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ROPIN' *Eli*

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ROPIN' *Et*

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I just love everybody praise the Lord, Amen.
—Shara

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CAVEAT

This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.

CHAPTER ONE

Gilly Nix was livid. This was the last damn time Eli Travis was treating her like a damn boy! First there was the indignity of having the damn man as the ranch foreman. Every since their fathers had decided to combine their ranching operations, Eli had been the one in charge, ordering her around like he had every right. Added to it, the man was the sexiest thing in all of Lauréa, Texas with his sandy blond hair and eyes like Kentucky bluegrass and a lean, hard body that just wouldn't quit. And the final indignity to end all indignities, he was completely unaware she was a damn woman fully grown. Not the gangly child she used to be, not an adolescent male, but a woman, damn it. With breasts and everything.

Yeah, she had to bind those bad boys pretty tightly. She worked on a ranch. Her D-cups tended to bounce all over the place unless she had them secured all nice and tight. The clothing she had to wear around the ranch didn't help either, but it wasn't like she could work in tight jeans and tighter t-shirts when she needed to move fluidly. That didn't mean she wanted to be in charge of mucking the damn stalls, or worse—bull insemination. She was sick of it, and once and for

all, the man with two first names was going to understand she was fully and completely female.

After taking a long, perfumed bath, she moisturized her skin with the same honeysuckle scent she used to bathe. No smelling like manure and horses tonight. Painting her nails fire-engine red (which went perfectly with her dark chocolate skin, thank you very much), she applied a layer of mascara and hot cherry lip gloss, then slid into the sleek little red dress she'd been saving for a special occasion—the one that clung to her every curve and was held up only by the tiniest of spaghetti straps. Tonight was that occasion as far as she was concerned. Tonight was the night she proclaimed to Eli and every other brain-dead cowboy that she was a woman, and she was gonna roar.

Assessing herself in the full-length mirror, she gave a little nod. Her hair was all got up in an artful top knot with a lock here and there pulled down to caress her cheek and the back of her neck. Her makeup was just right. She looked ready to kill, or at least to rope herself a mulish man.

After slipping on the three-inch heels that matched her dress, she grabbed her small clutch purse and marched down the stairs. She had gotten about halfway down before she remembered she was supposed to be a lady. Eli was down there with his father, talking to her father about the events of the

day. No doubt telling her dad all about the little shit-fit she threw over being assigned to mucking stalls yet again. Well, fine, it wasn't like Daddy was going to do anything about it. He would laugh it off, shake his head while patting her on the head like she was some kind of child, then tell her to be nicer to Eli.

Daddy was always telling her to be nice to Eli. For what? Eli was an asshole. She didn't want to be nice to him. She wanted to rope him, tie him to her bed and ride the living daylights out of him, but not be nice. He didn't deserve it. What he deserved was a swift kick in the behind, which was partially what tonight was all about. She would waltz right past him like he didn't even exist before making her way to his favorite hangout. She'd been there before, but usually in a corner somewhere in her jeans hiding in the shadows. She'd watched Eli woo and win some of the skeeziest Lauréa had to offer. Well, tonight he could just watch her, damn it, and stew knowing she could be feminine and desirable.

Taking a deep breath, she started her descent again, this time in measured steps as if she wasn't in any particular hurry at all. She had a sashay going by the time she made it to her father's study, sweeping into the room as if the man behind the desk was the only one there. Her heart beat a wild tattoo in her chest as she felt Eli's eyes on her, but she wasn't going

to look. She might run terrified back up to her room if she glanced in his direction and saw anything other than shock and awe.

Regardless of the bravado she had feasted on a few seconds earlier to build up her courage, Gilly had never done something like this before. Her entire twenty-five years had been spent in jeans around anyone who really knew her. Alone in her room at night she'd practiced walking and dancing in heels until she could spin on a needle-point heel like a pro, but she'd never done it in public. If it wasn't for the fact that Mya, her best friend in the whole world, was waiting for her in the driveway, there was no way in hell she could have pulled this off. Mya had called as soon as she'd driven up to the ranch. Gilly had told her to give her ten, and then come to the door. Only a few more minutes and she could safely escape without having to acknowledge her nemesis.

“Just came in to say ‘bye, Daddy.” Bending down so Eli got a really good look at her behind, sans panty line thank you very much, she pecked her father's cheek before glancing in the general direction of his oldest friend. “Mr. Travis, it's nice to see you again. Y'all have a good night. Daddy, don't wait up.”

She didn't dare look behind the man seated in front of her father. If he was mocking her with those damn eyes she would wilt, right after she skewered

him. As if the heavens decided to be kind, the doorbell rang. *Right on time.*

“That’s my ride,” she sang with semi-false brightness. She executed a heel pivot she had practiced for so long and skipped toward the door, but not before she heard Eli’s indignant response.

“You’re gonna let her go out looking like that?” Well now, that was downright interesting. Eli sounded like he wanted to spit nails. Perfect. She slowed her step just a little.

“Gilly’s a fully grown woman. Don’t see that I can stop her.” Oh, she just wanted to kiss her dad. Although the laughter in his voice was carefully disguised, she heard it nonetheless. But then, that was her daddy. She had long since given up trying to put one over on him.

