Her body felt so tense he worried that he'd hurt her when he forced her to hold still. She shook under his hand, letting him know just how terrified her ex made her.

"Let my wife go, you son of a bitch." Kyle moved the gun toward River. "I'll kill you. You fucked *my* wife."

River eased out of bed slowly, using the pillow to hide his hand. He opened his mouth to distract Kyle. He needed to keep Kyle's gun trained on him and not Brit. "I did. Best fuck ever, Kyle. She's so damn hot I've probably got second degree burns from her mouth."

From the corner of his vision, River saw Brit turn her head to gape at him but he didn't spare her a glance. Kyle's face turned red, anger making him jerk the gun higher. River hoped like hell the guy was drunk enough to affect his reflexes. He gauged the distance between the barrel and himself.

"What?" Kyle gasped.

"You heard me. Damn, man. She gives the best head I ever had in my life and she's tighter than a damn fist. I guess with you locked up nobody has been tapping that ass until I did." River stepped away from the bed, moving so Brit was further away and definitely safe from being shot. "I heard you have a thing for fucking her in front of people. Want to watch me screw your wife?"

"You're dead," Kyle screamed and raised the gun higher to shoot River.

River dived for the floor, putting even more space between him and Brit, and both arms went up. The sound of gunfire and the blast from the shotgun were deafening in the bedroom. River hit the floor hard, still firing, and watched as the other man jerked backward.

* * * * *

Brit screamed as Kyle fired the shotgun at River. Explosive sounds ripped through her ears painfully and the muzzle of the gun flared brightly. Repeated loud blasts shattered through the room in rapid succession. She stared wide-eyed as Kyle was thrown back from the kick of the gun, his back hitting the wall by the door, and she saw him jerk a few times.

His mouth opened and the weapon he held clattered to the floor. His head turned and his stunned, drunken gaze met hers. She saw shock there, his green eyes unusually wide, and then she looked down. Red bloomed on his chest in four places. It spread quickly down his blue shirt to the waist of his dark-gray slacks. She saw more blood spreading on his thigh from another wound and it sank in then that somehow he'd been shot repeatedly.

He sank slowly to the floor. "Britney."

She wasn't sure how she moved, shock probably should have held her immobile, but she got to her feet. Kyle stared at her, one hand reaching out for her, and she inched closer, shaking badly. She bent when she got close. Her gaze flickered over his blood, which was spreading on the floor where he sat. Her shaking hand avoided his and instead grabbed the shotgun he'd dropped.

Brit backed away, straightened, and threw the gun at the bed where it landed harmlessly on the soft mattress. She turned, afraid to see River, and prayed at the same time that he wasn't dying. He lay on the floor, his naked body stretched out, arms upward holding a handgun in both his hands. Their gazes met.

"River?" She whispered his name.

He cleared his throat and moved, struggling to push himself up while still holding the gun. "I'm okay."

"River!" The male shout came from the hallway and heavy footfalls pounded on wood.

Brit jerked her head to the side and watched as a fully dressed Drake nearly skidded past the doorway. He was a little out of breath, his leather jacket snagged on the doorjamb, and then he stepped inside. He looked down at Kyle, saw the blood and his normally tan face paled drastically. His head lifted and he sought out his brother.

"I'm okay. His aim was high, he missed." River climbed to his feet. "I didn't."

Brit swayed a little, seeing for herself that River's body didn't have any holes in it. His knees and elbows were a little red, so was his hipbone on one side, but he wasn't bleeding. She stumbled toward him and he stepped forward, releasing the gun with one hand, stretching his other arm back so the gun was far from her, pointing at the floor.

"Brit? Are you all right?"

She lunged, wrapped her arms tightly around his waist, and clung. River was alive. She'd thought Kyle had shot him. The words he'd spoken to her ex-husband had stunned and horrified her but she'd known at that moment he'd done and said what he had to draw Kyle's gun away from her.

She nodded, holding onto him tighter. "Yes."

"H-help," Kyle rasped, his voice gravelly with pain. "Call an ambulance. You shot me."

River wrapped an arm tightly around Brit's waist, holding her back. "Fuck you."

Drake softly cursed. "I'll call for help."

"Let him bleed out." River's voice sounded stone cold. "He meant to kill me and he came here after Brit."

The silence in the room was absolute until Kyle broke it.

"You can't d-do that. You can't let me...die. Do you know who—" He coughed, blood speckling his chin. "Who I am?"

"You're an asshole who abused Brit."

"Britney?" Kyle gasped. "Do something. C-call for help."

She shivered from shock and feeling cold deep inside. Turning her head, she stared at her ex-husband. He'd stalked her, abused her, drugged her, and done horrible things to her. "Go to hell."

Drake cursed. "I'm calling. Let's keep this legal."

"Let him die. It's the only way she'll ever be safe from that animal." River gently released Brit and moved toward the dresser, limping slightly from his bad knee. "I'm getting you something to wear, baby."

She stood there shaking and it only dawned then that she and River were totally naked. She didn't feel embarrassment though, that being the least of her emotional turmoil. Her gaze turned to Drake and watched him stride across the room to the bedside table. He picked up the phone, punched in three numbers, and then took a deep breath.

"We had an intruder at the Raine Ranch. He came after his ex-wife who has been staying here and he tried to kill her and River Raine. He's been shot. You need to send an ambulance and police officers."

"Fuck," River grumbled but then he stood in front of Brit.

The gun wasn't in his hand anymore. She spotted it on top of the dresser. River helped her pull on one of his T-shirts and get her arms through it. It hung to her thighs. He spun away, yanked out two pairs of sweat pants, and jerked one of them up his legs. He returned to her as soon as they were on, wrapped his arms around her, and helped her put on the second pair of pants. He hugged her tightly.

Brit could feel River trembling. Adrenaline and shock had to be coursing through his body. She met his gaze, verifying that he was as shaken as she was over what had taken place. She worried about how he'd react to shooting a man to protect her once it sank in that he'd made the ultimate sacrifice for her. She only prayed he'd be okay and that it wouldn't destroy what they had together. She hugged him tighter, trying to soothe him. She had no words to comfort him but River tried to do exactly that for her when he spoke softly against her ear.

"It's going to be all right. You're safe."

Drake hung up the phone and turned.

River glared at him. "You shouldn't have done that. As soon as he's released from the hospital he'll just come after her again. Next time I won't miss his damn head."

Brit watched as Drake smiled coldly and crossed his arms over his chest. "I taught you better than that when I used to make you practice with that gun, bro. You're too good of a shot even half asleep and trying to avoid being shot. Take a closer look at asshole over there. He's dead but just hasn't taken his last breath. He'll be gone before the ambulance ever arrives. You hit some major organs. The ambulance is at least fifteen minutes out but more like twenty-five. I just covered our asses with the law."

"You can't let me die," Kyle rasped. "Britney?"

She had to twist a little in River's arms to see her ex-husband. His complexion had turned paper white and blood soaked his clothes and the floor around him. Blood had also escaped his mouth, leaving a trail down his jaw and throat. She stared at him.

"I...love you," Kyle rasped.

River cursed. "You don't know what love is, you sick jerk. I'm taking her downstairs."

"Go." Drake stood as still as a statue.

"Britney? Did you hear me? I only came here because I love you." Kyle coughed.

River shifted his hold on her, hooked an arm under her knees and cradled her in front of him. "Look at me, Brit."

She locked gazes with River. "I'm taking you away from him."

"She's my wife," Kyle coughed.

Brit turned her head. "You don't know what love is." She glanced back at River. "Please walk."

She buried her face against River's hot skin near his shoulder, wrapping her arms around his neck, and clung to him when he limped out of his bedroom and into the hallway. She heard Kyle coughing, her name coming from his lips, but she didn't want to look at him again.

Chapter Twelve

Kyle died before the ambulance arrived, along with two police cars. Drake had come downstairs to let them know Kyle Marthum would never be a threat again just after he'd taken his last breath. The police had traipsed through the house asking questions and collecting evidence until nearly lunchtime.

