



# Two Point PROPOSITION

*Mary Winter*





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TWO POINT PROPOSITION

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Sydney let her good friend Blake stay at her farm with the self-imposed condition of not acting on her attraction to him. Then she meets Luke, a bisexual cowboy who wants both of them. What's a girl to do, but make a two point proposition?

She stepped into the barn aisle, instantly comforted by the heads sliding over the barn doors and the soft greetings the horses gave her. She went to Knotty's stall and checked on him. Satisfied he still had hay and his water bucket was full, she then went door-by-door and verified all the other horses were just as settled. They were, so she made her way to the pile of hay by the large double doors. Sitting down, she closed her eyes and found the quiet place in her mind that she visited before shows.

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"Hello?" Sydney called, assuming it might be one of the guys, though it didn't hurt to be safe.

The shape stepped into the barn, and she instantly recognized Luke's lean form. Besides Katie's men, he was the only other one in boots. Blake had stood out wearing his sneakers.

"Hey," she said, but didn't move.

"Hey, yourself. So the horses okay?"

She appreciated his keeping up the charade, though they both knew she hadn't come out here for the horses. "Yeah, they're doing fine. I just like to check in on them, and I didn't want to rush you guys home."

"That's good. I wouldn't want to be rushed away." Luke sat down beside her. He stretched out his long legs and even in the dim light Sydney found her attention drawn to his muscular thighs.

Her body tightened. An instant of want, swift and needy, filled her. Heat flushed her cheeks and her sex grew damp at his nearness. The scent of his after shave, something masculine and woody, had her nipples hardening behind the lace of her bra.

"No, I wouldn't imagine you'd want to be rushed at all." Sydney verbally toyed with him, letting the image of Luke laying beside her in her four-poster bed fill her mind. With his hands and mouth, he'd worship her body, so slowly that she'd beg him for some kind of release. "When you make your living eight seconds at a time, I'd guess that some things you'd want to last for hours."

"Oh, you're a wicked woman." Luke turned to her. He stroked his fingers lazily up and down her bare arm, each sweep of his hand sending new shivers down her spine. "You know, I told James and Daniel I'd sworn off women."

Sydney laughed, and to her own ears it sounded huskier than usual. "Funny, I told Katie the same thing." She swayed toward him, lips parted, wanting to put an end to this delicious tension spiraling between them. *Just kiss me.* Her tongue swept across her lower lip in invitation.

"Very wicked," he whispered. Luke cupped her chin. He stared at her for a long moment, and then dipped his head.

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PPB

## Chapter One

Sydney leaned forward and patted the horse's neck. For a colt no one wanted, Knothead was turning into a fine jumper. He sailed over the three foot jumps as easily as Daniel had claimed. He might not make a good roping horse, but Knothead loved to fly.

"Ready to go again, boy?" Sydney sat back in the saddle and shortened the reins.

Knotty flicked his ears back and forth, already prancing in place. "Easy," she crooned, turning the horse back toward the line of log jumps set up along the fence.

Across the field, Blake Madison schooled one of his up-and-coming geldings. She'd setup a show jumping arena at the top of the hill, near the gate. The rest of the large enclosure was given to her cross-country jumps. The arrangement worked out well for Blake, and meant they could train at the same time without running into each other. His horse had qualified for some pretty high level events in the show jumping world, and Sydney watched as Blake took him over some of the taller, stadium-type jumps she had set up in the front of the field. Her chosen sport, Three Day Eventing, consisted of more natural obstacles. Made to resemble logs or hitches, the jumps had little give and a lot of danger. Blake's show jumpers stayed in the arena, and they soared over obstacles painted vivid colors, sometimes designed to look like company logos. She often teased him that her sport seemed more butch compared to his, and he'd laugh, reminding them both that he was the Queen of this barn.

*Only temporarily*, Sydney reminded herself and wondered why that thought prompted a twinge of regret. Blake had lost his farm, some bad investments making it impossible for him to pay the mortgage. So she'd offered space, since she had acreage she wasn't using. Even with his twenty horses on the property she still had plenty of room to expand. And even if his stay wasn't temporary, Blake wanted nothing to do with her romantically. They were good friends, and both of them loved looking at the men.

She watched the athleticism Blake portrayed as he took his horse over the jumps. His buff-colored breeches cupped his ass and thighs, his tall boots gleaming on his long legs. He wore a t-shirt, revealing tanned forearms sprinkled with a light dusting of golden hair, and beneath his riding helmet was the sexiest sun-kissed blond hair she'd ever seen on a man. Take him out of the barn clothes and put him in shorts, he'd look like he'd flown in from California's beaches.

Her libido jumped. *Down girl. He's not for you.* Drawing a deep breath, she reluctantly turned away from the masculine sight on the top of the hill. She had a horse to school for an upcoming show—several horses if she kept to her schedule—and she wanted to take her broodmare, Jezebel, out on a nice slow walk. Jezebel had had the spring and summer off and the vet claimed she was right on track for her May foaling date, just a few weeks away.

*Besides, didn't you tell Katie you had sworn off men?* The little voice in her head was starting to annoy her. Sure, she'd told her best friend exactly that several months ago, when Katie had been all ga-ga over James and Daniel. Not that Sydney blamed her friend. Hell, if she had two hotties that sexy living at *her* house, she'd be all over them. She didn't. She had her good friend Blake.

She struggled to remind herself that he was her *gay* friend, Blake. Even if she did wonder about the rumors. One night when she'd attended a show with Blake, she'd opened her motel room to find him kissing a guy. She'd watched for a moment and when the kiss had ended, he'd muttered something about being the biggest man he'd ever seen.

No, she couldn't think about such things. The two of them had been through too much shit to mess things up now.

Her mind firmly back on track, she cued Knotty into a nice, sweet canter. She'd gallop him later, but for now, she needed to have him controlled over these jumps. The close spaces, maybe one or two strides at the most, between the obstacles meant that both horse and rider had to be on their marks. She turned Knotty toward the front of the line and started counting in her head. One...two...jump! Land...one stride...jump! Oh yeah, Knotty hit his spacing perfectly, listening to her cues, shortening his stride as they went through a quick in-and-out jump, and then lengthening it for the last one. She didn't hear the knock of hooves against the jumps. She'd have to see if Blake could take a video of her so she could share it with James and Daniel. Sydney bet they'd be very proud of their former horse.

She gave Knotty his head and cued him into a gallop. They kept to the edges of the fence, going more for endurance than for jump. There were a couple of obstacles, a larger spread jump, and a water hazard, she wanted to take him through, but soon enough, they reached the top of the hill where Blake was walking his horse.

Sydney let Knotty wander up to their make-shift arena. She noted a couple of divots in the outdoor dressage arena and made a note to do some work in the field this weekend.

"Hey," Blake said as he rode to meet her. "You guys looked good down there."

A brief flutter of pleasure darted through her that he had noticed. Of course, he probably hadn't noticed her new four-way stretch breeches that molded to her like a second skin, or the fact that she'd worn a sports tank with a built in bra that showed off her muscular shoulders and arms. Her brown hair hung in a pony tail down her back, her helmet was a pretty lavender one that matched the stripes on her new breeches. No, knowing Blake, he probably noticed Knotty far more than she, and Sydney wondered why that suddenly bothered her.

"Thanks. Didn't see much of you, but what I did see looked good as well. He's headed out to a big show next weekend, isn't he?" She tried to remember the schedule he'd given her. Right now, it lay on her desk, ready to be input into her calendar, and she couldn't quite remember if it was this weekend or next.

"Next weekend. We have one more week to prepare. I think tomorrow we're going to do a couple of long gallops."

"Sounds good," Sydney said. Their training regimens were similar enough she could follow his thought processes without needing them explained. Silence settled between them. Blake's attention flickered over her, darting, like he was trying to give her covert glances. She stiffened, Knotty instantly sensing the change in her. Consciously relaxing, she soothed the horse.

They made one circuit of the top of the hill and Blake moved his gelding to the fence line. Sydney followed him, wondering what he was up to. Usually once Blake cooled down his horses, he headed back for the barn. Like her, he had several mounts to ride. Training time was precious and with shows coming up, he needed to be riding as long as there was daylight.

Mentally, she went over her own schedule. Three more horses after Knotty to ride, and one of them was a young horse she was training. She could afford to take a little bit of time with Blake, and besides, she liked their long rides. It'd been a while since they'd done this.

"You settling in okay? I trust you have enough space?" Sydney asked. Blake had been there for a few months, and she thought they'd worked out their schedules well. He had the second barn

she hadn't expanded into yet, and it had several hot walkers and a large arena. Since both of them needed the stadium jumps, and she'd built this practice field for the cross country obstacles so important to her sport, they had plenty of room to ride.

"Great. Thanks. I just hope I'm not crowding you out?" He smiled, revealing endearing little lines at the corners of his eyes.

*Quit focusing on those gorgeous baby blues and pay attention to the horse beneath you.* The mental slap did little good, for Knotty walked like a seasoned veteran, not even shying when a rabbit darted beneath the fence line.

"No, not at all. In fact, you probably saved me from having to buy more jumps," she said. He'd taken over her extra shed too, filling it with all sorts of poles and planks and flower boxes. "We could probably hold a show with everything we have."

Blake chuckled. "That'd be nice. There aren't too many schooling shows in the area and this field is probably nice enough to hold a lower level event."

It was, though she didn't say anything. She'd specifically built her farm with such an end goal in mind. That they were so in synch, it sent shivers up her spine. Kind of like the same ones she saw when she'd ran into Luke over at Katie's place.

Luke, now there was a lovely distraction. He wanted her, and the fact that he hung out with James and Daniel didn't mean much. Both of them were bisexual. There was no reason to think that Luke might be different. When they'd first met, she'd sworn off men, and then she got busy with Blake's moving in. Now, her body was responding to her good friend who happened to be gay and the hunky cowboy. She figured the cowboy would be the better bet.

"I'm thinking about inviting Katie over for dinner. She'll probably bring the guys too. Thought I might ask you before I filled up the house." She watched Blake to gauge his reaction. Last week she'd gone over to see some of James' young stock. If he had other horses as good as Knothead, she wanted to know. That trip, she and Blake had met Luke in the barn. Apparently the cowboy was willing to fuck anything that moved, and Blake had ducked out rather quickly. Sydney bit her lip to keep from laughing at the memory; the attraction between the two guys, and between her and Luke, had been obvious.

Blake shrugged, though Sydney sensed his nonchalant attitude was a front. "It's your house. You can have over whoever you want. Is it just going to be Katie and her partners?"

Well, at least he handled that well. "Probably. And maybe Luke."

Blake stiffened. "Fine," he said, his voice clipped.

"You don't want Luke to come over? I know he's not with Katie, but since he's staying there, well it seemed polite." She kept her tone light, though Blake's reaction intrigued her.

"Sure." They reached the top of the hill, and Blake dismounted.

Sydney followed suit. She hurried around Knotty to reach her friend. Touching his arm, she studied him. "Hey, what's up?"

"Nothing. If you want to invite friends over you can." He stepped away, leading his gelding toward the circular driveway.

Knotty wanted to follow, and frankly, so did Sydney. She watched Blake's tight ass in those breeches and tried not to think about the things they could do once they got back to the barn.

She took off her helmet and wiped the back of her hand against her forehead. Damn, when had she gotten so involved with the state of Blake's body? They'd been friends, good friends, for such a long time. Acting on her impulses now, especially when he seemed so prickly, seemed like a good way to damn that friendship.

"You know, if you want to invite friends over, I wouldn't mind. I want this to be your place just as much as mine," Sydney said, offering an olive-branch. She fell into step beside him. Blake had taken the old apartment above the garage, even though she had a spare bedroom. He said it made things easier if he didn't live with her. Made him feel like he was renting the space, though he paid his half of the bills. As far as she was concerned he was more than a renter, and he didn't have to pay for anything other than his horses. That he did more, especially after the financial fiasco with his barn, touched her more than he knew.

She paused in the shade of the barn to allow him to walk ahead of her.

"I know." He cross-tied his gelding in the barn aisle, and immediately removed the saddle and pad from the horse's back. Grabbing a brush, he smoothed away the sweat marks, and swapped the bridle for a halter. His terse movements spoke the volumes he wouldn't say.