“I thought she looked right nice.” That was from Eli’s dad. She couldn’t be sure, but she could have sworn she heard a little laughter in his voice too.

“She’s a child!” Eli exploded, obviously forgetting who the hell he was talking to. “She can’t be let out looking like that.”

“What exactly are you trying to say about my daughter, Eli?” Her father wasn’t laughing now. Eli had better tread carefully answering that one. Oh well, she’d heard what she wanted to hear. With a bounce in

her step she went to meet her friend. Ha! Let him
stew.

CHAPTER TWO

Eli was livid. It wasn't like Lauréa was all that big; why the hell were there so many clubs? He had just left the seventh one and still no sign of Gilly. When he got his hands on her luscious ass— And just when had her ass gotten so damn luscious? When she'd come into Mr. Nix's office he'd damn near swallowed his tongue. The Gilly he knew didn't have curves like that. And just when had she grown up? Why hadn't he noticed? She'd always been a kid in his mind. He hadn't been prepared for the sight of Gilly as a woman; a damn fine woman at that. He'd felt like he'd been kicked in the nuts by one of the ranch's stubborn mules when she'd wiggled her hips into the room, not even deigning to look in his direction. It had taken twenty fucking minutes to shake off the fathers—the meddling somethings—and by that time, Gilly was long gone.

Where the hell was she? And who the hell was touching her? The thought of some stiff-necked cowboy touching that dark, smooth skin...

The shrill ring of his cell phone cut off the thought before it got him too hot to see straight, but he was already plenty hot. "What?!" He didn't mean to snap, but hell, his woman was out there somewhere...

Whoa! When had Gilly become his woman? *She's always been your woman.* Since she fell off her favorite mare when she was just six years old and he was all of twelve. He'd scoffed, picked her up and brushed her off, then made her get right back on. When she was ten and she learned to barrel race. He'd gone to every competition, training her himself. And when she was sixteen and thought she was going to the prom with a well known man-whore, he'd sent the sniveling asshole packing and taken her himself, making sure she got home with her virginity intact. Then she'd gone off to college. For four long years he'd waited, missing her something fierce but not willing to admit it, even to himself. When she'd finally graduated, he had buried his feelings deep inside. She hadn't acted like the same Gilly. She didn't follow him around anymore or bug him incessantly.

If he was being honest, he'd have to admit part of the reason he purposely gave her the worst jobs on the ranch was to get under her skin. The Gilly he used to know would have blown up long before today. She would threaten to tie him to a bull and then slap it on its ass. But no, she'd scowled and gone on about her business, refusing to even talk to him much. Today she'd finally showed some fire and told him to go supervise the mucking of the stalls his damn self, then disappeared inside the house. He hadn't seen her

again until she waltzed into her father's office, looking like sex in heels.

"What?" he barked into his cell phone without thinking about it. He had no time to discuss much of anything right now—he needed to find one fiesty cowgirl.

"Man, why didn't you tell me little Gilly had grown up, and out in all the right places?"

Baker. She was at the Horseshoe. She went to the one place he didn't even think to look. She knew he hung out there. Perhaps that should've been the first place he looked. He didn't bother to reply to his former buddy. Hanging up his phone, he hopped into his truck and made a beeline for the small club on the edge of town. If Baker had touched her—hell, if anybody had touched her—he might have to kill someone tonight. And it would all be her fault, the little brat.

As much as he tried, he couldn't keep out visions of Gilly in that tiny red dress being pawed at, groped... By all that's holy, no one had better put his fucking lips on her. By the time he pulled into the parking lot he was seeing red. He couldn't remember turning off the truck off or even getting out. His only thought was Gilly, his Gilly, in there with all those males. Just a club full of swinging dicks wanting to touch her, to put themselves inside her. His chest hurt thinking of it.

Standing at the entrance, he scanned the room looking for a flash of red; it took less than a minute to find what he was looking for. Gilly. And just as he'd suspected, she was surrounded. Her pretty little ass perched on a barstool, she was enclosed in a circle of cowboys of various ages, all looking to impress a woman who belonged to him. Front and center was Baker, his smarmy smile all up in her face. He was going to die.

It took Eli all of a half a second to reach her, shouldering aside her would-be swains with purpose. He didn't think, didn't hesitate, just pulled his fist back and planted it right in Baker's face. The man was damned lucky he stayed down, because Eli was all too ready to swing again. Casting a look around at the other men, he planted both feet apart, his body tense. Let one of them move just an inch, he swore by all that was holy he would rip them apart.

"What the hell was that for?" Baker moaned, clutching his now bleeding nose. "Hell, if I knew you'd act all like that I never would have called your dumb ass."

"What the hell were you doing with my woman?" Eli demanded right back, too furious to realize he had just announced to every person in the county he was staking a claim. "You don't touch her, you don't smile at her, you don't fucking look at her, you got me?"

Every other man standing around cautiously moved away, like he hadn't already memorized every face.

"I was keeping her safe for you, asshole!" Baker wheezed, slowly climbing to his feet. "Why the hell do you think I called you?"