Brit held the mug of tepid coffee to keep her hands occupied while she sat at the kitchen table. The blanket that River had wrapped around her kept her warm. *Am I sad? No*, she thought, *I'm not. It's finally over.*

Someone moved into her line of sight and she turned her head as Drake pulled out a chair and sat heavily at the table. He looked tired, worn, and his spiked hair had flattened a little on one side as though he'd run his hand through it there often.

"The last of them just left. River is walking them out."

"They aren't going to arrest River, are they?"

He shook his head. "It's an open-and-shut case. Kyle broke into the house through a basement window. He brought a gun and he fired it at River. Luckily he put a hole in the wall instead of my little brother. River fired back in self-defense. This is Texas, darlin'. We don't cotton to that shit. River saved the taxpayers some money when he used up some bullets to end this."

Relief had her slumping and her body finally relaxed. "Thank God. I was worried."

"No need. You had active restraining orders against Kyle. It was part of his probation to stay the hell away from you. He was even stupid enough to bring one of his own shotguns with the name Marthum engraved on the damn barrel. Your ex-husband wasn't overly bright and there's no doubt the shooting was justified."

She couldn't deny that. "It's not over."

"He's dead."

She stared into Drake's stunning blue eyes. "His father will never let this go. I'm afraid for River. I told you before the police arrived that we should let me take the blame—say I shot Kyle." Hot tears filled her eyes. "I'm afraid of Kevin hurting River."

Drake smiled. "You're in love with my brother."

"Did you hear me?" She ignored his statement, not wanting to confirm it. "Kevin will come after River. Why didn't you let me say I shot Kyle? Kevin is already going to come after me. I couldn't live with it if anything happened to River because of me."

"Let me rephrase that. You really are in love with my brother."

She sighed. "Is it a family trait to totally ignore someone when they are trying to tell you something important?"

"Yes." He winked. "Women find it endearing."

"No. We don't. It's annoying."

Broad shoulders shrugged. "It may be why I'm divorced."

"You think?" She sipped her coffee. "I need to talk to Kevin. I'm going to tell him River had nothing to do with this. I want to make sure River's safe."

"Like hell you are," River stated from behind her.

She turned her head, staring at him. He'd put on a shirt to cover his bare chest and had pulled his hair back into a messy ponytail. The frown he gave her was enough to show that not only had he heard what she'd said but he wasn't happy about it.

"He'll make sure you never work again and that's not the only thing Kevin will do if we're lucky." She stood, keeping the blanket wrapped around her. "I wouldn't put anything past him."

"Nor would I." Drake shrugged. "That's why I took some measures when River told me he was involved with you. Don't worry about Kevin Marthum. He's got a reputation for doing stupid, impulsive things, and I called in a few favors."

"What does that mean?" River took a chair on the other side of Brit, frowning at his brother. "What did you do?"

"Let's just say that I made sure his phones were tapped after I called in a favor. I'd had it done to try to track Kyle to locate him but it's a damn good thing we had it set up. I didn't find Kyle before he found both of you but his father had another sort of phone conversation that I'm damn grateful we managed to record." Drake smiled but it didn't reach his eyes. He glanced at his watch and then back at River. "He was informed half an hour ago of his son's death. Three minutes later he placed a call to a man and offered him fifty grand to kill you."

Brit gasped, horrified. "Oh my God!"

River's jaw clenched. "Great."

"They are on their way to place Kevin and the man he hired under arrest as we speak. The guy he called will flip on Kevin, make a deal to testify against him, and Kevin won't leave prison alive. He's had some heart troubles over the past year and I'm sure time behind bars won't improve his health."

"Thanks." River chuckled. "I appreciate you using your feds connections for me."

"That's what brothers do." Drake glanced between them. "They also know when the hell to leave two people alone so they can talk." He stood. "I'm sorry I left the house to go riding last night and wasn't here when that jackass broke in."

"You got home just in time for the important part." River nodded at Drake. "Thanks. I'm damn glad you were."

"I'm going to bed. We'll deal with the mess in your room later. The boys aren't due back from fishing until tomorrow. Adam and Trip took Ryder out to their favorite spot before he could sober up after he was reminded of his past by Decon's death. I didn't

call them to tell them what went down here so just take Ryder's bedroom for now. Try to get some sleep. We could all use it. It's been a hell of a morning."

River stared at Brit, waiting until Drake left the room. "You were really going to go talk to Kevin? Are you nuts?"

It stung that he'd ask her that. "I didn't want him blaming you for Kyle's death and I had planned on calling Kevin. If I got close enough to see that man in person he'd hurt me. I am not dense."

"The only one responsible for what went down is Kyle. If his daddy isn't bright enough to know his son left me no choice but to shoot him, nothing you could have said would have made him see reason. You just would have been fueling that old man's rage, daring him to come after you harder. What were you thinking?" Anger tinged his voice.

"I was thinking that I didn't want you to get hurt." Her temper flared. "I'm tired, it's been, well, hell. Don't jump on me."

"You're right. It's been a real bad, long night and morning that is now officially over since it's past noon. We're both tired and we've been through hell." He slowly stood. "Let's go to bed. Rest is what we both need most of all."

"I don't think I can sleep."

"Then don't, but I'm holding you in my arms. We'll lie down together."

Brit tipped her head back to look up at him. "I'm so sorry."

"Don't." He reached for her and pulled her into his arms. "None of this is your fault."

"You killed a man to save me."

"I know. I'm more than aware." He hesitated. "I'd do it again. That's why I'm taking it better than expected. I know what happened couldn't be avoided and it beat any other outcome that could have gone down with Kyle showing up here."

"Do you hate me?" She couldn't look at his face as the question popped out—her worst fear. After all, if it wasn't for her, River never would have been in that situation.

"No!" He leaned back, one hand gripping her chin to force her to meet his gaze. "Never. I—" He lips slammed together. "Let's finish this conversation after we wake up when we're both fully awake. I'm wiped out."

She nodded. "Okay."

River led her upstairs to the room across from his. Ryder's room caused her mouth drop open when they stepped inside. The walls had been wallpapered with outdoor murals. She found herself in the middle of lush woods with a stream pictured predominantly on one wall. She gaped in stunned wonder.

"I know," River chuckled, glancing at her when he closed the door behind him. "It's amazing that we're twins. This actually beats how it looked when we were in our teens. He went through this heavy metal period." He sighed. "Skulls everywhere." He glanced around the room. "He finds this peaceful to write his songs."

Brit studied the room as she followed River to the big, wooden sleigh bed. "No canopy and chains, I see."

Another chuckle sounded from River. "I'm the dominant twin. Handcuffs and chains aren't his thing. He loves aggressive women, which mostly describes his groupies."

"He's got those?"

River removed his clothes. "Many."

Naked, River climbed into bed after pulling back the covers. He stretched his big frame out and patted the mattress next to him. "Come here." His mouth opened and a yawn had him covering his mouth. "I'm tired and I know you have to be too."

She hesitated and then stripped. She tried to ignore how strange it felt to be in Ryder's room as River used his foot to hook the covers, pulled them up enough to grab them, and pulled them over both of them. He reached for her then, snuggling her against his side as another yawn broke from him.

"I could have lost you." He rolled onto his side, staring at her, and then his hand settled on her stomach under the covers. "When we wake up we should talk."

She nodded. She knew she had no reason to stay at the Raine ranch any longer. Kyle was dead and Kevin would go to jail for trying to have River murdered. She shivered and curled tighter against him. They really did need to talk but not at that moment. She needed time to think.

She lay there until she realized that River's breathing had slowed. She lifted her chin to stare up at his handsome face and study his lax features in sleep. She undeniably loved him. Leaving would be hard to do but she remembered he wasn't the settle-down type. He'd admitted it freely. The last thing she needed would be a long-term relationship as well.

Brit closed her eyes and clung to the man she loved. For right now, he belonged to her and they were together. *Tomorrow...* She pushed that thought away as she drifted to sleep.

* * * * *

The bed shifting woke River instantly and his eyes flew open. Memory of the night before hit him brick-hard. He turned his head, heart pounding, but instead of Brit's ex-husband in the room with them, he met his brother's amused gaze.

"This is a nice surprise." Ryder's knee dented the other side of the bed and his jeans were unfastened. His twin looked away to smile at the woman sleeping on her stomach between them. "She change her mind about letting me fuck her?"