Her comments had bothered him. Sydney frowned. She'd only been trying to make him feel welcome with her suggestion. Just because she hadn't had a boyfriend in a while, didn't mean he didn't have one, or wouldn't in the future. Especially with the way Luke and he had sparked.

~\* \* \*~

Using the excuse that she needed to check on the horses, Sydney darted from the kitchen table. She stepped outside and looked up into the dark sky. A heavy sigh emerged from her chest and she rubbed the bridge of her nose.

"And I thought this was a good idea why?" she muttered to no one in particular. Down by the pond, frogs croaked. A distant call, maybe that of an owl, filled the air. With a shake of her head, she hurried down the stairs. Better get to the barn in case someone wanted to look for her. It would appear odd if she'd fled her own dinner party.

And what a party it had been. As she'd hoped, Luke had come along with Daniel, Katie, and James. The four of them had made quite the boisterous party. They'd brought some side dishes and Sydney had hurried to the local chicken shack to bring back several buckets of southern fried goodness. With Luke giving her *those* looks as freely as he gave them to Blake, and Blake's trying to ignore them, tension ran thick. Out here, the cool evening air refreshed her, and as she walked to the barn, she got the same little thrill she did every day. After all, this was her farm. She owned this place.

She stepped into the barn aisle, instantly comforted by the heads sliding over the barn doors and the soft greetings the horses gave her. She went to Knotty's stall and checked on him. Satisfied he still had hay and his water bucket was full, she then went door-by-door and verified all the other horses were just as settled. They were, so she made her way to the pile of hay by the large double doors. Sitting down, she closed her eyes and found the quiet place in her mind that she visited before shows.

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"Very wicked," he whispered. Luke cupped her chin. He stared at her for a long moment, and then dipped his head.

Yes. The first brush of his lips against hers was like lightning to her blood. Her eyelids fluttered closed. The rich, delicious taste of the chocolate cheesecake she'd picked up for desert spread over her tongue. Chocolate and Luke. Damn, that made for a heady combination.

She reached for him. The western shirt did little to conceal his hard, muscled physique. His broad shoulders created the perfect place to rest her hands as she clung to him. The hay created a bench, the perfect place for seduction. Somehow, she found herself leaning back, caught between the bales and Luke's chest. With one hand braced next to her ear, the other found its way to her hip, and to the sliver of skin she'd deliberately left bare with her low-rise jeans. Dear God, she wanted more. She pulled away to drag a ragged breath. "Luke," she moaned.

A throat cleared next to the door.

"We got company," Luke whispered, then brushed the pad of his calloused thumb against her lips. He straightened and rose to his feet, sauntering oh-so-sexily toward the new arrival. "Hey, Blake. Nice of you to join us." The easy drawl of Luke's words held a different, darker intent. "I suspect you watched long enough to know exactly what we were doing."

Sydney stiffened at his welcoming words. "Blake?"

She cursed her high voice, the panting in her breath. Her pussy ached, wet and waiting to be touched. She had no doubts her nipples stood out against the thin shirt she wore, and somehow, she didn't quite want Blake to catch her in this position.

## Chapter Two

Blake stared from Luke to Sydney and back again. Betrayal, white-hot and a reminiscent of his ex stabbed through him. Even so, Luke's lean form and cocky stance hardened Blake's cock. As much as he wanted to be the one pressed so intimately against Sydney, he couldn't deny his feelings for Luke.

"I trust the horses are well," he snapped. If she'd wanted a roll in the hay, he would have gladly obliged. Now, he wondered what the hell his best friend did want. Because for all of her protests that she was through with men—protests he honored—she sure looked like she wanted a lot more of Luke. Damn cowboy.

"Yes. I was just coming back," Sydney said.

"I see." And he did, all too well. Sydney's breathy voice turned his attention to the word "come". Every so often he heard muffled whimpers coming from her room, the sounds of solo sex that had made him harder than a fence post. He wondered what she really sounded like when she came. And what he could do to make that happen.

"I think the others want to go." He stepped backwards out the door. Moonlight spilled over the edge of the barn, putting him at a disadvantage to see what Sydney and Luke were doing.

"I think you want *me* to go." Luke strode forward, every powerful stride emphasizing the physicality of the cowboy's job. He rode rough stock, that much Blake knew. And the sheer amount of guts it had to take to hop on the back of a bucking horse...Blake usually tried to keep his mounts more controlled. Testosterone oozed from every pore. Blake didn't blame Sydney for being attracted to the man.

"What I want is immaterial. This is Sydney's place. She is graciously allowing me to stay here while I get my footing again. But Katie was talking about going home." Actually, Katie and Daniel were close to making out on Sydney's couch and Blake had come out to get some air. Watching the two of them only reminded him of Sydney...and himself.

Luke's attention seemed to linger on him. "I think you want something else." He strode forward until he stopped mere inches away.

*Close enough to kiss.* Now that thought had to go! Blake forced his breathing to stay even. He ignored his tightening jeans and his hardening cock. Ever since Sydney had told him about her friend Katie, he'd had thoughts. Damn foolish thoughts about it being just him and Sydney. And now, Luke.

Leaning forward, Luke braced his fingers in the center of Blake's chest.

Blake swallowed hard. His gut tightened, his cock leaping as if Luke had touched that part of his anatomy.

"I think you want to play both sides and enjoy the middle. You're at the jump. You going to take it, Blake, or are you going to tumble into the dirt?" Luke dropped his hand to his side and strode toward the house.

Blake watched him go, thinking how hot and tight the other man's ass would be. He bit back a moan. "I'm going to my apartment," he said, then headed in the opposite direction.

~\* \* \*~

Two days later, Blake stood in the barn aisle wrapping cold packs around a young filly's legs. She stamped her hoof, sending the packs tumbling to the cement. Muttering under his breath about the intelligence of pissed off women, he wrapped the bandages back around her leg. Ever since he'd found Sydney and Luke together in the barn, the woman had haunted his every waking moment. She wore shirts open at the throat, along with jeans that were too tight. Her manner seemed more confident, more seductive, and he forced himself to remember that they needed to remain friends.

"See, told you that you couldn't keep your hands off the ladies." Luke said from behind him.

Blake straightened; clunking the back of his head on the heavy rope used to cross-tie the filly. Reaching up to touch the injury, he turned and scowled. "Sydney went out to lunch with Katie," he said.

"I know." Luke rested his hand on the filly's haunches as he walked up the aisle. "I'm not here to see Sydney." He grinned.

Blake stared at Luke's full bottom lip. He thought the man's mouth would look heavenly wrapped around a cock, preferably his. The slight bit of stubble on his chin would rub, and that would be half of the pleasure. The contrast between soft skin and rough cheeks would only enhance Blake's pleasure.

Luke cleared his throat. "No, hello? No kiss of greeting?" Luke stopped on the other side of the cross-tie, using the rope like some kind of invisible wall between them.

"Hello, Luke," Blake drawled. "Good bye, Luke. I have chores to do."

"The filly can't stand in the cross-ties by herself. From my counting, you've got what fifteen, twenty minutes to kill. I know a way?" His hand drifted down to his belt buckle, and the bulge beneath it.

Blake's mouth went dry. His cock leapt in his briefs, balls tightening with the memory of how long it'd been since he'd gotten laid. He turned away, not wanting to go down this road. Not with a cowboy who seemed to fuck everything on two legs. Sydney might be more than capable of making her own decisions, but Blake didn't think Luke should be hitting on both of them. "I have work to do."

"You know she wants you." Luke casually tossed the statement to Blake.

He spun. "Leave her out of this."

Luke's eyebrow winged up. "Oh, so you do care." He grinned. "I wondered."

Blake ducked beneath the cross-tie and went toe-to-toe with the cowboy. "I do care. And if you do anything to hurt Sydney, I guarantee you that the rankest bronc you've ever ridden will seem like a child's pony compared to what I will do to you. Got it?"

Luke's heavy hand settled on Blake's shoulder. "Oh yeah, I read you loud and clear." With a swiftness that surprised Blake, Luke spun him against the stall until his back touched the wooden door. Closing in, he pinned his hips against Blake's. "I bet when you get all unbuttoned in bed, you're a hot fuck." Dipping his head, he gave Blake a hard, bruising kiss.

The instant Luke's lips touched his, Blake's body knew exactly what to do, even if his mind was somewhere out in "oh no" land. His mouth opened, his hand grabbing Luke's lean hips to pull them even closer. Luke's erection rubbed against Blake's stomach, and he groaned against the cowboy's mouth.

Lust, pure and simple, unfurled through his veins. To get naked and fuck right there. Up against the stall, in the hay pile, the location didn't matter. All that did matter was the fact that he needed to see, feel, touch, and taste Luke's cock.

In the stall behind him, a horse snorted.

Blake stiffened. His lips stilled. Beneath his fingers, Luke's muscles bunched, flexed, and Blake knew he'd done a very bad thing. He pulled away and shoved against Luke's chest. "No."

Luke took a couple steps back, his hands loose at his sides. "What?"

"I said no." Blake crossed his arms over his chest.

"Why not? We're both adults. We want each other. If I felt right, you want me a lot." Luke glanced at Blake's crotch and mirrored his pose. "So why not?"

"You were kissing Sydney not that long ago, for starters. Look, I'm not some schoolboy who doesn't know his own mind. You're hot. I want you. But I'm not doing this."

"I was kissing Sydney. A kiss. That's all it was. It's not like we're engaged or something and I'm banging you on the side." Luke sat on a tack trunk and stretched out his long legs.

Blake tried not to focus on them, or on the tight denim around Luke's thighs. Luke's erection tented his jeans, making quite the picture with his large belt buckle. Blake's mouth went dry. He pondered Luke's words, the carefree feelings they evoked so at odds with his own caution that Blake wondered if maybe, this time, he'd be wrong.

No, he couldn't be. Sydney was his friend. His very good friend who had graciously allowed him to move his operations to her farm. He couldn't screw that up. Not this time. "Sydney's my friend. You want her. That's fine. I won't stand in the way. But you can't get both of us."

Outside the barn, he heard the crunch of tires on gravel. Shit! She'd returned home. He glanced toward the door, but didn't see her. He wanted this conversation over and done with before she'd even heard a whisper, even a hint of it.

Luke laughed. "You haven't been paying attention to her friend Katie, have you? Daniel and James are good friends of mine. Apparently they worked out the kinks in their relationship. You don't think we could do the same?"

Blake shook his head. "That's not my call to make. This is Sydney's place."

"And the fact that I'm bisexual doesn't change that? You think I'm looking for the kind of happy ever after that Daniel and James ended up with?" Luke snorted. "That doesn't happen for men like me. I'm just out for a good time."

"Then you should look somewhere else," Blake said, his voice suddenly cold. "Because I don't want you messing with Sydney."

Luke whistled. He glanced out the door, and Blake hoped he couldn't see Sydney. Or if he did, that she was heading into the house and away from this train wreck. "You want her, don't you?"

Blake's head snapped around to stare at Luke. "What?"

"You want her. Sydney. You saw us kissing, and now I kissed you, and you're all jealous. Because you want her all to yourself. I don't blame you. She's a hot woman. Feisty too. I bet she'd be a hellcat in bed."

“Don’t talk about her that way,” Blake growled.

Luke held out his hands in mock surrender. “See, what’d I tell you? You want her.”

“My feelings for Sydney don’t figure into this,” Blake countered. “This is between you and me. And if you only want something to stick your dick into, then maybe you ought to look elsewhere. Because I’m not interested in that and neither is Sydney.”

Luke glanced toward the open door. Damn it, what was he seeing out there? Blake shifted his weight and resisted the urge to move closer to the opening. He strained to listen for a truck door. He figured he’d missed it with Luke’s yapping.

“I think your feelings for Sydney are crystal clear,” Luke said, his voice a little louder than it had been a few moments ago.

Blake paused. No, Sydney couldn’t be out there. Luke wouldn’t make an ass out of himself, well out of both of them, by shouting this private conversation to her. Would he? “She’s a good friend,” he insisted, though he knew he was lying to himself. She was more than that, something he couldn’t tell her because she saw him as a gay man. The fact that Luke’s attentions might be the very thing to bring his feelings out in the open didn’t escape him. Still, he couldn’t.