"Wait just a damn minute here! I belong to me, you thick-headed jackass." There was the Gilly he knew and loved. "Why don't you go find one of your hoochies and let me have a little fun. I don't want or need you anywhere in my vicinity."

The smile he gave her wasn't nice, he knew it, and he couldn't care less. It was time to set things straight with little Gilly. Shifting forward slow and easy, he forced her legs open ever so slightly to move between them, careful to pin the hem of her dress down at the sides. He lowered his head, forcing hers back and up, keeping his eyes steady on the deep brown pools of her.

"There are no hoochies, there is no other man." Although his voice was quiet, he knew she heard every word. He watched with intense satisfaction as her pupils dilated, her breath hitching ever so slightly. "There is you and me. No one else...ever."

CHAPTER THREE

Gilly would have dearly loved to tell Eli all about himself. She would've liked to tell him off right then and there. She would've even appreciated a good fist to his gut. But all that was hard to do when the man's tongue was all down her throat, sparking all kinds of heat radiating from his devastating kiss straight to her quickly moistening pussy. Man, she really should have worn underwear, but she couldn't with a dress like this. Panty lines and all that. Besides, for reasons she couldn't even begin to explain, her arms had wrapped themselves around his thick neck, pulling him closer. In fact, she was so into it, she moaned with regret when he lifted his head, licking those juicy looking lips as he did so. The man seriously had some pussy-eating lips. It was just sinful.

“Come on.” He actually growled it at her. Not asked, not suggested—he growled.

She could have walked away right then and there, but she found herself slung over his shoulder, a jacket strategically placed across her butt. Had he been wearing a jacket when he had walked—no, stalked—into the bar?

“Wait, I have to tell Mya—”

“Baker will tell her.” Well, damn. Okay then. But still, how dare did he think he was just going to barge into the place and forcibly remove her?

“I’m not going anywhere with you, Eli Travis, so you can just put me down.”

A grunt was the only response she got. Until he got to that monster Dually he called his truck. Jerking open the driver’s side door, he set her on her feet, and then turned her to face the seat. She tried to climb in, but a hand on her waist stopped her. Before she got her mouth worked up to ask him what the hell he thought he was doing, she felt it. A large hand slipping underneath her dress.

Damn, but his hot, work-roughened hand felt so good against her soft skin. Up her thigh he went, sensuously caressing up to her hip, back to cup her buttocks before moving toward her front. The tormented groan behind her was well worth every second of pain the waxing had caused.

“You don’t have on any underwear, Gilly.” His breath was hot against her ear, his hips suddenly plastered to her backside. “Such a bad girl you’ve become.”

Oh yeah, she would be his bad girl all right. Especially given how good that thick finger of his felt against her labia. The unhurried strokes against her seam felt so damn good she wanted to cry. Her hips

moved against the thick erection pressed into her backside, encouraging further exploration. Oh please, please let him explore further.

“You know I’m going to have to spank you, Gilly. You took my pussy in a club all bare.”

Why the hell did that send shivers of delight down her spine? Her nipples tightened, throbbing against the soft material of her clothing. His lips skimmed over the side of her neck, making her pant. She always knew his touch would do this to her. Now finally her fantasies were coming true.

“Someone might see.” It was a half hearted protest at best. She wanted it, all of it. Any and all he would give her.

“You think I would ever allow anyone to see what’s mine?” The possessiveness in his voice was something she had longed to hear for so very long. “Spread your legs for me, Gilly.”

It wasn’t a request; she didn’t even think about saying no. Her legs opened, her ass canting up and back, anxious for whatever he would dish out. She whimpered in protest as his finger ceased its leisurely exploration of her core. She wanted him back, needing a deeper connection. She didn’t get it. Instead, a sharp stinging smack to her pussy had her crying out, her nerve endings firing off a mixture of slight pain and intense pleasure. Her head flew back, landing right

against his shoulder. His arms held her tight against him, like she would really try to get away.

“You won’t do it again, will you, Gilly?” Shit, even the heavy rasp of his voice was turning her on. His finger had returned, this time circling her all-too-sensitive clit. “You won’t ever run from me again, will you, sweetheart?”

“I didn’t run from you the first time. I walked.” Another sharp smack came as soon as she finished the sentence. Ahhh, sweet perfection. Just a couple more and she’d come. “And you deserved it.”

Three more smacks and Gilly had to bite her lip to keep from screaming out as waves of sweet ecstasy washed over her. She felt no shame as her juices coated his fingers. Obviously he didn’t mind—he simply used the lubricant to ease his way as he thrust not one but three broad digits deep inside her. Taking advantage of her thrown-back head, his mouth swooped down to swallow her cries as she rocked against his fingers, seeking deeper contact. It didn’t take long before her body exploded once again, her body convulsing with joy.

“You’re not a virgin, Gilly.”

“Of course I’m not. What made you think I was?”

Eli moved away, pulling her dress down and pulling her up as he did so. The night air felt colder than it actually was, making her long for his heat next

to her skin again. Instead of complaining, though, she merely turned to face him head-on. What the heck was his damage?