"Finish taking those pants off and we're going to blows," River threatened softly, hoping Brit didn't wake.

"You put her in my bed."

"There's too much damn blood in my room and I didn't think you'd return today or I would have left you a note that I'd taken over your room for the time being. I heard you were kidnapped by Adam and Trip in an attempt to make you human again."

"Blood?" Ryder's eyes swept over him and Brit. "Whose?"

"Her ex-husband showed up with a shotgun. I got to my gun first."

"Fuck." Ryder paled. "Seriously?"

"He died."

They stared at each other. Ryder backed off the bed, stood there gaping at his brother, and then blew out air. "Are you all right?"

River hesitated. "He left me with no choice when he came here to attempt to take her from me. I wasn't about to allow him to ever hurt her again."

Ryder stood there for long moments, his color returning as he fastened his jeans. "You killed for a woman?"

"Yeah."

River sat up slowly and then eased his body from beneath the covers to climb to his feet. Ryder tossed him sweat pants and they walked toward the door. River hesitated at the open door, making certain Brit slept on, and then followed his brother into the hallway. He carefully shut it quietly behind them.

"Talk to me." Ryder reached out and cupped his shoulder. "How screwed in the head are you over this shit?"

River took a deep breath, meeting a concerned gaze. "I'm better than you'd think. He abused her, would have done it again, and he fired at me first."

"Shit." Rage tightened Ryder's features. "I wouldn't have left if I knew trouble would show up."

"From what I heard, you weren't given a choice about going fishing. When Adam called, he said they dumped your drunken, passed-out ass into the back of the cab. I assumed you wouldn't be back until tomorrow."

Ryder hesitated. "I demanded they bring me back." He paused. "Her old man died and there will be a funeral."

Understanding dawned in River's eyes. "You think Summer might come back for it and you want to see her."

"Fuck that and stop saying her name. You know the damn rule. Her name is a foul word. I just didn't want to sleep in the back of a pickup listening to Adam and Trip arguing about Trip's recent drinking activities."

River let it slide, knowing bullshit when he heard it. Ryder loved a good argument, loved to egg his brothers on. The real reason had something to do with the fact that the love of his life might show back up in Hailey for her father's funeral. He changed the subject.

"We didn't know Brit's ex-husband could really find her and come here. I'm actually glad it happened. Now she won't have to live in fear or have to look over her shoulder. It's done, she's safe, and Drake made sure her ex-father-in-law got arrested."

"For what? Did he show up here too?"

"He attempted to pay some jerk money to take me out."

Ryder's hand dropped. "Are you serious?"

"Yeah."

Ryder's eyes glittered. "You could have died over a piece of ass."

Anger rose inside River and he glared at his twin. "She's more to me than that. I—"

"Don't say it." Ryder took a step back. "Not you too. What the hell is going on in this house? Navarro got married and then Trip. Of course that second one turned to shit but are you for real? You know nothing good comes of loving a woman and trusting one with your happiness."

"I know you're bitter still over Summer. She—"

Ryder backed up, stumbling in his haste. "Don't say her damn name. I *never* want to hear it again. We don't talk about that cold, heartless bitch."

"Not every woman takes off without a word."

"Right. Just the only woman I had to fall for did."

"I'm sorry."

Ryder shoved his hands in his front pockets. "Drop it. So is your physical therapist going to stay? Just give me notice if you need a best man. I won't book a band gig on that day and you damn well better ask me if you totally lose your damn mind."

"I have to talk her into staying first before we get to the needing-a-best-man stage."

"You could chain her to your bed."

River smiled. "It's a real possibility." He paused, his lips twisting into a grim line of disgust. "Can you help me clean up my room? It's a damn mess and I've never been so grateful we didn't carpet the floors. I don't want her to see all that blood again."

"Sure. I'll go get the bucket and mop."

"Thanks, man." River's gaze drifted to the closed bedroom door. He hoped Brit didn't wake before they finished. "I think this is going to be a breeze compared to keeping her with me."

"Chains," Ryder said softly. "If I knew back then what I know now, I would have tied *her* to my damn bed so she couldn't leave me." He spun away, quickly disappearing down the hallway.

River's shoulders slumped, hating to see his brother hurt. *What if I can't get Brit to agree to live with me? What if she wants to leave?* He realized he needed to decide how far he'd go to keep her.

* * * * *

Brit followed the sound of voices into the kitchen. River, Ryder, and Drake were grouped together over three pizzas spread out on top of the table. She had woken in a strange room and had gone in search of River.

"I can't believe they didn't get him." Ryder sounded disgusted. "What are they doing to locate him?"

Drake frowned. "Everything they can. It's just a matter of time."

"I'm taking Brit out of here. I'll drive the motor home somewhere on the ranch where we can't be found." River stood. "I'll go wake her up."

"I'm awake," Brit said softly, meeting River's angry gaze as he turned to face her. "What is going on?"

He crossed the room with grim determination. "I don't want you to panic."

"That's never good when someone says that." She lifted her chin, studying him when he stopped in front of her. "It's Kevin, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Drake said. "It took longer to get the arrest warrant issued than it should have and he's in the wind. They are searching for him though and when he's found, he'll be locked up."

Fear spread up her spine as she turned her attention on Drake. "Does he know he's going to be arrested?"

"Yes." River answered, his hands reaching out and brushing down her arms in a comforting gesture. "They will find him."

Dread and fear fought for dominance as her gaze flew to River. "He's coming after me. He'll blame us both for Kyle's death." Fear for him won out over all her emotions. "You're in danger."

"I'm not worried and you shouldn't be either."

Brit held her tongue, realizing River would be too stubborn to listen to her. He didn't know her ex-father-in-law the way she did. Kevin made Kyle seem like a harmless puppy in comparison. Where her ex-husband had been short-tempered and mean, his father had to be the coldest, cruelest, most devious person in existence. There would be no way he'd allow her or River to keep breathing when his precious and only child wasn't.

"It's going to be fine," River assured her softly. "We'll fire up the motor home and I'll take you to my favorite fishing spot. No one but my brothers will be able to find us until that asshole is locked up tight."

"That sounds great. Good plan." Drake stood. "My friends in law enforcement are all over his ass and he won't be able to stay off the grid for long since they froze all his assets. Rich people are helpless without funds."

Ryder nodded. "I'll pack up food supplies while you grab some clothes." He crossed the kitchen. "We'll let you know when it's safe to come home."

"And I'll keep Nav and Trina at my place where they are out of harm's way." Drake pulled out his cell phone and smiled tightly. "It will be over before we know it."

They have no clue how devious and cagey Kevin is, Brit thought, keeping it to herself. She feared River wouldn't listen. The longer she stayed at the ranch, the more danger she put the Raines in. Her gaze locked on the handsome man standing before her and her heart squeezed painfully in her chest. He'd put his life in danger to save hers. She had to do the same.

She forced a smile she didn't feel when River lowered his chin to gaze at her face. "That sounds good but we should move my car. If it's gone it makes it appear that I've left already and if someone shows up looking for me, they won't try to search your land."

"Good idea," Ryder called out from across the kitchen while he shoved canned food into a plastic bag. "I'll drive it over to Trip's house and park it in that big shed he has."

River hesitated and then he released her. "Go upstairs and just toss some of our clothes into my bag. I have to deal with your distributor cap."

So that's what he did to my engine. "That's it? You loosened it? I could have probably fixed that."

His shook his head. "I hid the damn thing. I didn't want to take a chance on you knowing your way around an engine and be able to fix your car just by fiddling with it. Hurry up. I want to get us settled in a camping spot and comfortable before the sun goes down. We napped most of the day away."

Brit jogged upstairs, her mind working on how to save River. Even if they managed to locate Kevin and lock him up, that didn't mean he couldn't hire another killer to go after River. The only way to keep him safe was if Kevin had no reason to hate the man she loved.

She paused at the top of the stairs, acknowledging just how deeply she'd fallen for River Raine. If anything happened to him she wouldn't be able to take the guilt or heartache. She'd rather set him free than bury the man who owned her heart. A plan formed. She could only think of one thing to do to make sure Kevin left River alone.