“I’m not interested in a roll in the hay, Luke. I’m sorry.” He softened his voice, more frustrated at himself then at the cowboy. If what they said about cowboys was true, and Luke was certainly proving that, then Luke simply acted in accordance with his own nature.

“Well if hay isn’t to your liking, there’s always the back of my truck. Or perhaps up against the wall. I’m flexible.” Luke grinned.

“I said no.” This conversation was starting to get inane. He had to do something to get this through the cowboy’s thick skull. “No means no.”

“Of course it does. I was just checking to see if you changed your mind.” Luke chuckled, and then turned toward the door. “Why hello, Sydney. Blake and I were just discussing you.”

~\* \* \*~

Sydney paused just inside the doorway wondering how much to reveal that she’d heard. It’d been enough to know her guesses about Blake were true. He did want her. Just thinking about those possibilities had her breath catching in her throat. She grew wet with the knowledge that two, hot, hunky men wanted her.

She looked from Blake to Luke, then back again. Blake stared at her, obvious chagrin on his face at being caught talking about her. Luke, on the other hand, looked sure of himself. She’d deal with the cowboy later.

“So, if I weren’t in the picture would ‘no’ still mean no?” She asked Blake.

He swallowed hard. She watched the line of his throat as it worked, imagining pressing herself against his body and trailing a line of kisses up to his jaw. She’d tease those full lips of his, sucking the lower one into her mouth, before using her tongue to get him to open to her. The more she focused on his lips, the hornier she got, until she shifted her weight to try and ease the ache between her thighs.

“I don’t know,” Blake said.

At least he’d answered honestly, and Sydney gave him credit for that.

“What if I told you not to hold back on my account?”

Blake sputtered, eyes widening. “What?”

Sydney grinned and sauntered forward until she stood between the two men. She motioned for Luke to walk over to Blake’s side of the aisle, and he did, getting a bit too close in her estimation. Staring at these guys, she toyed with the top button of her shirt. One question had been answered. Blake most definitely wanted her, so maybe he wasn’t as gay as she thought. Then again, they didn’t talk too much about the past, so most likely he’d been with women before. He knew too much about her sordid relationships, all the gory details poured out over beers and in between crying jags. She didn’t want that again and diving in with both men probably wasn’t the wisest thing to do. Well hell, when had she ever been wise?

Sydney braced herself for laying it all on the line. “Because you’ve lived with me long enough to know that I rant and rail against men. I’m through with them. You’ve heard me say that, right?”

Blake nodded. Confusion masked his face.

Sydney chuckled. “You know when you’re jumping there’s a place where the horse hasn’t hit the sweet spot, but there’s no safe way to refuse or go around? So you just have to rise into position, cue the horse and hope for the best. That’s where I’m at with you guys. Forget the fact that I’ve said that I’m through with men. We can consider that true for most of them. But you two? Well, I want you. Both of you.”

Blake sucked in a harsh breath. “You want me? Us?”

“Yeah, I do. The way I look at it, I’m a grown woman and have no problem with adults acting on their desires. I’ve wanted you for a while. Just took me a bit longer than usual to pick up on the signals that you want me. Luke’s made my panties wet since I first saw him. He’s got the cowboy thing going on. The idea of you two, and me, well that just makes me want to strip right down to my underwear and get a little dirty.” Sydney flipped open the first two buttons on her shirt.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” Luke said. “I haven’t missed my guess after all.” He tipped his hat at her.

“Cocky bastard,” she said, laughing to take the sting out of the words. “What about you?” she asked Blake.

He eyed them both for a long moment, giving just enough hesitation that Sydney feared he’d back out. Not that she still probably wouldn’t take her turn with Luke. She’d just been horny lately. Maybe if she got screwed enough times she’d remember why she didn’t like men and go back to her DIY ways.

“Well, I’m not a cocky bastard, that’s for sure,” he replied. “And I have to admit the idea has merit. But what are we talking about here? A week? A month? I live here. If this goes south, it’s my ass on the line, not yours. You can kick me off your farm and out of your life. Luke doesn’t have a base of operations, so in essence, you’d leave me strung out to dry.”

Half a dozen comebacks, mostly talking about being wet or tied up with lines, came and went. “Look, how long have we known each other?” Sydney finally asked.

“Ten years or so,” Blake replied.

“Okay then. I’m not going to mess up a friendship like that. And I’m not saying we’re going to fall into ‘two guys, a girl, and a horse farm’ forever bliss like Katie did. What I am saying is that I’m okay with Luke wanting you, and with you wanting me. I want both of you, so why not see if

this works? Otherwise, all this lusting from afar is going to interfere with our training, and I don't think any of us want to screw up our careers, right?"

Sydney undid a couple more buttons on her shirt, loving the way both men's attention seemed to focus on her cleavage. Her sports bra revealed little, yet from the way the men stared at her, she might as well been a nearly nude underwear model. And oh yeah, that kind of attention was hot.

"I'm game. How about you?" Luke unbuttoned his shirt nearly to the waist.

Sydney's mouth went dry at the muscled vision of a male chest revealed by his motion. *Say yes!* She turned to her friend to find him staring at the whorls of dark hair and the ripped abs with its tantalizing trail of hair disappearing beneath the waistband of his jeans. *Oh yeah. Please say yes!*

### Chapter Three

"If it's what the lady wants," Blake said, though from the smile on his face Sydney knew that it was exactly what he wanted too.

She resisted the urge to whoop for joy as both men stripped their shirts. Two sexy guys standing in her barn, one in jeans and boots, the other in breeches and boots, seemed like something out of one of her carnal dreams. She breathed deeply, catching hints of the guys' aftershave blending with the prevalent smells of leather and hay. The combined fragrances should have turned her off. Instead, her breathing quickened.

"But there's one condition," Blake added.

Sydney closed her eyes and groaned inwardly. Her friend, her ever-too-cautious friend, always had to throw a wrench in the works.

"Yes?" Sydney failed to hide the annoyance in her voice. To come so close to this opportunity only to have it snatched from her grasp seemed too cruel.

"I want to be back on my own farm someday, and Luke doesn't strike me as the settling down type. So if we do this, we do it with no strings. No attachments. Just for as good as it lasts." Blake hooked his thumbs in his slim leather belt.

"Gee, you make it sound like you're planning a happily ever after," she drawled. "That's fine with me. I thought we'd already decided on an arrangement like that, except for the part where I said I wasn't willing to screw up our relationship." She shook her head. "Surprised you don't ride dressage. Heaven forbid you try to fly." She winked at him to take the sting out of her words.

Blake chuckled. "You know me too well." He turned to Luke, an appraising gleam in his eyes. "What do you say?"

He shrugged. "Hell, I'm in."

Well of course he would be, though Sydney kept that biting observation to herself. All the stereotypical ideas about cowboys having a girl at every rodeo raced through her mind. Sure, with Luke, she had no idea if it was a girl, or guy, but at this juncture, she didn't know that she cared, either. He'd agreed. Blake had agreed. Together, they could make this very, very good.

"So what happens if I find a place?"

Sydney rolled her eyes. "You think like a woman, you know that?"

Luke laughed, the sound low and warm like a shot of good whiskey. "Makes you wonder why I go both ways, huh?"

Sydney shook her head. "Because it gives you more options for dates on Saturday night?" She toyed with a button, savoring the sight of the bare-chested men before her. She paused, thinking about the pile of hay and the couple of blankets stashed in her tack room that she used at shows when she bunked in her trailer. Both of the old comforters would be plenty large enough and plenty soft for whatever she wanted to do with the guys.

"That's one way of looking at it. Sometimes a little softness is nice in the middle of all the hardness." Luke eyed her from head to toe, a lingering look that made her skin tingle and her body ache with wanting. "Though there's little soft about you."

"Oh, there's a little," Sydney bantered back. Her breasts might not be overly ample, but they provided enough cushion for a man's head and crushed rather nicely against a broad chest. Her

hips flared enough to make her look damn good in riding breeches, her ass high and tight from her workouts and her job. She drew a breath and unhooked the last couple of buttons on her shirt. The fabric gaped to show the white cotton fabric of her sports bra.

"I see there is." Luke glanced at Blake. "What do you think? Shall we test that theory?"

Blake swallowed hard. His erection pressed against the fly of his breeches, and Sydney allowed her mind to wander with thoughts about how long or thick he might be. She resisted the urge to squeeze her thighs together to try and ease the ache between them. How could she have been so blind as to be friends with Blake for so long and not see how hot he was? Except she had seen, and she'd tried to ignore it until Luke had come along.

"I've known Sydney a long time. She can be quite soft when she wants to be." Blake's voice softened.

"Oh really?" Luke asked. "Tell me more."

"No one has a lighter touch on the reins. Just the tiniest bump of her leg will send a horse moving in the right direction. Her seat, her thighs, the way she eases herself down onto a fractious colt. Oh yeah, Sydney can be damn soft when she wants to be. Of course, those are with horses. You're hard on your men, aren't you, Sydney?" At his question, Blake caught and held her gaze with his own.

"I don't" She licked her lips, her mouth dry and her mind fixating on the word 'hard'.

"Oh yeah, you know. You use them and ride them, leaving them all worn out and sweaty when they're done. We've had adjoining motel rooms at some of the shows, remember?"

She flushed, heat sliding over her body, as she remembered. "I get tense. Sex helps me relax," she muttered. Taking a deep breath, she knew she needed to wrest control back from him. "Or are you saying that you've thought about me, my thighs braced on your hips, the flex of weight and tightening of muscles to tell you exactly what I want." She strode forward, putting an extra roll in her hips. "Are you telling me, you want to ride?"

For the first time since they started this whole conversation, Blake laughed. "Maybe I'm looking to be ridden."

No mistaking the lust in his words, or the way her pussy tightened.

Sydney stopped directly in front of him. She reached out and trailed a single digit down his sternum. His sweat slicked her skin, made her finger slide as easily as his cock would into her pussy. She licked her lips. "And what about Luke? Do you want to watch him ride too?" She shivered thinking about the big cowboy behind her, his hands on her waist, steadying her for both of their loving.

Blake made a show of looking over her right shoulder. "If he wants to, but he's going to have to watch too." With those words, Blake clamped his hand on her waist. He pulled her body flush with his; the ridge of his erection pressing against her stomach even through their clothing. "But I'm tired of watching." With his free hand, Blake threaded his fingers through her hair, freeing it from its confinement to spill down over her shoulders.

Sydney gasped.

Blake took advantage of her parted lips to kiss her, as hot and hungry as she'd been dreaming about kissing him. His tongue swept her lower lip, dipping ever so slightly into her mouth. He

groaned slightly, the tension of waiting finally easing in a burst of sensual delight. He kissed the same way he rode, with gentle coaxing and soft touches. On the back of her head, his fingers kneaded, a massage that had her melting against him. His hand on her waist moved to her ass to pull her even closer.

She curled her fingers into his shirt, as they took two steps back and Blake rested against the stall. Trapping him between her body and the unyielding wooden door made her acutely aware of his arousal, and of the hot, sweaty man scent of his body. She made soft moans in the back of her throat and tangled her fingers in his hair.

Her hips moved ever so slightly against his. A gentle slide of her pussy searching for the hard length of his cock. One booted ankle hooked around the back of his calves, her body open and waiting for more.

Her lungs burned with the need for air. She drew back, panting, wondering whether to turn and see if Luke wanted in on the action or just kiss Blake until they tumbled down to the nearest horizontal surface to fuck. For now, he seemed content just to watch, though he moved closer.

Sydney worked on the buttons of Blake's shirt. Kissing him was nice, way beyond nice, but she wanted to see, and touch, his skin. He usually worked shirtless around the barn, and she often leaned against fences to admire his taut shoulders and muscled back. Her mouth watered imagined licking the length of his spine, tasting the salt of his sweat and the flavor of his skin.