“What? Eli, I’m twenty-six years old. How could you think I was a virgin?”

“Who was it?” The tick in his cheek would have been cute, but he was deadly serious.

“Who was what?” This was getting ridiculous. Here she was all turned on, and he was worried that she wasn’t a virgin? What was she supposed to do? Wait for him to be licked in the head to get some damn sense? It wasn’t like he was a damn virgin. “Look, if you want a virgin, I suggest you look elsewhere. I’ll get a ride home.”

Stupid man. She was so close. Shaking her head, she turned to leave, not getting more than one step away.

“If you think for one second I’m ever letting you go, you got another think coming.” There he was, that arm wrapped around her right where it should be. Wise man. The phone in his hand was confusing, though. “Call your daddy. You won’t be getting out of my bed until you’re good and pregnant, and then only long enough to get hitched. Now get that sweet ass in the truck.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Eli didn't think he'd ever driven faster in his life. His cock was so hard it felt like it was going to bust out of his jeans all on its own. Thankfully, he had a place of his own to take her to. He just couldn't see doing all the things he wanted, needed to do to her, with her at his dad's place. Two years ago he had begun building his own place in between the Travis and the Nix spreads. It was perfect, too far away from either father to be heard, or even seen, but close enough so the fathers could come see their grandkids.

He'd been dead serious about the babies, and the marriage. Gilly Nix would be Gilly Travis, he was dead the fuck intent on it. He didn't want to part with her long enough to walk around to the passenger side of the truck, so he dragged her out on his side, wrapping her legs around him. He wasn't sure if he would make it to the bedroom. Not with her heated core pressed against his waist. He needed that heat wrapped around his dick. He needed to be a part of his woman in the worst way.

“Eli? I need you now.”

They'd only made it as far as the vestibule. He had barely locked the door behind him when Gilly started squirming against him, rubbing her bare pussy

against his waist. Pressing her against the wall, he tried to gather himself. Tried and failed. Fuck, she was sexy as hell. Those sweet, succulent lips just begging to be kissed. What could he do? He had to kiss her. Somehow his jeans became undone as he was giving that mouth what it was begging for, his cock springing free. Gilly's industrious little hands were grasping him before he could get a handle on what was happening, placing him right at the mouth of her sheath.

“Baby, slow down. We have all night.”

He might have said it, but he didn't really mean it. He didn't want to slow down. He wanted her. Needed her like he needed his next breath.

“No, no, no. Now! I need you now.”

Well, never let it be said Eli failed to please his woman. Not that he had much of choice. Not with Gilly bearing down on him, forcing him inside. The wide head of his shaft pierced her opening and it was over. His hips slammed forward before he could stop himself, the walls of her cunt squeezing almost unbearably tight against him. So good, so damn good.

“Shit, baby you're so tight,” he groaned out, gritting his teeth to try to hold on. She was convulsing against him so beautifully. His was moving without thought, stroking inside her sweet heaven. He wasn't exactly a small man; he didn't want to hurt her, but damned if he could stop. “So fucking good.”

“Yes, more. Harder. Damn it, Eli, make me scream.”

She was pulling his hair, biting against the side of his neck. All of it combined made it the hottest, most delectable lovemaking he'd ever experienced. Why in the hell had he waited so long to claim what was his? He couldn't stop pistoning his cock, hard. The world disappeared to the point where nothing existed for him but this, her. He needed her to come because heaven help him, he wouldn't be able to hold on for long.

“So sweet, Gilly baby.” His lips traveled any and everywhere he could reach. Would he ever get enough? “Come for me, baby. I need you to come for me.”

He'd never been so desperate in his life. He needed to come. He needed to mark this woman. The drive to have her over and over again consumed him. His woman, his heart. The urges were so deep, so primitive, he knew neither one of them would ever be the same again.

“Oh shit, Eli! I'm coming!”

Fuck yes. He felt every tremor, every spasm down to his soul. With a roar he released right along with her, giving her all he had. It was a while before he was able to pull himself away, and only then to get her to his bed. Their bed.

“Come on, sweetheart.” Eli didn’t wait for her to gather herself. Easing his still-hard cock out of her snug warmth, he gathered her in his arms, heading toward the bedroom. “We’ve got a baby to make.”

He managed to make it halfway up the stairs at least. His little spitfire refused to settle down. She clawed his shoulders, bit down on his neck—she was driving him crazy. He made it halfway up the stairs before dropping, carefully making sure his woman was on top. He wasn’t going to make it. He had barely sat down before Gilly had mounted him, hanging on to the banister for support. Even with his hands firmly holding on to her hips, he couldn’t stop her from bucking wildly, guaranteeing he wouldn’t be able to hold back.

“Damn it, Gilly, let me get you to the bed!”

“Need you.” She was so fucking beautiful all flushed and wild. He loved that she could barely talk; it made him want to beat his chest and declare himself king of the universe. “Now, Eli! Now!”

He was not going to come. He couldn’t. He needed to see her bare, sprawled out with only him as cover. He wanted nothing between them but air, and even that wouldn’t do. She clamped down on him so tight his head swam. It was pure grace he managed not to spill his seed yet again, but he was determined he

would have her in his bed. And once he got her there, he was keeping her there.