Chapter Thirteen

Brit froze inside River's room, her gaze fixed on the spot where her ex-husband had died. Someone had cleaned away the blood but the memory of him slumped against the wall remained. Her emotions see-sawed between guilt at not being sorry over his death and the sheer relief that he'd never stalk her again.

She forced her gaze from the spot and moved toward her bag. The last thing she wanted to do was leave the Raine ranch but options weren't on her side. She needed to deal with Kevin before there could be a chance of her having any kind of future contact with River. It only took her minutes to shove her things together since she hadn't unpacked much.

When she reached the door she paused and turned to stare at the big canopy bed where she'd slept with River. Pain tore at her heart as memories of their time together flashed through her mind but then she forced her legs to move. Kevin would kill River and the only way to stop that would be to get away from him, contact her worst enemy, and lie about Kyle's death.

Ryder had put two bags of groceries on the table and gave her a tense smile when she entered the room. "I didn't pack any meat but Drake is getting a shotgun and shells for you guys to take with you. I don't know if you hunt but River does from time to time and won't let you starve. He's a good shot."

Brit remembered that fact since he'd gotten the drop on her ex-husband, thankfully. "It sounds adventurous."

Ryder chuckled. "Speaking of, you want me to come along?" His dark eyes lowered down her body. "Two men are better than one to make sure you're taken care of."

The sexual innuendo wasn't missed by Brit. "No thanks. I'm a one-man kind of woman."

"Too bad." Ryder turned away, striding to the back door. "I told River I'd check the tires on that land boat of his. He's taking you into the hills and the last damn thing you need is a flat out there."

She paced, her mind working, until the back door opened again. She held her breath when River paused inside the door. He held up dirty, grease-smeared hands.

"Let me wash up and then we'll head out. Did you grab me some clothes too?"

"I repacked your bag," she lied. "I only carried mine down in case you wanted to add something to yours." The smile she forced hurt and she hoped her pain didn't show in her eyes while she stared into his beautiful, dark gaze. "You saved my life last night and now you're in danger because of it."

"They'll arrest that asshole. You heard Drake. He's got a lot of friends who owe him favors. He's forever assisting them with cases and has racked up a shitload of brownie points with them. They will go all out to track down Marthum and put him behind bars where he belongs."

"Even in prison Kevin won't let this go. You should have allowed me to tell the police I shot my ex. Kevin actually hired a hit man to come after you. You don't think he could do that from prison?"

"They screen prisoner calls and visits. He'd be a moron to try to hire someone else with every word he says being monitored. Besides that, you heard Drake about Marthum having a bad heart. He won't last long in there."

River wouldn't hear reason. He seemed to be counting on a lot of "what ifs" – *if* the prison actually paid attention to what Kevin did and *if* his heart gave out, he wouldn't be able to try to get back at them. Brit knew nothing she could say would penetrate River's hopeful mindset. He didn't see how much danger her ex-father-in-law would be to him unless she did something to change it.

She dropped her bag and closed the distance between them, gripping his bared upper arms by curling her fingers around the muscles of his biceps. She rose on tiptoe and stared into his eyes. "Thank you. You not only saved my life but you've shown me that I'm not dead inside. You make me feel, River."

His arms moved to wrap around her but then he jerked his hands back, grinning. "I don't want to get you dirty but hold that thought. Heroes get kisses and then some, right?"

"You can kiss me now."

River's head lowered and she tilted her head back, closed her eyes, and sadness tinged her heart at the soft brush of his lips. When he pulled back she stared up into his handsome face.

"Hold that thought for about half an hour until we get set up at camp. I'll show you a kiss and a hell of a lot more."

She feverishly wished she'd be there to enjoy whatever he wanted to do to her. "Okay. I am going to wait for you outside. I could use a little fresh air."

"I'll hurry. I'm just going to scrub this gunk off my hands and it will only take me a minute to grab my bag and the stuff my brothers put together for us."

Brit hesitated to let him go. "I'm so glad I met you, River." She meant that from the bottom of her heart. "I want you to know how much you mean to me."

Something flickered in his dark gaze. "Hold that thought too. Tonight we're going to have a long conversation about us. There are some things we need to discuss."

"Okay." With regret, she released his warm skin, dropped flat on her heels and stepped back.

River winked and then he left the kitchen to go wash up and retrieve the bag he believed she'd packed. She waited until she heard his boot loudly tap the bottom stair

before she spun, leaned down, and grabbed her bag. Her free hand gripped her keys as she straightened and rushed to the back door. Time wasn't on her side.

Luck graced Brit when no one waited outside as she exited the Raine home. She picked up her pace, ran to her car, and just threw her heavy bag onto the passenger side as she dropped into the driver's seat. Her hands shook slightly when she shoved the key into the ignition and slammed the door shut. The engine started right up and she grabbed for the gear shift on the steering wheel.

Brit turned her head and stared up at the second floor of the house. She didn't want to do this, knew she'd regret it, but River would stop her from trying to get Kevin to come after her instead of River. Her foot left the brake and the car shot forward.

* * * * *

"I can't believe she did that," River muttered, holding the mug of hot coffee Drake pushed into his hands. "She left me."

"That's what women do," Ryder sighed. He sat down at the table across from his brother. "I'm sorry, bro. Maybe it's for the best. Women are nothing but trouble."

Anger burned through his shock at finding Brit and her car gone. He'd only been upstairs for a few minutes. Walking outside to discover her gone had stunned him at first, then enraged him. She hadn't even said goodbye or left him a note. He'd rushed back to his room to check. The woman had just fled. Again.

"We'll find her," Drake swore.

"Maybe she was taken." That thought left River cold. He released the cup and stood so fast his chair hit the floor. "Maybe someone grabbed her. I have to find her."

"I saw her go," Ryder admitted softly. "She was alone."

"You just let her go?" River glared at his twin. "Why the hell didn't you try to stop her?"

"I wasn't close enough and I doubt she saw me. I was crouched down looking at your damn tires on that land boat of yours. She ran out the back door, jerked open her car door, tossed her shit inside, and took off like a bat out of hell. What did you want me to do? Try to chase her down by running after her? I didn't even have my keys with me."

"Yes!"

"Calm down." Drake reached out a hand and gripped his younger brother's shoulder. "I called in another damn favor for you. I think by the time I get home I'm going to owe them. She is worried about your safety and she thinks Marthum is going to have a hard-on for killing you. Maybe she thinks if she isn't around that he'll go after her instead. She loves you."

River's mouth fell open. "What? She doesn't love me. She couldn't get away from me fast enough."

"You're dense." Drake shook his head, letting his hand drop. "You didn't notice the way she looks at you? I think you spend too damn much time with horses or maybe you landed on your head one too many times when you rode bulls. That woman is insanely nuts about you. She didn't cut and run because she's sick of you. She's wrong but she thinks she's doing the best thing for you. If she didn't give a shit she wouldn't have cared if you got hurt or not. She'd have stayed put and allowed us to protect her. I've dealt with a lot of women in my life and I haven't met one yet who wouldn't use a guy she didn't give a damn about if her life were on the line. She is putting distance between you because she knows she's got a bull's-eye on her back and wants you clear when a bullet comes at her."

"Hey, she turned me down flat when I hit on her so she must love your ass." Ryder smiled. "I'm much cuter than you are and way better in bed."

"Damn it." River ignored his brother's bad joke. Helpless frustration gripped him so hard it hurt to breathe. "She's out there alone and until Marthum is caught she could get killed."

"I told you to handcuff her to your damn bed." Ryder shrugged his broad shoulders. "It's about the only way a woman will stay with one of us Raines."

"Shut up," Drake ordered. "You're not helping."

"I'm just saying our track records with women suck." Ryder walked to the fridge and pulled out a beer. "Instead of wedding rings, we need to put shackles on them. It would have changed my life if I'd locked my girl up. Drake, your wife wouldn't have been able to divorce you. Hell, I bet Trip wishes he'd tied his wife to the bed too since she took off on him."

"If I get her back that's what I'll do," River promised. "And she'll be lucky if I don't spank her ass."

"Kinky," Ryder chuckled. "Can I watch?"

River lifted his middle finger, flipping him off. "No."