If she was going to do this, she was going to do it right. No half-measures for her. Leaning forward, she breathed deeply of his scent, a combination of some intoxicating after shave, sweat and horse. She licked the indent of his collar bone, following the broad planes of his chest across the bone. Then lower, until she discovered the flat male pectorals with their hard nipples and the slight crease between. Each ridge of his abdomen waited like a feast spread before a starving woman, and she slowly tugged his shirt free of his breaches to lick, nibble, and taste every hollow and swell.

"Do you know how hot she looks doing that?" Luke asked. "Her eyes half-closed in ecstasy. The little noises she makes. Damn, did you know she was that hot?"

"No." Blake's answer emerged more like a strangled growl as her fingers curled around the leather tab of his belt. "I didn't."

"Shit man. I'm about to explode just from watching her."

She flipped the end of his belt free, releasing the buckle and pulling the thin strip of leather out of the two closest belt loops. The flat button on his breeches, similar to the one on hers, flipped open easily. The zipper lowered from the pressure of his cock, and his erection pushed aside the fabric, held back only by his white briefs.

"You know, if you had on dark breeches, you wouldn't have to wear your tighty whities," she teased. She didn't reach for him though her fingertips tingled with the thought of touching him. Instead, she kissed her way back up his chest to his mouth before claiming his lips.

"And if I had you in bed, I wouldn't be wearing anything at all," Blake replied. "So, did you undress me for the show or do you have other plans?"

She leaned back, focusing on Blake. Luke had receded to her periphery, though she was still painfully aware of the cowboy. Right now this was all about her and Blake, and her fantasies. "What kind of plans do you want me to have?"

"Maybe put that sassy mouth of yours on my cock." Blake smiled.

Sydney drew a quick breath. Luke's words echoed in her ears. *...about to explode from watching her...* She played at ignoring him, choosing instead to kiss along the narrow line of hair leading into his underwear. Kneeling, she pushed his breeches down around his knees, leaving him standing in just his briefs.

"I don't know if Luke can handle it." She looked up Blake's semi-nude body, loving the taste of anticipation on her lips. Her body hummed. Her pussy ached, the hurts-so-good kind of ache, and she bit her lip to keep from moaning.

Blake glanced at Luke, and Sydney followed his gaze. The raw hunger in the cowboy's face stole her breath. "I can handle a lot of things, baby. Want to find out just how much?" The corners of those oh-so-kissable lips turned up in a come-play-with-me smile.

"Later. Blake was first in line." With those words, she tugged on the waistband of his briefs, pulling them down enough to free Blake's cock. At first sight, he looked huge, thickly built, with a pussy-tingling long shaft. Oh to have him in her mouth, in her body. She leaned forward and drew a whiff of his musky fragrance into her lungs. Sweaty man and horses. Nothing had ever turned her on more.

She drew a single finger along his length, and then proceeded to pull his briefs down to join his breeches around his knees. The high tops of Blake's boots kept her from stripping him to the ankles, and damn, he looked sexy in his skin-tight pants wadded up around the tops of his boots. She'd never quite seen the extent of his leanly muscled thighs, his narrow hips, and she could only guess about his ass, muscled from hours spent in the saddle. Naked, well she wished he'd made his preferences known a bit sooner.

"Can you take all of him?" Luke asked, an inquiring drawl to his voice. Boots scuffed against the concrete aisle.

"Any particular place in mind?" She turned, tossing her hair over her shoulder, and bringing her lips close to his cock. Her breath teased his plum head, and beneath her fingers, his skin twitched. She stroked the knot of nerves underneath the ridge with the pad of her thumb. "Easy, boy. We want this to be one, long ride." She flicked her tongue over the slit.

Both men made strangled groans.

She circled her thumb and forefinger around his base, marveling at how thick Blake's cock was. Yet another thing that she'd never known about her friend. The one comment made by a one-time lover—or at least she'd guessed he'd been a one-time lover—hadn't painted a picture this good. She lowered her mouth to him, taking first just the tip, then more, until she drew, lick by lick, Blake's cock into her mouth. His wiry curls tickled her nose and his heavy weight sat on her tongue. Her jaw ached a bit to take something so large into her mouth, and she drew back, savoring every moment and every sound both men made. As she made love to him with her mouth, she waited until he rested on her lower lip, and then moved forward once more.

Sydney closed her eyes. To even be doing this to her friend fulfilled so many fantasies her entire body hummed with fulfillment. She lost herself in the movement, in the salty taste of his pre-cum and the moans he made. Reaching for his balls, she fondled them, thinking how different things would be if he weren't still trapped in boots and breeches.

Luke moved. He knelt behind her, one big hand splayed on her stomach.

Her muscles contracted beneath his touch, and her entire body went rigid. *Lower*, her entire being seemed to say, and when he flipped open the button on her breeches the way she'd done to Blake's, her moan mingled with someone else's, though she couldn't have told which man it was. Luke tugged her pants down, and then traced the elastic of her panties.

"You ride in a thong?" His incredulous tone made Blake stiffen.

"A thong? She's wearing a thong and I didn't know?"

Sydney released Blake's cock with a pop. "Apparently you weren't looking at my ass long enough to see there weren't any panty lines. They're actually quite comfortable." She spread her knees, giving Luke greater access.

He slid the strip of damp fabric aside and stroked along her labia. His voice rumbled in her ear, "Nice. I can watch you suck his cock and finger you at the same time."

Sydney shivered. Already aroused, the slide of his finger along her skin had her working her hips for more. His digit easily slipped between her labia to caress the swollen bud of her clitoris. She mewled in the back of her throat, and then began sucking Blake's cock again. In the heat of Luke's words and his fingers, she'd forgotten what she'd been doing.

Above her, Blake chuckled. "The view is pretty good from this angle too."

"Oh, I bet it is. She's hot and tight." Luke swirled his finger around her opening, and Sydney fought against the first telltale flutters of her impending orgasm.

Blake reached down and cupped the back of her head. He held her still, fucking into her mouth. Sydney took him, relaxing her throat so he could slip past the tight ring of muscles.

With Luke holding her, she felt trapped between the two men, at the mercy of their desires. And maybe that's what she wanted, because as her orgasm drew near, she didn't want to have to think about this tomorrow. Let this afternoon be something the guys thought up. She wanted them both, still did; she just wasn't quite ready to face the reality of that.

And then Blake stiffened. He cried out, one of the horses whinnying at the sound. His cock pumped streams of cum into her mouth, and she licked and swallowed as if this might be the last time she'd ever taste him.

Luke plunged two fingers into her tight channel. She released Blake's cock, gave a whimpering cry, as she came. The powerful waves of her orgasm washed through her, driving away the sensation of hard cement through the knees of her breeches, or the sound of Blake's ragged breathing over her head. Closing her eyes, she focused solely on her body, on the sensation and the movement, committing it to memory. And when she opened them again, she found Blake kneeling beside her. He tilted her chin up so her gaze meshed with his, and then he kissed her.

~\* \* \*~

Luke stared at the two figures kneeling at his feet, not sure which one aroused him more. Stroking Sydney might have been just a sexual encounter; it wasn't like he hadn't had a three way before. He knew the ropes and the rules. Except, sliding his finger through her slick folds, finding her clit and strumming her to release was more than just a physical thing. Sydney affected him on far more than a base level.

He shifted his weight, trying to ease the pounding in his cock. Of the three, he was the only one who hadn't come, and try as he might, he couldn't get upset about that. He should be. He should be hopping mad, feeling left out, and hell, wasn't that why he preferred the no-strings

attached types of relationships? All the parties involved get their orgasm and then go on their way.

He knelt down beside Sydney and wrapped his arm around her, his fingers resting on Blake's shoulder. The intimate moment shook him. Something connected the three of them, a sense of belonging, of finally finding...something. The urge to flee, usually close to the surface, wasn't anywhere to be found. No, he wanted to...stay.

Luke stood, shaken to the core by his thoughts. "I better get back to the farm. James will want help with the chores." With a nod, he spun on his heel and left the barn, leaving Sydney and Blake still kneeling, still clinging to each other, and with him very much wanting to stay with them.

## Chapter Four

Sydney sat in the booth across from Katie at their favorite diner just outside of town. A former drive-through, the building had been renovated like a fifties diner with chrome and neon everywhere. Sydney swirled her French fry through a massive puddle of ketchup, her mind flashing back to her tongue making the very same motion on Blake's cock. A sudden wash of heat rushed through her, and she munched on her fry before her too-perceptive friend figured it out.

"So, you want to tell me what you were thinking about right then, because I guarantee you it wasn't on the fact that you think Knothead can make Intermediate Level without any problems." Katie leaned forward. "Luke's been spending an awful lot of time at your place lately. Makes me think the next time we see him, he's going to be wearing breeches, or at least be *in* somebody's breeches." She chuckled at her own comments.

"Nothing," Sydney hedged. It seemed as if she'd already been discovered.

"Okay, so if it's nothing, tell me what Luke is doing over at your house all the time. Not that we mind. He's a grown man and can do what he wants." Katie sipped her malt.

"Apparently he hit it off with Blake." Sydney shrugged, trying to keep her nonchalant attitude. "I've been busy with Knothead so I haven't been paying much attention."

Katie laughed loud enough to draw the notice of a couple other patrons in the diner. "Yeah right. You have those two hot guys at your farm and you're telling me that you haven't noticed?" She pulled her straw out of her malt and sucked the last of the chocolate goodness from the end.

"I told you. I've sworn off men." Sydney shrugged. "Seriously."

The waitress came by and set their bill on the table. Katie reached for it, though didn't flip over the ticket. "Want to make a bet?"

Sydney's stomach flip-flopped and it wasn't the large order of fries or tenderloin she'd devoured, either. "What kind of bet?" she asked slowly.

"If you're telling the truth, then I'll buy your lunch. If not, then you'll pay this time, and the next time too." Katie grinned like a maniac. Yeah, she thought she was going to win.

Sydney feigned a gasp. "The next one too? You play rough."

Katie chuckled, low and seductive. "The guys like it when I do. Oh wait, we were talking lunch, weren't we? Well, lunch and sexy hot-hands Luke."

"Flip it over. You get to pay. He *is* over there spending a lot of time with Blake. I think the guys have the hots for each other." She laughed, enjoying the look of shock on Katie's face.

"You mean you're not involved in this? Really? My friend Sydney, who lusts after anything in jeans?" Katie flipped over the bill, then opened her purse and pulled out a twenty. She shoved them both toward the end of the table.

"I'll get the tip," Sydney offered. "After all, just because they have the hots for each other, doesn't mean that I can't play in the middle."

"Hah! I knew it!"

The waitress hurried back with their change, and Sydney tucked several dollar bills beneath the ketchup bottle.

"Let's talk about this on the drive home. I don't want the entire diner to hear how I finally got to blow Blake, while Luke fingered me," she lowered her voice so it barely carried across the table.

"You what? And he what? I'll race you to the truck for this story." Katie shimmied out of the booth.

Sydney followed, figuring now that she'd laid all her cards on the table, at least the physical ones, she might as well toss the emotional ones down too. They reached Sydney's truck, and she unlocked the door and held it open for Katie. Sydney hopped behind the wheel and waited until they were on the highway before speaking.

"It happened in the barn a couple of weeks ago, when I impulsively invited Luke over for dinner. He cornered me in the barn, told me that I wanted Blake, and him, and what was I going to do about it. He kissed me, and damn is he a good kisser. Then Blake walked in, and well, I guess it turned out my one-sided lusting over him wasn't so one-sided after all. We decided to try this, no promises, no emotions. Just sex. I gave Blake a blow job and Luke fingered me from behind." She tried to speak cold and emotionlessly, just the way she'd handled all her affairs before. This was different. Luke and Blake were different.

Katie gave a low whistle. "Wait? This happened a couple of weeks ago and you haven't told me?" She laughed. "You're lucky you're driving or I'd smack you for holding out on me." She quickly sobered. "You always could handle men, but those two are handfuls, I'm sure. And I'm not talking their dick size, either. You up for this? I know that last bastard dumped you harder than a fall into a ditch."

Sydney winced in memory. "You're telling me, on both accounts. I'm as sure as I can be. You know my track record with men. I figured this would be easier."

"Just make sure you talk. Daniel and James had a pretty good working relationship, so it was mostly about my fitting into their lives. Blake and Luke didn't know each other until not that long ago. You're three different people with three different lives. Talk. Don't guess about anything, okay? That's my good advice for the day."