Waiting until she stilled, he surged to his feet again, literally jogging the rest of the way up the staircase. This time he didn't bother disconnecting from her—he didn't think he could even if he wanted to. His mind had one single objective, and nothing was going to keep him from it.

He made it this time, ripping the little red abomination of a dress along the way. His boots were kicked off while he was still buried deep inside his Gilly, his jeans shrugged off with her help. He had no idea what happened to his shirt. But none of that mattered. He had made it. Now, all he had to do was keep her there. Not so much to break his filly as to subdue her, but he was up for the job.

CHAPTER FIVE

Eli Travis was far too high-handed by half. As if any man was going to keep her locked away in the house. Her body may have felt as if it had been rode hard and put away wet... Come to think of it, it had. That was still no excuse for sneaking out early and leaving her in his damned house with nothing but a note.

Get some rest. I'll be back soon and we'll talk

—Eli

Like she needed to know who wrote it. If he thought for one second she was giving up her job on the ranch... Suddenly it wasn't so important that he had given her shit jobs, which he admitted he had done purposely. She was born on the ranch; it was in her blood. There was no way he was turning her into the little woman waiting at home while he went out and "took care of things." She would shoot him first.

Sure, part of her was happy, ecstatic, really, that Eli was looking at her like a female, but she only wanted him to look at her like that after hours. Well, okay, not at first, but now she did. Damn it! Why the

hell did he have to go and confuse her like that? When she saw him again she was going to give him a piece of her mind. She would rip him to shreds with her tongue. She'd—

“Gilly, what are you doing on that stallion?”

She really needed to start paying attention when she was mad. She had ridden all the way to her house without even thinking about it.

“How else was I going to get home, Eli? You took the truck.”

She noted the stallion beneath her was dancing around nervously, eyeing the horse on which Eli sat. He looked as if he'd already been out on the range for a bit, which, given the time, was understandable. Gilly usually rose with the dawn, but today she'd slept like a log until after ten. Given the position of the sun, it had to be nearing noon, but she'd had to shower and scrounge for clothes that wouldn't fall off her. She wound up in some old jeans and a plaid shirt that practically drowned her.

Eli was backing his horse away carefully, motioning to one of the hands. What the heck was this about? She was about to follow him to give him a piece of her mind when his soft-spoken command cut through her.

“Stay there, Gilly. Try to keep him calm.”

It was then she noted the horse was more than nervous—he was downright jumpy. Something was wrong. Wasting no time questioning, she leaned down to talk softly to the skittish stallion. She saw out of the corner of her eye Eli dismounting and handing his horse over to a ranch hand, then approaching slowly. It wasn't until after he grabbed the reins that Gilly exhaled a breath she didn't realize she'd been holding.

“Get down and go in the house and wait for me. I'll be in directly.” His tone didn't exactly invite argument at the moment, so she decided now would probably not be the best time to give him one.

However, she wasn't going to just sit and wait for him to come inside and act like the docile woman. Instead she stomped up to her room to change. Tearing off the oversized clothing, she fumed at the high-handedness of the man. Let him wait for her while she spent her time getting comfortable for the throw down she knew was coming. He'd ignored her since she came home from college, and now he wanted to what—rule over her? First of all, how dare he slip out this morning as if she was the poor little woman who was so blown away by the big man's prowess she had to sleep it off? It hardly mattered that he was indeed so good she'd slept past any alarm he may have set. Saturday was still a work day on a ranch. He could have at least tried to wake her up. Instead he'd

probably gloated that he wore her out. Who cared if she was sore as a greenhorn after her first hard ride? And second, in how many different ways did she have to prove to the jackass she was a full-grown woman? She would not be treated like some brainless twit. Where did he get off ordering her inside her own damn house like she was some little child? *Maybe because the horse you were on wasn't completely broken?*

The unwanted thought quickly deflated her pretend ire. She shouldn't have gotten on that horse without thoroughly checking him out first. Instead, in her anger she had basically ignored all the signs staring her straight in the face the horse was nowhere near ready for the ride she had taken him on. If it hadn't been for her heavy hand because of her blind anger, she could've broken her neck. Had she been Eli, she would have dragged her ass from the horse and beat it right there in the yard. But he hadn't done that. He had reigned in any anger he'd felt, and she knew he had to be plenty pissed by her casual disregard for not only her own safety, but the horses as well.

Sinking down in her bed in the underwear she had just thrown on, Gilly swallowed the guilt threatening to drown her. She'd really fucked up this time. Last night she had deliberately set out to goad the bear, and she had gotten exactly what she'd been

looking for. To be truthful, she had only gotten what she'd been after. She had longed for Eli since forever; she dreamed of the man. Every day she yearned for him to look at her and realize they were perfect together. And she had gotten it all and then some.

She hated to admit it, especially to herself, but she was scared. Downright terrified in fact. Eli had been everything she'd dreamed he'd be and so much more. The truth was she didn't know if she could handle it. Despite her glib dismissal of not being a virgin last night, she'd only been with one other person in her life, and that hadn't been an experience she'd cared to repeat. It was awful; messy and painful. In the end, she'd punched the guy and threatened to castrate him if he ever thought about touching her again.