"Enough, children," Drake looked disgusted. "I just hope our side finds Brit before someone from Marthum's side does."

"Fuck," River cursed. "I can't just stand here doing nothing."

* * * * *

"Are you listening to me?" Brit gripped the bars, watching the police officer who had pulled her over and arrested her. "What are the charges? I demand to know why I'm here."

The station had to be the tiniest one ever, just a large room with a few desks and two holding cells. Brit couldn't even pee in private, which irritated her. The police officer had left the room once to give her that private moment but it still irritated her deeply that he ignored her while reading the newspaper.

"Hello? Can you hear me? I have rights, you know. I want an attorney or something."

That got the man to lower his paper to glare at her over the rim of it. "Do you ever shut up?"

She glared back. "Not when I have no idea why you arrested me. I was only going four miles over the speed limit. Last I heard that only meant getting a ticket. My license, registration, and insurance are all up to date."

"I allowed you to make a phone call. Don't I get a few hours of silence for that? You're starting to give me a headache. I already told you that the judge has gone fishing and tomorrow you'll get an arraignment."

Sweat beaded her brow and fear inched up her spine. "Tomorrow? You said he'd gone fishing and I'd get bailed out when he got back. I thought you meant today." She stared at the cop with horror. "You can't keep me until tomorrow. It's a long story but trust me, I can't stay here. I need to go right now. I swear I'll return for my court date if one is needed."

"I can and I will. Like I'd trust the word of a two-bit thief." He snorted.

"A thief?" She gasped. "What do you think I stole? That car is mine."

The paper rose. "Shut up. I'm reading the sports section."

Brit paced, remembering her one phone call—a number she had dreaded to call but knew by heart. Kevin's longtime secretary had answered...

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"How may I help you?"

"Hi, Darleen. This is Britney."

The silence on the other end of the phone stretched and then the woman finally spoke. "How dare you call after what you've done? We got word about what happened to Kyle. I always knew you were trash. You—"

"You're having an affair with your boss, Kevin is married, and you've been with him for years so don't talk to me about trash," Brit cut her off. "I need to speak to him and I'm pretty sure he wants to take my call."

"He's not here. The police are looking for him because of you. Is that why you're calling? Are they listening in?"

"No."

"Really?" The woman snorted. "We have caller ID, you twit. I see this is coming in from a police station. The name is clearly displayed on my screen. You really think I'm stupid, don't you? I have no idea where Kevin, um, Mr. Marthum, is."

"This is not a trick and it's not being recorded."

"Sure. You think I'm going to tell you where Kevin is so you can send the police to arrest him. Go to hell. I have no idea where he is and I told that to the police."

"I want you to give him a message, okay?" Brit's gaze was fixed on the outer door of the office, making sure it remained closed and that no one overheard her conversation. "Write it down."

"I don't take orders from you."

"You work for Kevin and he'll want you to do this. Now write. Ready?"

Darleen hesitated and then uttered a soft curse. "I'm not saying I know where he is or that I have a way to reach him but I'm ready."

"I've had hours to think and I know Kevin is way too smart for me to fool," Brit rushed the words out, purposely attempting to sound frightened. "I also know it's only a matter of time before he finds me and discovers the truth about how I'm really the one who shot Kyle. That guy who said he did it only took the blame out of fear he'd get into trouble because I used his gun to do it. I kind of flirted hard with him to sweet talk him into saying he did it." Brit rolled her eyes, the lies so appalling it hurt to say them, but Darleen hated her and would easily believe the worst. "Tell Kevin that I'll confess to murdering Kyle if he lets me live. I'm sure," she tried to hide her sarcasm, "he'd much rather see me in prison than dead. That's why you are seeing a police station come up on your caller ID. I'll tell the cops the truth about who really shot Kyle if Kevin agrees to my terms. I'd rather spend my life behind bars than end up at the mortuary."

Brit held her breath, hoping Darleen believed she was a complete idiot to think making a deal with the devil could be possible. Anyone who knew Kevin would know she didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of him actually agreeing and following through on a bargain he made. He wouldn't stop coming after Brit until she took her last breath but now he might believe she'd pulled the trigger instead of River.

"I knew it," the woman hissed. "The second they said some asshole had shot Kyle to death I pegged you for the shooter. I tried to tell Kevin that but he said that rancher guy confessed."

"I have a conscience." Brit paused. "I totally manipulated that cow chaser into taking the blame but I realized Kevin would figure it out. The guy wasn't even home when Kyle found me. The owner of the house walked in a good ten minutes after Kyle died. His only crime was being nice enough to offer me a guest room when my car broke down. Please give Kevin my message and I'll call back in two hours for his answer." She hung up. *By that time I'll be out on bail and far from here. And Kevin will leave River alone and come after me...*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The slight sound the paper made when the cop flipped the page drew Brit from her memories of the conversation that had taken place hours before.

The doors opened and fear made Brit's heart pound until she saw who walked in. It wasn't some stranger sent by Kevin to kill her. Drake Raine, in full leather gear, walked into the station. His blue-eyed gaze looked decidedly chilly as he sought and found Brit standing in her cell.

"Who the hell are you?" The cop stood, dropping his newspaper to the floor as his hand reached for his weapon.

"I'm Drake Raine."

"Really?" The cop's hand hesitated over the handle of his sidearm. "You got identification? You don't look like no fed I ever saw before. They don't wear chaps and biker jackets."

"They do if they are off duty and drive a Harley. If you check with them, they'll vouch for me. I can prove who I am but I don't have a badge." Drake pulled out his wallet, flipped it open, and handed it over. "I'm here to take the prisoner."

Brit had to close her mouth after it had fallen open at the pure nerve River's older brother had at imitating a fed trying to bust her out of police custody. Sweat beaded her brow and her fearful gaze fixed on the cop.

"It's nice to meet you, Mr. Raine. When I got the bulletin to be on the lookout for that little lady and her car, it didn't say what she stole. Is she a bank robber who hid the money or something? It said to not hurt her under any circumstances, so I was careful with her. Are you going to have to find out what she did with the money?"

Drake accepted his wallet back, shoved it into his back pocket, and frowned. "Where did you come up with that theory?"

"I read about a bank robbery in the paper from yesterday. I just put two and two together."

"Your math is off." Drake turned his head, blue eyes narrowing on Brit. "It wasn't money she stole."

The cop turned, lifted his key ring, and approached the cell. He unlocked the door and opened it wide. "Out you go." He glanced back at Drake. "You need cuffs for her? I hope you've got backup outside. You aren't planning to transport her on a motorcycle, are you?"

"I've got a transport coming right behind me. I drove a little fast to get here before it did so I'd have a few minutes to talk to the prisoner." Drake crossed his arms over his chest. "Let's go, Brit."

She stepped out of the cell, stunned that Drake had fooled the cop into believing he had a right to take her from the station. If she stayed in one place for too long Kevin would find her and the caller ID had given him her location.

"So what did she steal that was so valuable to get an all-points bulletin put out on her?" The cop frowned.

"My damn heart," a familiar deep voice answered from the open door.

Brit's eyes flew to River's, his words hitting her as though he'd physically struck her. Her mouth parted in shock and she noticed how angry he looked as he limped across the room toward her.

"What the hell were you thinking, Fuck And Run?" River halted in front of her. "And don't even deny that's exactly what you did to me again. Have you lost your mind? You were safe at the ranch or would have been once we set up camp."

"I—"

He cut her off. "Don't. I'm so pissed right now I'm tempted to put you over my knee and give you some swats for the damn anguish you've put me through the past few hours. I imagined the worst, damn it."

"What the hell is going on here?" The cop glared at Drake.

"It's complicated. She's a victim of abuse and her abuser got himself killed. A family member of his has ordered a hit on her. I'm sorry for the lie we told about why we needed to find her but you saved her life when you arrested her." Drake blew out a deep breath. "We need to go right now. If Marthum has any law enforcement contacts, he could learn where you detained her. We don't want her to still be here if he sends someone to kill her. Her safety is priority and catching that jackass is secondary."

Brit hesitated. "I called his office and gave his secretary a message to tell him I'm the one who shot Kyle. I thought I would be able to bail myself out and be long gone by now."