Sydney listened to the hum of the truck's tires against the pavement for several moments. "Don't worry. I'm good. I'm real good." Except her friend's words haunted her all the way to Stockton Stock Contractors, where she dropped off Katie with Daniel and James, and all the way home. Because really, since that afternoon at the barn, there'd been a lot of wanting and a lot of hot kisses, but few conversations. And she tried not to let it worry her.

She did, however, think about it all the way home. And when she pulled into the driveway and saw the barn doors wide open and a fresh trailer full of hay partially unloaded outside, she knew where the guys were and where she needed to be. Her t-shirt and jeans were causal enough, and she'd worn paddock boots that had been to the barn, though she'd polished them before going out to lunch. Deciding she was suitably attired, she stepped into the barn.

Sydney heard the guys before she saw them, laughing and joking punctuated by the thump of hay bales. She paused to allow her eyes to adjust to the dim light and saw them in the corner stacking the bales of hay.

Damn they looked good. Luke stood on top of the pile, shirtless and sweaty. A beam of sunlight coming in through the open double-doors flashed against his belt buckle. Blake stood a few layers down, tossing the bales up to Luke. He, too, was shirtless, though his riding jeans molded to his thighs and legs like a second skin.

Unconsciously, Sydney licked her lips. The effortless movement of their bodies, muscles bunching and lengthening with symphonic elegance. Just like watching horses do dressage or go over a jump, the beauty of power in motion simply took her breath away.

And made her horny. Okay, so maybe watching jumpers didn't do that, but the guys riding them, oh yeah. And when it was Blake, even more so. Seeing these two guys together made her hot. Hmm, she'd have to do something about that.

Surprised they hadn't noticed her, she sauntered over to the hydrant. She unwound several lengths of hose, checked to be sure the spigot was closed, and then flipped the handle. Water pressure instantly filled the hose. Squeezing the trigger softly, she released a fine spray of mist, which she turned on herself. The water droplets moistened her face, running down her throat to drench her shirt. It clung to her bra, the light blue lace starting to become visible beneath her paler blue shirt. She strode forward.

Clenching the trigger as hard as she could, she turned the spray of water on the men.

Blake's back took the brunt of the blow, and he yelped and jumped sideways. His foot slid off the bale, and for a moment, Sydney feared her foolishness had broken his ankle or something. He slid harmlessly down to the next level and spun on her.

"Sydney!" He barked, though laughter softened his tone. "You need to aim a little higher?"

"Oh really?" She caught Luke square in his tight ass, damping the seat of his jeans.

Luke braced himself, bending over to present his rear to her. "Need to aim a little higher. I could use a good hosing."

Blake laughed so hard he nearly choked at the double meaning in Luke's words. He scurried down from the pile of hay, and Sydney turned the hose from Luke to the center of Blake's chest.

"That feels good," he said, now that he stood on concrete. "Better for the hay, too."

Oh sure, she knew hosing down the hay meant they'd have to let it dry off. Wet hay could mold, and that wasn't good for the horses. Thankfully, there wasn't a drought this year and if they needed to toss some bales, they could. Though she figured they'd move the wet bales off to one side to use them up first. One of the older mares took wet hay, so maybe they'd even cut down on chore time for a day or two.

Luke turned around. "Hey, you forgot about me?" He hopped down off the towering stack of hay like a mountain goat, his boots hitting the concrete floor with a thud. Wiping his forehead with a very wet handkerchief stuck in his back pocket, he grinned. "Don't I deserve to get wet, too?" He held out his arms.

"If you insist." She sprayed him, pretending the stream of water was her tongue, starting along his clavicle, then dancing between his nipples. Up and down the arrow of hair dipping beneath the waistband of his jeans, until she had thoroughly doused him.

Blake came up behind her. Wrapping one arm around her waist, he hauled her against his very wet, and very hard, body. He took the hose from her, though she barely noticed with his cock poking her in the ass. She didn't need the hose to soak her panties. Her nipples pressed against the thin lace and her t-shirt, twin points that dared him to turn the hose on her.

He did, making sure to soak her shirt before sticking the nozzle beneath the collar to dump water straight down her front. The cold stream did nothing to cool her ardor.

Blake walked them both backwards until he could reach the hydrant. He flipped down the handle then hung the hose nozzle on the hanger. "You're going to pay for that now," he growled in her ear. With his right hand now free, he tugged at her shirt. The cotton fabric protested as Blake pulled it away from her skin, and then he flattened his palm on her stomach. "Oh, we're going to make you pay." With his booted feet, he kicked her legs apart.

Luke strode forward. He stopped directly in front of them both and took her shirt from Blake. Yanking it over her head, he dropped the soaking garment behind him, where it landed with a splat. He didn't notice, no one did really, for the heat of Luke's gaze radiated through all three of them. "You thinking what I'm thinking?"

"That it's afternoon and no one is due out to the barn, so there won't be anyone to catch us here?" Blake's voice rumbled past her ear, and she shivered.

Luke's big hands circled her waist. From behind her, Blake unhooked the clasp on her bra, and then slid the straps off her shoulders. Luke caught them, trailing first one, then the other down her arm, until he tossed the scrap of lace to join her sodden shirt on the ground. "Nice," he said, using his calloused thumbs to stroke her nipples. "Very nice."

Sydney shivered. The tension emanating from Blake behind her set her nerves on edge. The reverent way he skimmed his fingers between her collar bone, the light brush of his lips against the nape of her neck, told her that he wanted her as much as she wanted him, and not in a slap and tickle sort of way. No, this was the bone deep wanting, the entire body aching and crying out for release sort of wanting. The same desires that made her wonder, deep in the back of her mind, if she couldn't get Blake to stay at her farm after all.

Then, Luke replaced his fingers with his warm mouth. The contrast between her chilling skin and the warm, wet heat of his mouth nearly drove her out of her mind. Reaching behind her, she grabbed Blake's hip to try and steady herself. Her other hand curled into Luke's shoulder.

Blake looked over her shoulder, his breath caressing the taut peak of her other breast. "Do you know how good you look?"

Sydney moaned. She couldn't think, couldn't process words. Not when Blake's erection rode her ass and Luke's warmth seeped into her front. He licked a droplet of water from between her breasts and made a hungry sound.

"I think you need to pay for getting us wet." Luke straightened and stepped away. He rested his hands on Sydney's shoulders and gentle pressure had her lowering to her knees.

She bit her lip to keep from moaning again. All that delicious expanse of his chest so close, and yet, with his hands on her shoulders, she couldn't lean forward and taste him.

When at last her knees touched the aisle, he released her and flipped open his belt buckle. "Really, a woman has to pay for making a man ache like this." He undid his button, and then lowered his zipper. His fully-aroused cock filled the opening in his jeans, a drop of pre-cum already forming on the head. His cock was thick enough that looking at it made her jaw ache. The musky aroma of him tantalized her with the memory of giving her last blow job.

"I don't think you're hurting any more than I am, darlin'." Sydney spoke with a *faux* Texas accent to match Luke's real one. She drew a finger along his length. Oh yes, this would be a pleasurable experience, indeed.

Leaning forward, she licked the drop emerging from the tip. Luke's salty taste filled her mouth, making her even hotter, even hornier, and she wrapped her lips around him greedily, before drawing him deeper into her mouth.

Luke's low groan rumbled through him and around the shaft in her mouth, Sydney smiled. She licked his shaft. Wrapping her tongue around him, she played, loving the taste and texture of him in her mouth. Besides, she had to give Blake a show. Her friend would have no idea what he was missing if he didn't watch her blow Luke.

She reached between his legs and cupped his balls. The weight sat in the palm of her hand, warm and full of promise. Closing her eyes, she savored each pull of her lips against his skin. His soft, delicate skin contrasted sharply with the strength of the man. His cock jerked against her tongue, the tiny twitches telling her that he enjoyed what she was doing. With her free hand, she cupped his hip then slid her fingers beneath denim to caress his skin. The hard gluteus muscle beneath her finger reminded her of the athletic nature of his work and she gave a little moan.

She pulled back and let the tip of his cock rest on her lower lip. Making a show of swirling her tongue over his head, she looked up at him from beneath lowered lashes. She dipped her head to him and began sucking once more.

"Do you know how long it's been since a woman has knelt between my legs?" He squeezed the back of her head and thrust into her mouth.

He was probably used to men whose mouths he could fuck, she guessed, and figured she'd surprise him by relaxing her throat muscles and letting him slip deeper. From the ragged groan he gave, he hadn't been expecting it. Once she'd nearly deep throated her largest vibrator on a dare from an ex-boyfriend. Only the immense dimensions of the toy had kept her from taking it all. Luke had no idea the heaven that her lips and tongue could create, but he was about to find out.

She sucked harder, hollowing her cheeks and welcoming the burn along her muscles. Bobbing her head, she lifted her ass a little in invitation. Now, if only Blake would kneel down behind her and if he wasn't into licking her pussy, maybe he could finger it. She hungered for his touch, for any touch on her body.

Luke pulled back. "I think I want to watch you suck Blake now. And maybe I can fill your pussy instead of your mouth?" He stepped back and shoved his jeans down. "Game?"

Oh hell yeah. She turned to Blake and bent to unlace her Jodhpur boots.

"Or maybe your ass. It looks good from here," Luke offered.

She glanced over her shoulder. "Either one, cowboy." As wet as she was, she could take him anywhere.

## Chapter Five

Blake watched Sydney remove her boots and pants, taking her underwear with them. Naked, she used her jeans to cushion her knees as she dropped down in front of him. She reached up to his belt and slid the tail free of the loops. Nibbling on her lip, as if concentrating on her work, she unfastened it. He dared not breathe. Though he'd agreed to this, and damn it was time if the pounding in his cock were any indication, he wasn't quite sure how to handle sharing her with Luke.

The cowboy must have figured out the direction of his thoughts, because he glanced over the top of Sydney's head and winked at Blake.

She freed his belt and unbuttoned his breeches. The stretchy fabric clung to him, and it wasn't until she lowered the zipper then pushed down his pants that his cock was free of his briefs. She closed her eyes and nuzzled it, the most sublime look on her face. His shaft twitched next to her cheek, and when she turned and mouthed along the edge, he nearly came.

"She's beautiful, isn't she?" Luke's voice grounded him in the moment, and maybe not-so-oddly aroused him further. "From back here I can see her heart-shaped ass and the mouth of her pussy, all wet and pink, and waiting for my cock. Damn, I think I'm just going to have to fuck her and take her ass later."

Blake groaned. He'd thought on many occasions about what it would be like to make love to Sydney. Not fuck her, though he knew she had a penchant for hard sex. He'd heard it through enough hotel rooms to know. He mumbled something incoherent, words impossible when she wrapped her lips around the tip of his shaft and started sucking it deep into her mouth.

Looking down at her, he wanted to pinch himself to see if he were dreaming. Because really, if he were, it was a damn good dream. His attention was torn between watching her, and watching Luke. The sight of the cowboy standing behind her, his cock free of his jeans, made Blake's mouth water. He wished, for a moment, that his and Sydney's positions might be reversed. To feel the cowboy thrusting into him, while he licked and sucked her, would be heaven.

Then Sydney took him all the way, and he could think of nothing except how warm and wet her mouth was and how damn hot she looked.

Luke shifted position. He rubbed the head of his cock along Sydney's opening. The moans she made vibrated along Blake's length. He clenched his teeth, not wanting to shout and startle the horses, but damn! This wasn't a dream. Any dreams he had certainly weren't this vivid. And, they were usually set in some kind of room with a nice, soft surface on which they could get horizontal.

Luke's naked rod penetrated Sydney. Blake opened his mouth, wanted to say something, though he vaguely remembered her saying she was on the Pill. Sometimes, he was thankful for her habit of telling him TMI like he was one of the girls. Surely Luke was clean. A guy like that probably got tested pretty regularly; Blake knew he did.

To her credit, Sydney didn't stop or release him. Instead, his cock muffled her cries. Damn, she'd said she liked giving head; he'd never known how much until now.