What Eli had done to her last night was so far from anything she'd ever had to deal with before, she didn't know how to handle it. Before opening her eyes, Gilly wracked her brain about what she would say. But Eli hadn't been there that morning, and damn it, that had hurt. The note he'd left scared the shit out of her. What did he want to talk about? She had no words for him. And she definitely wasn't about to promise to marry him, As he'd insisted all through the night.

“Well, I've stepped in it now.”

There was no answer for her in her lonely bedroom. Unbidden images flashed through her mind of Eli taking her against the wall as soon as they'd managed to stumble into his house. Of Eli on the staircase, allowing her to have her wicked way with him. She hadn't been able to help it. He felt so damn good inside her, she just had to move, had to relieve that gut-deep itch threatening to burn her from the inside out. That had only been the beginning; Eli had loved her well into the night, paying homage to her body with his hands, his mouth, and oh man did he have a gifted cock. She found herself being swept up in a vortex of pure Eli, and that was something she'd never considered. She didn't want to be swallowed up by him, but how could she possibly stop it? There was no way she could walk away now.

CHAPTER SIX

Eli stopped outside Gilly's door. He hadn't wanted to come up until he had calmed down, and that had taken more than a few minutes. Instead of stalking into her father's house after her, he had taken the horse she'd taken from his barn and calmed him down a bit. Thankfully the half-broken horse she'd chosen to ride was an Arab, who were generally mild mannered. Heaven help them all if she'd chosen a Saddlebred. She might've broken her neck. The mere thought made his knees weak. A day without Gilly was like a day without sunshine. She may burn, she may scorch a man with that unruly mouth of hers, but he didn't think he could live without her.

"Well, I've stepped in it now," she'd said. All was quiet for a few seconds before the distinctive sound of sobbing drifted through the closed door. Gilly crying? Ah hell, how was he supposed to handle that? Gilly pissed he could deal with. Gilly obstinate just made him horny. But Gilly sad broke his heart. He should've considered the brash ride here had been an act of bravado instead of true anger. In a way, he had waylaid her, taking what they both wanted and needed instead of letting her set the pace.

In a lot of ways, his woman was as wild as any unbroken horse. It was an analogy that would probably get him slapped, but it was nonetheless true. She was skittish when it came to change. When their fathers had struck an agreement to tear down all the fencing between their respective ranches and combine operations officially, Gilly had tormented him for months, afraid her father might want a son instead of a little girl. She stopped wearing dresses and refused to have anything to do with her dolls anymore. She'd been five at the time. By the time she was six, he'd been her hero, right up until puberty when they had somehow become frenemies.

Throughout her life, Gilly looked at change as some kind of personal challenge. Moving their relationship to a new, much more intimate level would be a major change. Of course she would challenge him, the situation and any and everyone along the way. That was just Gilly. Taking a deep breath, he pushed the door open. Of course she hadn't bothered to lock it. She really believed he thought she would be downstairs as he'd ordered. The very idea was laughable on its face. She would rather eat a live rattlesnake than do anything she was "ordered" to do.

Gully was huddled on her bed, on top of the patchwork quilt her mother had made before her death. Both of their mothers had died in childbirth, a

weird fact that drew their fathers closer together, aside from their being buddies in Vietnam. Eli had a similar quilt on his bed at his father's house. She would have looked sweet and innocent had she bothered to throw on some clothes. As it was, the way her waist flared out to the most grabbable hips known to man kept drawing his eye no matter how hard he tried not to look. Her arms were covering the lush breasts he knew to be under there. Didn't stop his mouth from watering remembering the way they tasted, or the way her pussy walls would clamp down on his dick with the right suction to those sensitive little nubbins.

Stop it! She needs comforting, not fucking. Just the thought caused a deep moan he was helpless to draw back. Gilly's head popped up, her hands hastily attempting to wipe away evidence of her tears. It was cute, really, like her eyes weren't all red and slightly swollen.

"Ever heard of knocking?" Although she attempted to be biting, she just sounded guilty and sad.

Ignoring her pretended huff, Eli sat on the bed gathering her in his arms. It was telling she didn't even attempt to avoid his embrace, but burrowed into his arms. It was a little slice of heaven having her in his arms. Willing his erection down wasn't working, so he

decided to concentrate on rubbing her back, careful to keep himself from dipping too low.

“You wanna tell me what the waterworks are about?” He didn’t pull back from placing a light kiss on her head.

“No.” The muffled reply was so typical he had to smile. “You wouldn’t understand.”

“Why don’t you try me?”

Maybe he shouldn’t have said that. Gilly not only lifted her head so she could look him dead in the eye, she shifted her body so she was straddling him. His cock jumped. There wasn’t a damn thing he could do to hold back the reaction. She lifted her brow but otherwise ignored it. At least he thought she did, but she certainly swayed a little closer to his throbbing organ. Minx.

“First, I’m sorry. I should have paid more attention to what I was doing.” That threw him. He really hadn’t expected her to apologize. He understood her anger. “And second, I’m not really mad at you. I think it’s sweet that you wanted me to sleep.”