"Why would you do that?"

She met River's stunned, angry gaze. "I don't want him coming after you."

"Did you say where you were?" Drake tensed.

She forced her attention from River to his brother. "No, but the caller ID did."

"Shit." Drake shook his head. "We need to go. He definitely knows where she is by now."

"Wait until we get home," River said under his breath. "Your ass is mine."

She glanced up at him but then his hand gripped her wrist, strong fingers gently but firmly curving around her skin. He gave her a tug, turning her to face the door, and pulled her after him. Drake moved ahead of them but then froze at the open doorway.

"Shit," he hissed. He jerked the door closed and twisted the deadbolt to lock it. He spun to face the room. "There are two thugs walking this way. It could be nothing but call me paranoid. Get her over there by those file cabinets, bro." Drake unzipped his jacket, his hand reached inside and he pulled out a big, black gun.

"Unlock the door," the officer ordered softly.

"Are you on the take?" Drake's gun rose to point at the other man, his frown deepening.

"No." The cop shook his head. "But we can control the situation better if we let them walk right in. Otherwise they are going to be firing through the walls, fishing to hit something. You said there are two of them and there are two of us. I'll take the one on the right, you take the one on the left, and we'll come out of this alive. Call me J.P. We should be on a first name basis if we're about to face a deadly situation together."

Drake lowered his weapon until it pointed at the floor. His other arm shot back to twist the bolt free. "Good plan. I want to know the location of their boss."

"Understood."

Drake glanced at River. "Cover her, bro."

"Got it." River jerked his head in a sharp nod.

Brit opened her mouth to ask what that meant but then she gasped as River released her wrist, grabbed her around her waist and the back of her knees, and her feet were jerked from the floor. He shifted her into the cradle of his arms, moved a few feet to a heavy desk and knelt behind it. He laid her down flat on the cold, hard floor, and his body crushed down on top of hers.

"What are you doing?"

"What does it look like?" He arched a black eyebrow. "They may have guns and there's nowhere to go but the floor. I'm protecting you with my body in case the desk doesn't stop a stray bullet."

The situation sank in and Brit reached up, cupping his face. "I only left you because I'd rather let you go than have you die."

Something softened in his gaze. "You're still in hot water with me."

"I stole your heart?" She still couldn't believe he'd said those words. "What exactly did you mean by that?"

"You want to talk about this now?" Dark eyes widened. "Really?"

"I—"

River's mouth silenced her as he dipped his head, his full, sensual lips sealing over hers. His tongue delved between her parted lips, tasting her mouth with a teasing swipe. Brit kissed him back, her arms sliding around his neck, and enjoyed the passion that flared between them intensely until the door banged open. Their lips parted when they jerked their heads in the direction from which it came.

Brit could see the bottom of the front door from her position under the desk. Two men walked in wearing boots.

"Freeze," Drake ordered. "Drop your guns."

"Fuck," a male hissed.

Two shots rang out immediately. River suddenly blinded her when he slumped over her totally, his body crushing down, and his face pressed hard against her cheek. Something heavy hit the floor and a male groaned loudly.

"Damn it," Drake ground out. "You should have dropped the damn guns."

River's head jerked up. "You okay, bro?"

"Yeah. We're great but these two idiots need ambulances." Metal clamored across the floor. "Clear," Drake suddenly said. "Why don't you call this in, J.P.? The one you shot looks like a through and through to the shoulder but this asshole took one to the gut when he lunged at me."

River lifted off Brit, slowly getting to his knees. When she tried to sit up, he reached out a hand to help her, pulling her up to a standing position next to him. Brit took in the scene in front of her.

Two men she'd never seen before lay by the door on the floor. One held his stomach, blood on his hands, and a grimace etched on his features. His companion gripped his shoulder, blood spreading slowly down his blue shirt, and he leaned against the wall next to the door. He glared at her.

"This is Officer J.P. Jenkins," the cop said into a cell phone. "We need two ambulances sent to the station. I have two perps down with gunshot wounds."

"What happened?" River inched over, blocking most of Brit's body from the guy glaring at her still. He glanced at his older brother.

"These two idiots walked in here gripping guns." Drake jerked his head. "I kicked their guns over by the cells so they aren't stupid enough to go for them." He kept his gun trained between the injured men. "But I'd love for them to try to go for one of them. I'm a real believer in the death penalty and assholes who walk into police stations pointing guns are prime reasons why."

"Is she still alive? I want to watch her take her last breath," a man called out as the sound of running feet approached.

Brit watched in stunned silence as Kevin Marthum jogged into the room. He came to a halt when he nearly tripped over the gut-shot thug he'd obviously hired to kill her. His startled expression over the situation he'd run into changed to anger quickly when he saw her unharmed across the room.

"I heard the shots," he gasped. "I thought you'd shot her and the cop."

"I told you I'd call you on your cell," the one injured in the shoulder muttered. "They were waiting for us, like a trap."

Kevin's face turned bright red with rage and he took a threatening step in Brit's direction. "You bitch! You killed my son. I want to see you suffer and bleed to death in agony the way he did."

"You're under arrest," J.P. kept his gun trained on Kevin. "Slowly turn around and put your hands behind your back."

"It's not fair," Kevin raged. "You're nothing but a two-bit whore. You're trash my son threw his life away over. You—"

River closed the distance in three long strides and his fist slammed hard into Kevin's mouth, sending the older man flying back. J.P. moved too, shouldering River aside, and grabbing hold of a swaying Kevin Marthum.

"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have—"

"I'm going to see you dead," Kevin swore harshly while he glared at Brit. "I'll beat the charges they file against me and next time you won't get lucky."

Drake laughed. "You're not going to beat the charges against you and you're making death threats. With your money, you're a flight risk, so they are going to toss your ass into a hole." His expression hardened. "You think we're not smart enough to know you'll attempt to hire someone from prison to kill her? You'll never get the chance. I'm going to make damn sure you're not even allowed access to a priest. The only person you'll get to talk to is yourself. That happens once you go nuts from living in solitary confinement."

"It's never going to be over," Kevin swore.

"It is," Drake stated calmly. He turned his head and met River's furious gaze. "Take her out of here so she doesn't have to hear his meaningless threats. He won't be able to take a breath without someone watching him. He's done for and doesn't even know it."

"What if he does find someone to try to hire to kill Brit?" River took a step forward. "He'll never stop until he kills her."

"Trust me, bro." Drake winked. "I'm the king of collecting favors. I still have a lot I can call in. I know the wardens personally in every prison in the state. He'll be talking to four-legged and eight-legged creatures but not to anything on two."

River hesitated and then nodded. "Fine." He spun around and held out his hand to Brit. "Come on, sexy. You and I have some talking to do."

She didn't hesitate. His warm fingers laced through hers and she allowed him to lead her out into the cool evening air. One of the ranch trucks sat parked next to a large Harley.

River jerked open the passenger door and frowned at her. "Get in."

"My car—"

"Get in. I'll have my brothers get your stuff later. Right now we've got more important things to deal with."

She didn't miss the simmering anger in his dark gaze as she studied him. "I left to protect you. You wouldn't listen to me but I've spent years on the run, getting lost. That family never stops and I didn't want him coming after you too. It wasn't as though I planned to ever allow him to find me. You just wouldn't listen to reason and I didn't want you in danger."

River's expression was still angry. "We'll talk when we get home. I'm more than a little agitated. The drive home should cool me off and calm me."

She hesitated and then climbed into the truck. River slammed the door, walked around, got in, and then started the engine. She was going home with River. She realized how much she really wanted to do just that.

Chapter Fourteen

Brit opened the bathroom door to find River standing there gripping the doorframe, blocking her way. She swallowed hard, staring up into his angry eyes. He hadn't cooled down much on the drive to the ranch. He also hadn't spoken to her except to demand she use the bathroom the second they'd walked upstairs.

"My room now," he demanded, backing up as he released the wood.

"Okay."

Her chin lifted and she headed where he wanted her to go. She didn't feel fear. She refused to believe that River would hit her or do any of the things her ex-husband had been capable of. She glanced behind her when his door slammed shut.