Blake focused on Luke's face. He had to. The cowboy had aroused things that he'd tried to tamp down, thinking maybe in a few months he'd stop batting for that team. At least for a while. Because after moving in with Sydney, he'd wanted more, a lot more with her. Now, Luke had

offered a temptation too great for him to resist. And he had to play this like a grand prix jump-off round. Move quick, but move sure and don't leave anything to chance.

From the sounds Sydney was making, Luke sure wasn't leaving anything to chance. Her whimpers and moans made it sound like she was about to go over the edge.

Luke's hand disappeared beneath her.

She shuddered, releasing his cock so she could give a wail of pleasure. Her panting breaths echoed around him, and at the moment, Blake didn't care that he hadn't come. Not when the sight of her orgasmic face was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. She closed her eyes, face scrunched. A few more keening moans and she came.

"Oh damn," Luke growled. "You're squeezing me like a vice, honey." He grabbed her hips with both hands and pistoned into her.

Moments later, she grabbed Blake's cock again and began sucking, more driven this time, relaxing her throat and taking him deep. Reaching down, he cupped the back of her head, kneading her scalp with his fingers. He wished he could tell her how good this felt, how right this seemed. Words escaped him. Instead, he could only enjoy the hot slide of her tongue and the suction her hollowed cheeks gave.

Luke gave a hoarse, wordless shout. He shuddered, his climax hitting him at the same time Sydney came again. This time, she cupped Blake's balls, her other hand on his hip as if to steady herself, her fingers clenching and releasing against his ass hard enough to leave half-moon indents of her fingers. When at last her whimpers ended, it was Blake's turn.

He shot like a rocket, trying to pull out so he didn't come down her throat. Sydney held him there. Instead, she wrapped her tongue around him, licking and sucking while he came. He forced himself to look at her, to see that she was enjoying it. And she was, for when she pulled back, swiping her tongue across his tip, a feline smile curved her lips.

He sagged against the stall door. Drawing air into his lungs, he struggled to find a coherent thought. He'd been blown before, but this surpassed the last time. Watching Sydney and Luke...he closed his eyes and groaned.

~\* \* \*~

Sydney looked up at Blake and smiled. Behind her, Luke shifted. She turned, aware of her nudity and the fact that she'd knelt on a cement barn floor. Gingerly, she grabbed her clothes, and then staggered over to a bench to dress. Once her ass was covered, and she'd pulled her jeans on, she sat down and shrugged into her bra and shirt.

Luke glanced at the big clock above the tack room. "Shit, it's late."

"You going somewhere?" she asked.

He'd tucked his cock back in his pants and put on his shirt, though he didn't button it. His hat once more sat on his head, and he'd looked like the cowboy she'd first seen, and wanted. "As a matter of fact, I am. There's a rodeo in Amarillo this weekend. I'm heading out, seeing if I can get back into the points race." He grinned. "There's a youngster topping the bronc riding at the moment. I think he needs to know that old guys can ride, too."

"Oh there's no doubt of that," she said, and liked the answering wink Luke gave her. "Do you need anything? How long will you be gone?" As soon as the questions tumbled from her lips, her heart began to hammer. She'd promised him a no-strings-attached affair, just something to get

the lust out of their systems. Now, she questioned him like a whining girlfriend or something. Inwardly, she winced.

Luke only gave that coy smile and shrugged. "Probably the weekend. Gonna miss me?"

She laughed. "I've got Blake and my horses." She glanced at her friend and saw him leaning against the stall, his pants done up and shirtless, arms crossed over his muscled chest. He looked half-dazed, as if he were still recovering.

"Good. No strings attached, remember?" He kissed her on the forehead, and then headed out to his truck. "Got to go back home and talk strategy. Probably see you on Monday." Before she could answer, he strutted out of the barn. Moments later, his truck started and she heard gravel fly as he drove away.

"Probably?" she asked.

Blake shook his head. "He rides rodeo. I don't think he follows a set schedule. Heck, I could be down in Dallas this weekend at an invitational. I'm staying here mostly because I want to give my horses the weekend rest, and I need the rest. So see, you have me and the horses." He relaxed.

Well, if Blake wasn't worried...Sydney stood. "I'm going to go take a shower and then go for a ride. You going to be around for supper?" It was an easy question, one that she asked most every day, because their training schedules often diverged. Today, it took on a new meaning, one more domestic in nature.

"I'm going to ride some dressage in the arena and maybe take one of the youngsters out for a few jumps." Blake eyed her curiously.

"Okay. See you at supper." She hurried from the barn, before she could give into her baser instincts like the one asking him if he'd ever left anyone after sex so quickly.

Once inside, she took a quick shower and changed into her riding clothes. She stared several times at the phone, wondering if she should call Katie. Except Sydney could probably guess what her friend would say.

She sat down on the edge of her bed with a sigh. Her body ached pleasantly, the lethargy of good sex making her unwilling to head out and do as she said, school one of her horses.

"I wanted to do this," she spoke aloud. Her words hovered in the empty room. "And Katie told me communication was the key." She rubbed her eyes. Maybe Luke hadn't communicated with her, or maybe she with him. Either way, somehow, she sensed that she'd gone about this all wrong and wasn't sure how to right it.

Maybe because she wasn't sure it *could* be fixed. Luke was, and probably always would be, a cowboy. Giving into the stereotypes that meant a rodeo in a different town every weekend, and possibly a different man, or women, too. Sydney nibbled her lip.

She closed her eyes and held her face in her hands. Raking her fingers through her hair, she gave a heavy sigh. How did she get herself into these situations. Sydney, the woman who had announced she was done with men. Completely, thoroughly done with them, now sat in her bedroom mooning over a particular bisexual cowboy who had walked into her world and knocked it off its axis. She stood and shook her head. No use pouting over him, not when he'd spun gravel in his haste to get out of here.

Apparently he'd gotten his ride and was on to the next one.

She flinched at the thought.

“Sydney, you okay?” Blake called.

She grinned. Blake, her good friend, her friend with benefits, always looking out for her. “Just fine. Trying to figure out which shirt I should wear and if I should coordinate it with my saddle pads.” Her stack of saddle pads was legendary among her friends. Katie teased her about being a horse clothes diva, and she wasn’t far from the mark. Deciding she’d better wear something that coordinated, she found an Australian polo print shirt to wear with a matching saddle pad for her horse. The combination happened to be one of her favorites. Pasting a smile on her face, she opened the door to find Blake standing in the hall.

“Ta da!” She gave a little runway twirl. “I’m all ready. It was nice of you to check in on me, but I’m okay. Really.” She sashayed past him and patted his butt for good measure. *Let him believe the old Sydney was back. It was better this way.* Never mind the fact that once again Katie’s words reminded her about communication, and how she wasn’t doing it.

~\* \* \*~

After an afternoon spent riding and a quick supper of left over roast and noodles, Sydney once again found herself in the bedroom. She sat on her bed, wearing an oversized t-shirt and a pair of bikini underwear. With her arms wrapped around her knees, she stared at the large Kentucky Rolex Three-Day Event poster on her wall. Communication. She sure messed that part up.

She tried not to think about what time it was, and whether Luke was on the road, or maybe in bed with someone else. Sure, they hadn’t mentioned others. Keep it a light no-strings affair. Hell, Katie could have told her she sucked at those. That’s what usually got her into men-problems to begin with. She had to stop thinking of things as unemotional, because once the sex started, she got very emotional.

Sydney sighed. She could sit here and mope about Luke, but that horse had already left the barn, so to speak. Stretching out her legs, she did a few quick toe-touches then stood. She started to pace the length of the braided rug on the floor by her bed when a soft knock on the door stopped her.

“You still awake, Sydney?” Blake’s voice filtered through the door.

“Yeah.” Her heart leapt at seeing him. His tender care, even when he’d been just a friend, had never ceased to touch her. Now that they’d become friends-with-benefits, she relished each and every moment. She opened the door, unconcerned about having Blake see her in her nightgown. Just a few hours ago he’d seen her in a lot less. “Everything okay?”

“It is. You said you were going to bed, so when I saw your light on...” He shifted his weight from side to side.

Sydney stepped back in silent invitation for him to enter. Seeing Blake standing there, the gentle concern on his face, touched her I-don’t-want-to-be-alone buttons. “Not really sleeping. Just thinking—”

“About Luke?”

“How’d you guess?” she tried to sound nonchalant, but it came out needier than she’d wanted. Damn it! The last thing she needed was to get used to Blake’s shoulder, especially since

she'd made it abundantly clear that their sex hadn't changed anything. Apparently she'd gone for massive man-fail this evening.

"I know you."

Three simple words that struck straight to her heart and filled her with a tiny bit of fear. "Come in," she said, when he'd brushed past her to sit on the edge of her bed. Seeing him there, wearing a clean pair of jeans and a worn t-shirt advertising some long ago charity ride, hit all her buttons. Blake...on her bed! She'd dreamed of that scenario so many times she needed to put her hormones in check.

"Seriously, Sydney. I just wanted to be sure you were okay with this afternoon."

The urge to tell him that his caring was what flagged him as gay, really really girlfriend-guy type gay, hovered on the tip of her lips. She didn't, though. Because straight guys could care too. She'd even run into a few.

"I'm fine. Don't be such a mother hen!"

Blake laughed. "Honey, if you're thinking I'm a mother hen, then you weren't paying close enough attention this afternoon."

Heat rushed to Sydney's cheeks. Though she'd been there and yeah, there definitely hadn't been anything feminine about Blake, his quip still made her blush. She sat down next to him and wrapped her arm around his shoulders. "Thanks." She rested her head on his shoulder and automatically, her other arm hugged him.

He returned her embrace, shifting so that her chest pressed against his. Just feeling her breasts crushed against his pectorals reminded her of their differences, of how solid and sturdy he was, and not just in his physique. No matter what happened Blake had always been there. A shoulder to cry on, someone to discuss jumping videos with, even sometimes to commiserate about bad boyfriends.

She reached up and caressed his stubbled cheek. Her thumb smoothed over his jaw, moving upward to find the soft hairs just behind his ear, then stroke down again. In spite of her afternoon's activities, something awakened deep inside. Not the hard, primal lust Luke incited in her. No, this was something different, something gentler. She turned her face and brushed a kiss across his lips.

Blake made a sound somewhere between a half-moan and a groan, something that told her that he wanted her, too. His fingers tightened against her back, drawing her even closer to him. Raising her knee, she pressed it against his thigh, moving to straddle him on the bed.

A moment's hesitation and she kissed him again. She let Blake be the aggressor, something different for her. Parting her lips beneath him, she reveled in her rising arousal. Sliding fully onto his lap, she rocked against his hips, grateful to feel his hard cock. Her fingers worked at his t-shirt, finally pulling it free of his jeans. She smoothed her hands down over his back, kissing him back as his tongue slid along hers.

Blake flipped her onto the bed. Above her, he yanked her sleep shirt up, and she helped him remove it. He tossed it alongside the bed, then reared back to stare at her bare chest.

"White bikini panties." Blake ran his finger along the slender ribbon holding the front and back together. "Quite demure for you, I think." He smiled wickedly and plucked at them.

She smiled coyly. “Didn’t know I’d be having visitors in my bed. Let’s see what you have.” She sat up enough to grab onto the waistband of his jeans. Flipping open the button, she gasped at the sight of his curls. Gingerly, not wanting to damage the equipment, she lowered his zipper.

She struggled against the self-satisfied smile wanting to tilt her lips as the last teeth parted and Blake’s cock took full advantage of the room by standing up to say hello. A drop of fluid emerged from the tip, and it was all Sydney could do not to lean over and taste it. Instead, she stroked the underside of his shaft, from base to tip, savoring the hard length of him against her fingers.

Blake groaned.

Her hand moved in rhythmic strokes, her other braced on his thigh to keep her upright. Sitting here, watching him, made her pussy wet, because all she could think about was leaning back on her ultra-soft mattress, lifting her hips and letting him slide home.

Blake grabbed her wrist. “Keep doing that and I won’t last long.” With gentle hands he pushed her back, shifting positions long enough to shed his jeans and the rest of his clothing. She took the opportunity to do the same, and soon, she lay naked.