“You’re not? And you do?” Okay, who the hell was this Gilly, and where was his woman?

“No, I’m not, and yes, I do.” She took a deep breath, her breasts straining the lace of her bra. Okay, there was only so much he could take. Those dark mounds were temptation personified. His throat

closed up as he attempted yet again to focus. “My eyes are up here, buddy.”

Caught. How could she blame him? She was the one running around in barely there underwear. Since when had she gotten all feminine like this? It showed last night wasn't such an anomaly after all. Maybe under her usual plaid and denim she always wore frilly, girly things like this. He wasn't sure his heart could take it. Knowing she was waltzing around the ranch, around all the hands, dressed like this under her clothes. He'd never get a damn thing done.

“Baby, I swear I'm listening. And I want to hear everything you have to say. But uh, do you suppose you have any normal under things?” He hoped he didn't sound like the backwoods hick he really was, but it was hard to think of Gilly like this. No matter how much joy he found with her behind closed doors, he was having a hard time reconciling the two Gillys.

“Eli, these are regular underwear.”

“But it doesn't even cover your ass.” Nope, he couldn't deal with this. He was going to have to take her to get something that covered her up more. A lot more. “And since when does your bra offer up your breasts like that? I've never seen them look like that.”

Before last night.

“That's because plaid generally hides a lot, especially since I tend to favor oversized shirts. Plus I

usually wear a sports bra when I'm working. Eli, are you going to pay attention?"

He felt a great deal better. He would kill the first man staring at that chest, and then the ranch would be short a hand.

"Yeah, I'm paying attention." Sort of.

"Good."

She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and snuggled even closer, the cradle that housed Earth's sweetest pussy pressing directly on his shaft. His eyes crossed but he managed to hold her hips lightly. He wanted to press her tightly against him, make her ride that hard ridge until she came.

"The truth is, I'm scared."

"Excuse me?" Now he was staring at her face, trying to figure out if she was pulling his leg. His Gilly would challenge a tornado that dared come too close. She did not just say she was scared. Her eyes were clear, despite the slight red cast from her early tears. His heart began to pound in his chest. She couldn't just invite a man to heaven and take it away. "You don't want to, uh, stop, do you?" There was no way he could.

"No." Eli let out a pent-up breath. "What I'm saying is, I'm scared of what I feel for you. I mean, I've always loved you, but knowing you feel the same way, it scares me."

He melted right there. That was one hell of a confession. It had to take a lot for her to admit it.

“Honey, you know I’d never do anything to hurt you.” He would kill for her, die for her, but never ever hurt her.

“I know. I just don’t want to lose myself in loving you. The note felt like a command, and I’m not a woman to be ordered about, Eli Travis.”

She looked so adorably serious, so fierce, he had to kiss her. Not a peck either. He took her mouth, forcing her lips open to thrust his tongue inside. His hands tightened on her hips, rubbing her pussy against him. He swallowed her responding moans, desperate to get closer. He didn’t know what the heck he could say in words, so he decided his best bet was to show her how he felt about her. He just hoped she’d understand his point.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gilly didn't know exactly what she'd expected when she'd made her confession, but leave it to Eli to have the perfect answer. She felt vulnerable, exposed, and she supposed she just needed a little reassurance. His kiss was more than just an expression of passion; it was deeper than just a claiming. It was hard to stay focused when he kissed her like this, like if he didn't taste her, he might die. She loved that she could do this to him.

Her body went boneless, melting against his hard frame. Every stroke of his tongue against her own sent tingles of joy flowing through her veins and centered right at her core. She pressed her body closer, ever closer, wanting to get so close they merged.

“Slow down, honey.” Eli peeled her off him, much to her dismay. She didn't want to be parted. She felt so cold without being pressed up all against him. “Let me love you, let me show you.”

“Show me what?” Even though she asked, she already knew.

“Show you how much I love you.” He laid her on her back, trailing his fingers down her sides and making her shiver all over. “Show you how crazy I am about you.” He dipped his head to tongue her belly

button. Her blood turned to lava almost instantly. “Damn, Gilly, I would give you anything. Everything.”

“Just you, Eli.” Her back arched, seeking him. “Please. I need you.”

Only Eli could turn her mope into passion in a blink of an eye. She had been serious about being scared—she really was. It just didn’t matter when he left a trail of hot, suckling kisses from her neck to her stomach, traveling back to where his hands were cupping her breasts. He didn’t use his fingers to free the tingling mounds from her bra. Oh no, he used his teeth, pulling the material down then latching on with that hot mouth, pulling the nipples using only his compressed lips.

Gilly bucked, trying to rub herself against him, but Eli wasn’t having it. He held his body just above her, close enough so she could feel the heat from his body, but too far for her to touch. He worked slowly, going from one breast to the other with deliberate slowness. He kept his hands there too, lifting them, kneading them until little shudders began from her spine and quickly overtook her body.

“Ummm, I think my honey baby liked that,” he praised, gifting her with another devastating kiss. “Have you ever come like that before?”