"You left me." He paused. "Again." He frowned at her, crossing his arms over his broad chest. "It is starting to become a pattern with you."

"I just wanted you safe."

A dark eyebrow lifted. "Same here. Do you have any idea what kind of thoughts tortured me while I worried about you out there alone without me there to make sure nobody hurt you?"

"That wasn't my intention."

"I don't give a damn." His arms dropped to his sides. "Take your clothes off."

She faced him and frowned. "You want to have sex now? You're angry."

"I'm furious actually. Do you need help?" He took a step forward and paused. "You can remove them or I'll tear them off."

She took a step back. "River?"

He didn't move. "I'm not going to hurt you. Do you think I would ever do that?"

"No."

"Good. It's the truth. I'm really pissed, I admit that, but what I want most is you under me. I want to touch you and assure myself that you're really okay. I need..." He blew out a deep breath. "Damn it, Brit. You drive me nuts. I went a little crazy when I walked in here and realized you hadn't touched my bag to pack my clothes. It hit me hard in that second that you had no intention of allowing me to be with you. I ran downstairs but you were gone. You don't know what it did to me."

"I just—"

"I know," he cut her off. "You wanted me away from you. You're used to being on your own, looking out for yourself, and you didn't trust me enough to protect you."

"That wasn't it. You just didn't seem to want to hear how bad Kevin could be. He's going to try to hire someone else to come after me. I just wanted to make sure when it

happens that you're not on the receiving end of that too. I couldn't live with it if something happened to you."

The anger melted away from his tense features and his hands unclenched. A strong emotion flashed in his gaze. "You love me, don't you?"

Brit's heart accelerated. She could tell the truth had dawned on him, that he knew how she felt, and lying about it would be useless. "Kevin thinks I killed Kyle. You're safe as long as I'm far away from you. If he ever finds out we're together he'll assume you had a part in his son's death."

"I don't give a shit what that man thinks."

"You're still not listening when I try to tell you how dangerous he is. I've been dealing with those assholes for years, River. They just keep coming. They have money and know important people, and they win." Tears flooded her eyes and she tried to blink them back. "I doomed myself the second I woke up married to Kyle. It was so stupid that I never even saw—"

River closed the distance between them in a few quick, long strides. One hand slid around her waist, tugging her against his longer frame, while his other hand slid into her hair to cup the side of her face. He tipped her head back, lowering his chin, and stared deeply into her eyes.

"You don't ever have to worry about Marthum again. If Drake says it, he means it."

"He's a lawyer. He should know better than anyone that the legal system doesn't always work and people with money can manipulate it."

"My brother isn't just a lawyer. I can't say much more than that but he's got all those connections of his for a reason and while we're not rich, loyalty is priceless. We're rich beyond words when it comes to having good friends. Kevin won't get the chance to send anyone after either of us. Stop worrying about me and start thinking about us."

It hurt to even hope she could stay and be a part of River's life for however long he wanted her. She'd come to the conclusion that happiness or being in a relationship wouldn't be something she could hold on to. Years of struggling to stay out of Kyle's clutches had left her battle weary and terrified.

"What do you expect from me? What do you want?"

His arm tightened around her waist. "I want you to stay with me. I want you to swear you won't ever run away from me again."

"For how long?"

His eyes closed and then he opened them. "Sixty years at least."

Her breath froze in her lungs, stunned. Her mind struggled to work. His answer was something she'd never expected to hear. "You don't do long-term relationships. That's...um...a really long time."

"I didn't do long-term. I also had never met a woman who could turn me inside out, fuck me and run away, and take my damn heart with her when she left. I've never held a woman in my arms and wanted to do it every night of my life for the rest of it

but then this sexy little spitfire of a physical therapist walked into my bedroom.” He smiled. “And now I just want her to take off her damn clothes, chain her to my bed, and make love to her until she’s willing to admit she loves me as much as I love her. I’m willing to keep her there until I’m sure she’s convinced that being under me is the one and only place in the world she belongs.”

“River—”

“And until she realizes I belong to her as much as she does to me. We’re great together, we make each other happy, and I’m not letting you go when I know damn well we’re a perfect fit.”

“I—”

“You love me and I love you. I know you aren’t going to be happy in my motor home. Nav has been pestering me for years to get my ass home and help out with the ranch. I want us to have our own place. I’m not asking you to live on the road with me and I’ll make enough money to support us if I stay on here. I actually managed to save some money that Drake bitched at me to send to him when I was doing real good on the circuit. He opened a savings account for me, it’s not a hell of a lot but it’s enough for us to buy a mobile home. We’ve got a lot of beautiful land right here on the ranch to put it on. If you don’t like that we could build a ranch house similar to this one. It would take longer, we’d have to live here until it’s built, but—”

Brit rose on tiptoe, pulled him down to line them up better, and kissed him. He groaned against her lips and tried to deepen the kiss but she pulled back, staring up at him. “Stop interrupting me. You have an annoying way of doing that. It’s my turn to talk.”

He smiled but didn’t say a word.

“I love you too but I’m also scared that my past is going to bite us in the ass again.”

His mouth opened.

Brit shook her head at him, silently asking him not to talk. “But some things are definitely worth taking risks. Sometimes you have to say ‘what the hell’. That’s what I said to myself when I went to bed with you the first time and you’ve been talking me into doing insane things ever since. You’re just too cute to resist.”

River chuckled, his grin widening.

“I want to stay and be with you. I also admit I have a habit of running away when I get scared or things get too intense.” She turned her head, glanced at the bed, and then grinned up at River. “It’s a good thing I fell for a guy who has a thing for handcuffs.”

She stopped talking and then pushed against him, wiggling out of his hold. He released her. She reached for her shirt, pulled it over her head, and tossed it to the floor. River watched her undress, a sexy grin curving his lips, until she climbed onto his bed and stretched out flat on her back. Her hand lifted, one finger wiggling at him.

“Come here.”

He tore at his shirt, tossing it haphazardly to the floor. Brit laughed when he nearly fell over when he bent to tear off his boots and remove his pants. His hand grabbed at the bedpost to steady himself, shaking the bed, and one of the chains fell from the canopy.

"The bed comes with us when we move out of here, right?"

River laughed. "You know it." Naked, he got on the mattress with her, moving until he crouched on his hands and knees, hovering over her to cage her body under his. "I plan to keep you here often." He lowered his body, fitting it over hers.

Brit brushed her fingernails lightly across his chest, loving the feel of firm, warm skin. "I can't wait."

His mouth descended, stealing her breath as she exhaled, when his firm lips opened hers. She moaned when he kissed her, his tongue dominating hers. He shifted his hips and she parted her thighs, making room for him. His hot, hard erection pressed firmly against her feminine folds. Her hips arched, welcoming him to enter her but he broke the kiss instead.

"Not so fast." His deep voice gave her chills in the best way. "I promised to chain you to my bed."

She released him when he rolled away from her. She watched as he lowered the chains on the three remaining corners of the bed and held perfectly still while he shackled each wrist and ankle until he had her spread-eagle on his bed. She didn't miss the satisfied grin on his face when he grabbed the motor remote, tightening the tension until they had no give. She tested them, trying to move, and found she couldn't.

"You're not going anywhere now, Fuck And Run."

Brit's eyes narrowed and she gave him a dirty look. "Are you really going to keep calling me that?"

He laughed. "Maybe. I love that little line you get between your eyes when I say it. It's damn cute." He bent, reaching under the bed. Material slid on the floor and the zipper of his toy bag sounded loud in the room. "It beats calling you my old lady," he teased.

"You're right." She relaxed and fought to hold back a smile. The man loved to get reactions out of her.

"You need to make a very important decision." He straightened, holding a bullet vibrator between his fingers, showing it to her. His other hand lifted and he held up a feather. "Which one of these am I going to use on you?"

Brit laughed, staring at the blue feather. "What are you going to do with that?"

"This," he waved the feather slightly, "is for if you say no to my question. If that's your answer I'm going to tickle you with this until you say yes."

Her gaze locked with his. "And the vibrator?"

"It's for *when* you say yes. I'm going to use it on you until you scream my name after I get you to come so hard you see stars."

"What's the question?"