Blake’s heated gaze caressed her body. His lips parted, and he let out a low whistle. “Do you know how long I’ve waited to see you like this?” He didn’t wait for an answer, probably didn’t expect one, because no, she didn’t know. But then he stretched out beside her and slid a finger across her nipple.

Sydney shivered. Her legs scissored, a restlessness roiling through her body that had her turning and reaching for him. Tracing his arms, his chest, she slid her fingers over his skin, all the while craving deeper contact. Maybe it was wrong to use him like this, to have his lovemaking—one look in Blake’s eyes told her it wasn’t anything but—distract her from Luke’s absence. Communication, discussion, too late for that now, and tilting her head, she hoped he understood when she pressed her lips to his.

Whether he did or not, Blake cupped her cheek, holding her still for his kiss. His tongue stroked the seam of her lips, inviting her to open. She did, and sighed into his mouth as he gave her the most delicate, the softest, and the most arousing kiss she’d ever experienced. The way he stroked and licked had her thinking he’d show the same care with her body, and the moan he made when she hooked her calf over his hip vibrated through her entire body.

They rolled together, his erection pressing against her stomach. He deepened the kiss.

Sydney let him possess her mouth, offering herself to him. Her core ached, her pussy wet, the walls clasp at something to fill it. Losing herself in Blake seemed like such a great idea at the time. Now, the emotional need gave way to the carnal one, and she followed the smooth muscles of his back down to his waist, then lower to grab his ass and pull him closer to her.

They parted for air and a needy mewl escaped her lips. *Yes!*

Blake rolled her onto her back and slid one thigh between hers. He pressed up against her labia, one of his big hands palming her breast. Finding her nipple, he rolled it between his fingers, inviting her to ride his leg with rhythmic grinding of his hips and thigh against her body.

She accepted it, knowing the subtle signals his thighs could send to a horse and how he could glide them as a team over a jump. No doubt he could guide her over more important peaks and down the other side.

Suddenly kissing him, touching him, wasn't enough. Spreading her legs, she grabbed his ass and pulled him over, so that he settled between them. "Please," she whispered, not quite ready to beg, but hurting-oh-so-good for his cock inside her. Each brush of her nipples against his whorls of chest hair heightened her arousal. Just the subtle differences, the reminders with each sound he made that this was Blake, her good friend, her lover.

She stiffened at the word entering her mind. Lover. No, not yet. Not tonight. Right now they were fuck buddies, friends with benefits, even though the words seemed harsh.

"Please what?" he whispered, dipping his head to nuzzle the side of her neck. He nipped her, then swirled his tongue over the red mark he must have left. "You want to feel my cock pumping deep inside you?" He shifted and his shaft slid along her labia.

"Yes." Tilting her hips, Sydney begged him deeper. She longed to reach between their bodies, circling him with her fingers to guide him to her entrance. She didn't. Let this be Blake's show. Let him find the way to clear her mind of Luke.

Blake slid down her body, his mouth nibbling the slope of her breast. "Not yet," he murmured against her skin, and then swiped his tongue over her nipple. "Mmm, you taste so good." He drew the bud into his mouth.

Slowly, Sydney reached up and cupped the back of his head. No one before had made love to her with such longing, such tenderness. With her other hand, she clutched at the blankets. Really, she wasn't quite sure how to react. Her body wanted him, demanded him, and surely he knew that because she kept rocking her hips and letting his cock move against her.

Her heart...oh her heart wasn't used to such care and tenderness. Her breath caught, then released as tiny ripples of pleasure darted through her.

Still, Blake worshipped at her breasts. His hand covered the one he wasn't kissing and sucking, rolling the nipple into his palm, then stroking it with soft, fluttering caresses. Her body might be demanding for release. His, in spite of his physical reaction, must not have been, because he moved over her as if he had all the care in the world. And when he released her nipple to turn his attention to the other one, she caught such depth of emotion in his eyes that she feared she might have lost it with both men.

She'd never intended for this to happen, none of it. Luke. Blake. Neither one of the men were supposed to have found their way into her bed. Technically, Luke hadn't gotten here yet, and right now, she wasn't sure she was sad or happy about it. Of course, with Blake licking and sucking her breast and nipple, she couldn't feel much except for the pleasure spiraling deep into her body.

Blake turned his attention south, over her stomach she worked so hard to keep flat, then down above her neatly trimmed curls. His big hands slipped behind her thighs, lifting them, opening them. She looked down her body, the top of his blond head visible as he lowered his mouth to her.

She cried out at the first puff of warm breath against her wet folds. He nuzzled her, didn't even really kiss. Just slid his lips over her labia, using his mouth to learn the feel of her.

His tongue slid out and tasted her.

"Blake," she moaned.

He shifted between her legs, lifting them over his broad shoulders. Pressed up against her as intimately as he could be, he used his tongue to lick the length of her slit, and then slide ever so softly between her folds to find the bud of her clit. Unerringly, he swirled his tongue around it, murmuring something about how she tasted like honey.

Her climax hit. She clutched at the blanket because she couldn't reach him and let her back bow from the pressure of her release. Her surprised cries echoed around her.

Blake gave a chuckle. He eased back, giving her time to settle again, before he used her juices to coat his fingers. He caressed her once, then again. Each time he moved closer to her clitoris or dipped his fingers that much farther inside her.

She panted. White-knuckled, she curled her fingers into the comforter and struggled to hold back another release. Damn, she'd never come so many times in one day before, and Blake was threatening to send her over the edge once more.

"Mmm, you're so beautiful like this." He fingered her, brushing against her g-spot with every stroke. "Do you know how much I want to be inside you. You're so hot. So wet." He added a second finger, and the exquisite pressure made her long for his cock.

"Then do it," she growled, lifting her hips to meet his thrusts.

His thumb brushed her clit.

A bolt of white-hot pleasure shot through her body. The base of her spine tingled, her pussy walls tightening around him in an effort to draw him even tighter into her body. Head tilted back, mouth open, she rode his fingers like she would her favorite vibrator.

Blake pulled his fingers out. "If you want it." He slid her thighs off his shoulders, and then knelt between her legs. Gently cupping the backs of her thighs, he lifted them just enough to position the head of his cock at her entrance.

"Oh, I want it." The saucy Sydney was back, and she bent her legs to press her heels into his buttocks. One thrust of her hips slid the tip of his cock into her, and she groaned at the sensation. She breathed deeply, not daring to move. So right, so perfect, and dare she say it, so much better than the heated sex she'd had in the barn.

"Sydney," Blake groaned. He filled her with a single slide of his cock into her and fully buried, he paused with a ragged groan. "You're so hot and tight."

Eyes squeezed closed, she couldn't say anything. Instead, she let her hands do the talking for her, roaming over his back, sliding down to grab his ass, then cling to his shoulders. She moved against him, taking his shaft even deeper so that finally, he had to pull out to begin the glorious thrust anew. Slowly, he made love to her. No rash, heated sex, no racing for completion with him. Instead, it was like each plunge of his cock savored her, testing her snugness around him and finding her the secret place that made her toes curl.

She rode a lazy wave of arousal to its pinnacle. And then, fingers clenching on his shoulders, she gave herself over to the emotions. Sydney pressed her face to his shoulder, clinging to him. A quick flick of her tongue and she tasted the sweat on his chest. She smelled the scent of sex in the air, and damn if she didn't thrill to the fact that it was Blake.

"Oh G9d, I can't wait," Blake groaned.

"Then don't," she whispered. One more thrust, the brush of her clit against his pelvic bone, and she cried out as her orgasm swept through her. Her body tightened, her inner muscles

rippling along the length of his shaft in a carnal dare for him to follow her into bliss. Her head fell back against the pillow, mouth open wide as cries of surprise and pleasure tumbled from her lips. "Blake." Somewhere in the back of her mind she realized she repeatedly cried his name.

Blake slid home one, final time. He stiffened above her, his muscles trembling. Hot waves of seed erupted from his cock to splash against her inner walls, causing more mini-quakes of pleasure.

She forced her eyes open to watch him, a study in masculine pleasure and beauty. Rising up, she kissed his chest, his neck, and finally his mouth, drawing his full weight down upon her so that they touched from head to toe. She stroked his lips with her tongue, forcing him to open his mouth, and when he did, she kissed him, long and deep, because she found no other way to share how profound this moment was to her.

At last the kiss ended, and Blake rolled to the side. He slid his arm around her, drawing her close to his side. Sydney snuggled against him. She dismissed the thought that she was being awfully cozy for a girl just out to have some fun. Better savor the moment, because she didn't know how long it would last. *You've ridden too deep to this fence, Sydney-girl. Now you're going to have to find a way over.* She hoped the answers came to her in time.

## Chapter Six

Waking up next to Blake was entirely too domestic for Sydney's state of mind. She dressed in an old shirt and jeans, hurrying downstairs to eat a banana and drink a cup of juice before rushing to the barn. She started the coffeemaker in the tack room, the one she usually reserved for when she had to watch over a sick horse or foaling mares. The sound of the machine gurgling to life, and the smell of freshly brewed coffee couldn't erase the sight of Blake, sprawled on his stomach and sleeping in her bed. His bare back tempted her. The sheet rode low on his hips, and she wondered what would happen if she nuzzled her way down to the base of his spine, then reached around to see if he had morning wood. She smiled, and then picked up a manure fork. Perhaps more earthy chores would help keep her focused and her thoughts out of the bedroom.

She fed the horses, listening to them eat their breakfast while she sat on the couch in the tack room and thought about the morning. Luke would be at the rodeo. Had he ridden with Katie's guys, and did the three of them split a motel room. Or did James and Daniel stay in one room, so Luke could have another. The thought of him lying in the bed, alone, made her throat tighten. She should have been there with him. She could have arranged to bring Blake along too.

"I never should have made that stupid comment." She drained the last of her mug, grimacing at the grocery store brand coffee. "And I need to keep a canister of the good stuff out here, too." Horses milled in their stalls, ready to go outside for the day.

By the time she had the horses turned out and three stalls done, her thoughts could do nothing but circle around Luke. Pulling her cell phone out of her pocket, Sydney dialed Katie's number.

Her friend picked up on the third ring. "Sydney, you're calling early."

"Just finishing chores," Sydney replied, hoping her astute friend didn't ask why she was working so early on a Saturday morning. "I hoped to get some good riding time in." The instant the lie passed her lips, she pressed them closed. Now that Katie thought she wanted to ride...

"Oh, because I was going to leave for the rodeo in an hour or so. I volunteered to stay home and take care of the stock, though the guys pretty much turned the horses into the pasture and didn't leave me much work. I thought I'd surprise them and you might want to go along." Water ran, the sound of a hose filling a bucket.

"I don't know." Sydney leaned against the wall and frowned, wanting to make this sound convincing.

"Come on. It'll be fun. Bet you've never seen Luke in action, have you?"

Katie sure knew how to get her, and Sydney smiled. "No, I haven't. Want me to meet you there?"

"Sure. I was hoping you'd come. I'll email you the directions and the map. We'll drive separately since I was thinking of staying the night. I'd hate to leave you stranded."

"That's nice of you, but I doubt I'd be stranded. Luke is there after all," Sydney chuckled. "I might bring Blake. A little cowboy education might be fun for him."

"Sure, the more the merrier. I want to finish a few things before heading out. You'll have an email from me within half an hour or so." They exchanged a few more pleasantries and then ended the call.

Sydney finished the next three stalls in record time. When she headed back to the house, for a good cup of coffee, if for no other reason, she saw Blake standing bare-chested and barefoot in her kitchen. She gave a low whistle. "I could get used to this." Somehow, seeing him like this seemed far less cozy than waking up with him had. Maybe it was because she'd come into the house to this before, or maybe it was that she could take a step back and remember her promise to the guys--keep things light.

Blake rinsed out his cup and turned. "I was just going to head out to the barn. Looks like you beat me there."

"Yeah, my stalls are cleaned for the morning. Katie was going to email me directions to the rodeo to watch Luke compete. Want to come?" Sydney bent over and unlaced her boots. When she straightened, she saw a heated look pass through Blake's eyes.

"To the rodeo. To see Luke?"