The idea that she had just done so now was stunning. She'd never even read about something like that before.

"No," she admitted softly.

One day she'd tell him there had only been one other sexual experience, and just because she was determined not to come to him a virgin. Maybe it was silly to be afraid. She had always known they'd be together. She was still Gilly, and he was still her Eli. This Eli might be different from the austere cowboy he showed the rest of the world, this one being sensual and temptingly sinful, but he was still Eli underneath. Besides, how could she be scared when his scorching mouth was working its way down her torso, gently biting past her stomach, stopping to nibble her inner thigh?

She whimpered helplessly, legs widening of their own accord. Oh yes, she wanted his mouth there. She cursed the small scrap of lace barring her drenched sheath from his hot breath. Thankfully he didn't seem to be in the mood to be separated from his treat either, because he snatched the panties off her hips, dragging them down her legs and throwing them over his shoulder. She cried out in relief as his face fell between her splayed legs, his tongue tunneling deep inside her cunt while his thumb strummed her clit. It didn't take

much before she was bucking, grasping hanks of his hair as she merrily rode his face to glory.

“Eli! Yes, so good. Don’t stop.” She was panting, babbling, desperate to let him know how good it felt. She just couldn’t seem to string the right words together.

How could she think when he moved his lips up to latch her nub, sucking down hard until bright lights appeared before her eyes?

“Again,” he growled against her quivering flesh. “Come for me again.”

He didn’t have to ask, or command, rather, again. Her neck arched, her back bending. Waves of ecstasy swept over her as she held on for dear life. She was nearly senseless by the time he rose over her, her hips still in his hands.

“Open your eyes, Gilly.” Her eyes popped open. She hadn’t realized she’d closed them. “Watch us. Watch us come together.” She glanced down to where his thick cock nudged against her opening, the broad helmet head spearing her lips. “See how beautiful we look together? You see how sexy you are when you open for me?” It was a contrast of light and dark. Although his shaft was darkened a purplish red, angry-looking almost, he appeared so light against the darkness of her skin. “Like a chocolate-covered

strawberry. So fucking sweet. I'm going to eat that pussy every day. You've got me all addicted."

The deep baritone of his voice, the possessiveness, the hunger made her shiver in anticipation and delight. That sounded like a plan to her. She wanted to answer him, but she couldn't, not when he was pushing forward, filling her so good, so right. Her eyes drifted closed again, her pelvis canting upward to receive him.

"More," she begged between huffing breaths. "I need more."

"Shhh, baby, let me take care of you." He had to hurry. He was taking too long; she needed too much. She tried forcing herself down on the massive length of his cock, but he held tight. "I don't want to hurt you, Gilly."

Hell, she was already sore, but that hardly mattered right now.

"Eli, if you don't— Oh!"

Just like that, he powered inside her, so she could feel him all the way to her cervix. She clutched at the bed, holding on to anything to keep her anchored to the earth.

"Don't you dare hold back from me, Gilly. Show me, baby."

Show him what? She couldn't even think. She was a mindless bundle of nerves, desperate to get

closer. She let go of her death grip on the bed to clutch his shoulder, her legs wrapping around his waist. Every down stroke hit just right against her g-spot.

“Eli, I’m coming... Oh shit!”

She didn’t just come, she exploded, an internal combustion sweeping out and seizing control of her entire being.

“Fuck yeah, baby. Just like that. Aw, hell, Gilly baby. Fuck yes!”

Eli slammed into her once, twice, three times more before mashing their hips closely together. His crisp, curly pubic hair tickled her clit, sending her over yet again. Gilly gasped, sinking down into the bed. She welcomed his weight as he fell forward, kissing her all over her face. They stayed just like that for a few precious moments before he rolled to his side, taking her with him. He didn’t withdraw from her, a fact that thrilled her to her toes.

“I love you, Gilly. I can’t promise I won’t be a little high-handed sometimes, but I swear I will always respect you.”

“I know.” And she did. Despite her momentary case of nerves, she wanted this more than anything. There was just something inside that made her push sometimes. “I guess I just had to make sure.”

“I know, sweetheart.” He smiled at her, tweaking her nose. “But you do realize we have to get married

now. I'm pretty sure those nosy old men downstairs heard us."

Oops. She'd forgotten all about the two men downstairs. If Daddy didn't kill them outright, there was sure to be a shotgun ceremony in the near future. And Eli was just laughing as if it was all so funny.

"Daddy might kill you, you know." It so wasn't funny. Good girls did *not* have sex in their parent's home.

"Not if you come downstairs with this." Eli pulled out the most beautiful ring she'd ever seen. The band was covered with small blue diamonds, with one big rock in the middle. "Gilly, will you marry me?"

"Hell yes! What the heck took you so long?"

****SA****

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shara is the first one to admit she is a little off. Her favorite movies are Steel Magnolias and Apocalypse Now, with a little Godfather and Animal House thrown in for fun. When not planning to take over the world, or re-fighting the world's greatest battles in her mind, she can usually be found having deep and meaningful conversations with her kids (11 & 8) about the meaning of life or trying to talk her husband into buying her weapons—just in case of Armageddon.

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