River took a deep breath, his features tensing, and then he sat down on the edge of the bed, twisting his torso to face her. "I'm not good at this shit but I figure you can't run away from me." He flashed a grin when he glanced down her body. "I'm just waiting for something before I ask."

"Okay." Brit watched him, feeling a little confused. "Am I supposed to say something or ask a certain question to prompt you?"

"No." He looked away, glanced at the clock on the bedside table, and then sighed. "He's running later than I thought he would."

"Who?" Her body tensed.

A knock sounded on the door, making her jump. River rose to his feet and set down the feather and the small silver vibrator on the edge of the bed. He took a few steps, bent, and straightened, holding his discarded shirt. He faced her, leaned across the bed, and dropped his shirt over her breasts to her thighs, covering her enough to barely be modest.

"Hang on."

"Don't open the door," she whispered. "Or let me go first." Her head lifted, staring down at her body, realizing anyone standing in the hallway would see the vulnerable, displayed position of her mostly still-bared body. "River!"

He ignored her and threw open the door. "It's about damn time."

Ryder stepped into the bedroom, grinning when his dark gaze landed on Brit on the bed. "I see you took my advice about chaining her up."

River held out his hand. "Did you get it?"

"Yeah and a speeding ticket to go with it. You're paying that."

"Fine. Hand it over."

Ryder chuckled. "Need any help convincing her?"

"Eyes on me, damn it," River nearly growled. "Touch her and I break any part of you that does."

Ryder's grin widened, reaching into his back pocket, and removed something he dropped into his brother's hand. He finally stopped staring at Brit to look at his brother. "Good luck."

Ryder turned and left the room. "I still think you should let me help you convi—"

River slammed the door shut, muffling the rest of what his brother said, and turned to face Brit. He paused and then approached her slowly. "What? Did you think that was what I wanted to ask you? To let my brother touch you?"

For a split second she had. It had been an unpleasant moment. She said nothing, just gazed up at him.

"It will never happen." He put his knee on the bed, reached out with his free hand and jerked the shirt off her to expose every inch of her to his view again. "I asked him to go buy something for me."

She darted a glance to his closed fist. "What is it?"

"It's about that choice you need to make."

He lifted his leg over the chain and her leg, moving to sit between her spread thighs. He picked up the vibrator, made sure to allow her to see it, and then turned it on. It hummed to life and Brit gasped when he pressed it against her clit without warning. Pleasure strummed from it straight to her brain. Her body tensed, her hands wrapping around the chains that secured the handcuffs to his bedposts.

"Oh God."

"You're so damn sexy," River murmured.

He rubbed her swelling clit with the small but strong vibrator in circular patterns until sweat beaded her body and she knew she was about to come hard. He removed the vibrator, set it on the mattress, and slid one arm under her back as he bent forward, shifting until he lifted her ass up onto his thighs. His cock pressed against her pussy and he entered her slowly.

"River!"

Her gaze met his, holding it, seeing pure emotion in his eyes and passion that she knew matched her own. A loud moan tore from her parted lips as he pushed into her more, stretching her with ecstasy as her vaginal walls clenched around him in desperate need to find release.

"We're a perfect fit, aren't we, Brit?"

She nodded and tried to wiggle to move but the chains held her in place. "I need you."

"I need you too." He withdrew a little and then started to fuck her slowly. "So damn much."

"Faster," she urged.

His hips stilled. "Brit?"

She couldn't look away from him. "Why did you stop?"

"I wanted your full attention."

"You've got that."

"Will you marry me?"

Surprise was too mild a word to describe the flash of emotion that had her forgetting to breathe.

"Don't make me get the feather, baby. I'll tickle you until you say yes." He moved his hips, driving into her deep. "I'm not above fucking you until you agree to it either." He froze there, keeping them joined. He opened his fisted hand and gripped something

small between the finger and thumb with his other hand. "We'll pick out an engagement ring together, something to your tastes, but this is universal."

Brit gawked at the gold wedding band he displayed for her. Her eyes flew from it to his face. She'd never expected him to propose.

"I don't want to just live with you. I want it all. Marriage. A house. Hell, a dog." He paused. "I love you."

Brit's heart swelled almost painfully while she stared into his handsome face. He offered her everything she could possibly want, something she'd always dreamed about—a man who knew how to love her and whom she loved back with her entire being. She hadn't known him long enough to make that serious a decision, he wasn't the ideal type she'd always thought she'd end up with, but no one had ever made her happier in her entire life.

"Yes," she breathed. "I love you too."

"Hot damn," River laughed. He carefully put the ring beside the feather on the edge of the bed, and then crouched over her, keeping their bodies linked the entire time. "You won't regret it."

"Undo the cuffs. I want to touch you."

"Not yet. I promised to make you come if you said yes."

He moved then—fast, hard, driving in and out of her. All thought left as ecstasy took over. His hips shifted slightly and Brit screamed out as River slid his hands between their bodies, pressing the bullet vibrator against her clit. It was the last little bite of pleasure that she needed to send her over the edge. She shook with the intensity of the climax. She heard River yell out as he found his own release.

* * * * *

River turned off the vibrator and tossed it behind him, not caring where it went. His gaze fixed on the woman spread out on his bed. Her eyes opened and the look in them made him suck in air. He loved Brit. She had to be the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen in the aftermath of hot, sweaty sex. It was the way she looked at him too, he admitted. She made him feel complete and as if he had become the center of her universe.

"You can let me go," she panted. "I want to touch you."

The grin came easy, pure happiness pouring through his entire body. "I'm not done with you yet."

"Really?" Her tongue darted out to wet her lips.

Watching her do that hardened his cock again inside her hot, tight, welcoming body. He remembered the feel of that mouth wrapped around his cock. Brit felt like pure heaven to him in every way she touched him.

He chuckled. "I just want to keep you chained to my bed, under me." He lowered his body over hers, careful to make sure she could breathe easily, and then stared at her mouth, inches from his own. "This is going to be our favorite pastime."

Amusement sparked in her incredible eyes. "I can believe that."

He adjusted his arms on the bed to free up his hand, bracing his upper body weight to his elbows. His fingers traced her cheekbone and then down to her chin, watching the movement until his gaze met hers.

"I love you. I never thought I'd feel this way, sure it would terrify me if I ever got totally wrapped up in a woman, but I'm just too damn happy to worry about it."

"River, I love you too." She shook her arms, the chains making a slight sound. "You might be wrapped up in me but I'm the one tied down."

Throwing back his head, River laughed. He grinned and met her gaze. "Damn straight. Your days of running are over. I've got a new endearment to call you now."

"I'm almost afraid to ask." Brit laughed. "Okay. What is it? I'm feeling brave."

His lips lowered and brushed lightly across hers. He stared deeply into her eyes. "My everything."

Tears welled in Brit's eyes and her lips parted. "I love that one nearly as much as I love you."

About the Author

I'm a full time "in-house supervisor" (sounds *much* better than plain ol' housewife), mother and writer. I'm addicted to caramel iced coffee, the occasional candy bar (or two) and trying to get at least five hours of sleep at night.

I love to write all kinds of stories. I think the best part about writing is the fact that real life is always uncertain, always tossing things at us that we have no control over, but when you write, you can make sure there's always a happy ending. I *love* that about writing. I love it when I sit down at my computer desk and put on my headphones to listen to loud music to block out the world around me, so I can create worlds in front of me.

Laurann welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

Also by Laurann Dohner

Cyborg Seduction 1: Burning Up Flint

Cyborg Seduction 2: Kissing Steel

Cyborg Seduction 3: Melting Iron

Cyborg Seduction 4: Touching Ice

Mate Set

Riding the Raines 1: Propositioning Mr. Raine

Zorn Warriors 1: Ral's Woman

Zorn Warriors 2: Kidnapping Casey

Zorn Warriors 3: Tempting Rever

Zorn Warriors 4: Berrr's Vow

Print books by Laurann Dohner

Burning Up Flint

Loving Zorn



Discover for yourself why readers can't get enough of the multiple award-winning publisher Ellora's Cave. Whether you prefer e-books or paperbacks, be sure to visit EC on the web at www.ellorascave.com for an erotic reading experience that will leave you breathless.

www.ellorascave.com