She nodded. "Yeah. Might be fun." She yanked the elastic out of her hair and ran her fingers through it. "I'm going to shower and change then check my email. If you want to come with me, be here in forty minutes. Okay?" She didn't focus on his lack of a response, using her haste to get upstairs and change as an excuse to leave. *God, did I screw things up with both guys?* Her body tingled with memories of last night and she feared she had acted rashly.

Forty minutes later, her fears evaporated in the face of Blake standing in the kitchen, a pair of boots on his feet, a belt buckle shining above his zipper, and a denim shirt covering his broad chest. He looked—well—like a cowboy, and a smile spread across her face. "I didn't know you had clothes like that," she said.

Blake laughed. "The boots and belt buckle were a gag gift from a friend. Everything else, I had. You look nice."

She twirled in her chubby boots, tight jeans, and western-style shirt with the first couple of buttons undone. "When in Rome, do as the Romans," She laughed. "Or should I say, when in Texas."

~\* \* \*~

Sydney called Katie on her cell phone as soon as she pulled into the parking lot, and her friend met them just beyond the ticket booth. Katie looked red-cheeked and just a bit mussed, making Sydney wonder if her friend had gone behind the chutes before they'd arrived. Blake's head swiveled like a telescope, taking in the sights.

It was obvious this was a gay rodeo. Male couples, as well as female partners, walked together. Some of the guys were hand-in-hand. The sponsor logos were mostly businesses, with the logo for the International Gay Rodeo Association along with the Texas Gay Rodeo Association and the Oklahoma Gay Rodeo Association.

Katie led them to the grandstands. It was a large event, and in spite of the crush of people, they seemed to have pretty good seats close to the arena. Sydney noticed the area had been roped off for the partners and family members of the athletes.

"You made good timing. I think the roping will be next." Katie flipped open a program and skimmed the page.

Blake sat on the edge of the bleacher. His attention focused on the arena, or more specifically on the cowboy sitting astride a bucking horse. Without a saddle and stirrups to help him balance,

it was a battle between the cowboy's innate sense of the horse's movement, and the determination the bronc had to buck him off. The buzzer sounded and people clapped. Moments later a score in the high eighties was called.

"You gave good directions." Sydney said, only half-paying attention to what was going on. Blake's reaction interested her more. For a guy who once made very disparaging remarks about cowboys and rodeos, he certainly was paying a lot of attention to the guys in the arena. Another cowboy rode a bronc, and Blake's attention followed every move.

The last rider cleared the arena, along with the two guys riding horses who helped the cowboys off the bucking broncs.

"Here comes the roping," Katie leaned forward.

"So we missed Luke's events?" Sydney hoped she didn't sound too disappointed.

"Yeah, that was the last of the bronc riding. He might be back later in something. Sorry." Katie flipped through the program. "Daniel told me that they'd be going fifth in this round."

She focused on the arena, wondering why she'd come if she had missed seeing Luke riding. He should have said something, should have told her what his schedule was like. Not that she wanted to stifle him or be a mother-hen.

The first team came out, and Sydney had to admit the easy way the guys worked together, roping the calf in less than fifteen seconds. The team left the arena amid cheers and applause. The next team got ready in the starting box.

She half-listened to Katie explaining the nuances of the event. Her knowledge of roping, especially for a girl who drove carriage horses, astounded Sydney. Apparently Katie had been broadening her scope in the last few months.

Finally, Daniel and James' names were called. Sydney watched the two men in the starting boxes, James' attention fixed firmly on Daniel. When he was ready, Daniel nodded his head. The calf broke from the box, traveling a bit to the right, but James moved in, expertly maneuvering the calf in for a good roping attempt. Daniel's rope sailed around the horns and he turned, bringing the calf with him. A flick of James' wrist sent his rope sliding beneath the hooves, and he pulled it tight. The clock read under seven seconds.

Katie jumped to her feet, yelling and stamping along with the crowd. She blew a kiss toward the arena, and the cheers grew louder as Daniel and James rode close together for a kiss as they exited.

Blake laughed. "They put on a show, don't they?"

"Yeah, but the crowd loves them," Katie replied. "We'll let the round finish and let them announce the winners, and then we can go back to the barns."

Sydney nodded, her stomach churning. The show of affection tugged something deep inside her. Maybe it was wrong to think such things; after all, Daniel and James had been in a relationship a lot longer than she and Luke. Besides, Sydney doubted what she had with Luke could be called a relationship.

Communication, Katie had said, and Sydney knew she'd gone and screwed it up. Big time! The roping finished with Daniel and James ending up in first place, a common occurrence for them. The victory lap was galloped, and then the arena was cleared for the steer wrestling.

Katie stood. "Let's go down to the barns. I bet Luke will be back there." From the flush on Katie's cheeks, she certainly wasn't thinking about meeting Luke.

Sydney was, and the gravity of the moment sat like a lead balloon in her stomach. She stood and followed Katie from the bleachers. Blake walked closely behind her. She breathed deeply and tried to tell herself that this was okay, that Luke wouldn't mind her coming. It'd be a surprise, the good kind. Once he got back to the farm, she could level with him. Because things sure got a lot deeper than the fling she'd told him she wanted.

Gravel crunched beneath her boots. A few beads of sweat dripped from the nape of her neck. The smells of horses and hay mingled with frying food and truck exhaust. Clamping her jaw, she hoped her nerves wouldn't make her sick. *Think of it just like one of your events, except all the saddles are western.* She chuckled to herself for the direction of her thoughts.

Blake rested his hand on the small of her back, a soothing, possessive gesture that quelled her nerves. "He might not even be there," Blake whispered in her ear. "He doesn't know we're coming."

"He usually hangs out back at the barn," Katie said, then stopped. She turned and shook her head.

Sydney stiffened. She prayed for her astute friend not to notice the worry in her eyes at the suggestion of barging in on Luke. What if he was with another cowboy? Oh God, what if he was? She checked her forced smile and breathed a sigh of relief when Katie turned away and headed for the barns once more.

Unerringly, Katie found Daniel's truck. "Luke will probably be nearby." She hurried down the aisle, only to immediately see James and with a squeal of happiness throw herself into his arms.

"Hey, darlin'," James drawled, pulling Katie tight against his body. He glanced over her shoulder. "Luke was resting in the tack stall last I knew." He jerked a thumb down the aisle.

"Thanks," Sydney said. She followed, thankful to leave the joyful reunion behind. Moments later another male voice, probably Daniel, joined them.

Without Blake's hand on her back, Sydney wasn't sure what she would have done. With him, she strode down the aisle, somewhat comfortable in the familiar surroundings of horses and hay. Every so often a stall was draped with sheets for a dressing room or sleeping area, and she found the one marked with a small, wooden sign bearing the name of James' business. Just inside the door, she saw a pair of booted feet.

Sydney stopped. She licked her suddenly dry lips, her heart pounding a mile a minute. She could do this. Really do this. Just say hi, mention that Katie had invited her along. Nothing sinister, nothing like the stalker-like vibes coursing their way through her veins. She moved forward.

Seeing Luke spread out on three hay bales covered with a thick cotton blanket sent a stab of lust through her. His hat was tipped down over his eyes, shielding them from the barn's fluorescent lighting. A deep maroon western shirt piped in silver covered his broad chest and was tucked into tight wranglers that left nothing to the imagination. From the size of the bulge behind his fly, his dreams were pleasant ones.

"Hey, Luke," Sydney said.

She waited a heartbeat, two. Blake stood beside her and called out a greeting as well. More breaths passed, too much time for him to really be happy to see them. She bit her lip. Blake's hand tightened on her lower back, a comforting gesture.

Finally, Luke reached up and tipped back his head, blinking sleepy eyes to sit up and straddle the two hay bales. "Hey. Didn't realize you were coming." He yawned, ran his fingers through his hair, and then put his hat back on. "I was just catching some sleep before the second round of events later in the day. This is a double header."

*Way to make me feel like an intruder.* She started to step back, but Blake's hand stopped her. "Sorry if I caught you at a bad time." She bit back the rude remarks she wanted to say, words about being thankful and how nice of her to drive all this way to see him. *My bad. I told him I wanted a fling and now my heart tells me I need more. It's not his fault. He didn't know I was coming, and I probably woke him.* The excuses ran thin.

"It kind of is, sorry. I didn't sleep well last night."

From a couple of stalls down, Katie's and James' low chuckles ended on a sigh as they were obviously giving each other a very, enthusiastic greeting. Luke glanced over his shoulder and arched an eyebrow.

"I see." And Sydney did. For the first time, she really saw the situation. He didn't sleep well. He wasn't happy to see her. Obviously what they said about a cowboy having a girl in every rodeo town was true. "Sorry I bothered you." She spun on her heel and pulled away.

Blake lingered, though she sensed his hesitation. Right now she just needed to get out of here. She heard Luke's voice saying something, Blake's voice replying, though she'd closed her mind to the words. Hurrying from the barn, past the stall, where Katie and James were kissing and groping each other, Daniel checking the legs of one of the horses, past the entrance, and even past a couple of guys who gave her a once over, she rushed to the parking lot.

*Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. How could I have done such a thing?* She pulled her hat off and wiped her forehead.

"Sydney, stop!" Blake's voice rang through the parking lot.

Out of habit, she did, grumbling that it was Blake who had come after her and not Luke. She turned to see him striding over the gravel parking lot, concern in his gaze. "Luke says he's sorry. He slept in the stall last night to keep an eye on things, so he couldn't get too cozy."

"And you believe him?" Sydney spat out the words without thinking. "Damn it, you believed him!" She drew a deep breath, the pressure of unshed tears stinging her eyes. Oh hell no, she wouldn't cry over this son of a bitch, not when she'd been the one to get in too deep. "Let's just go home." She turned, palmed the car keys from her pocket and hurried to the truck.

"I don't think he expected us. I don't think it's what you're thinking." Blake's calm voice tried to soothe her nerves.

She wouldn't let it. Punching the button for the remote entry, she unlocked the doors, then hauled one open. "And what do you think I'm thinking, Blake? What do you think he did all night?"

"I don't know," Blake admitted after sliding into the passenger seat. "I don't think he was fucking anyone, if that's what you believe." She flinched at the crude words. "I think the only people who got fucked were us."

## Chapter Seven

Her glassy eyes and hiccupped breathing hurt Blake; Sydney couldn't stop no matter how much she wanted to. Driving home, she tried to stifle her sobs. Blake shouldn't have to hear it. He'd been more excited to go to the rodeo than she. Sydney knew she shouldn't give into the crushing disappointment.

Katie had told her, warned her even about communication and how important it was to the relationship. Not only had she not mentioned how her feelings had changed, but she also didn't ask if she should come to the rodeo. She sighed. It wasn't all her fault. It wasn't like Luke had talked to her either.

She'd merged onto the interstate, not caring that she hadn't told Katie she was leaving. Blake sat beside her, his silence surprisingly supportive. She bit her lip, the sting of tears making her angry. How dare she cry over Luke? How dare he make her cry!

"I didn't want to see anymore, anyway," Blake said.

She stiffened at his levity. "You sure?"

"I'm sure." He slid closer to her on the truck's bench seat. Reaching across the space separating them, he patted her leg. "You're not okay, are you?"

Thankful for the cruise control and the interstate, she shook her head. "No, I'm not." Her voice, thick with tears, surprised her. She swallowed hard and breathed deeply. "But I will be." She glanced across the space separating them.

Blake looked dubious, though didn't say anything. Like at the shows where she worried as the last riders completed their rounds, he remained silent, but there for her. She bit her lip, swallowing again to keep the tears at bay. She had to drive; she couldn't wallow until she was safely behind her closed bedroom door.

~\* \* \*~

Blake's gut twisted with each hiccupping sob that Sydney made. He longed to go back to the barn and wring Luke's muscular neck. Maybe kick that tight ass of his down to the state line and back again.

Okay, so maybe the cowboy had just awakened and hadn't had a chance to process things yet. And maybe he was surprised to see Sydney and Blake and just not showing it. Or maybe, he was an insufferable prick who thought their presence had ruined his weekend of partying. No, Blake couldn't believe that about Luke. Something *had* to have happened.

It didn't matter. Not now, really. Luke's actions had hurt Sydney, and as she pulled into her driveway, he saw the tears running down her face. She turned off the truck, and then opened the door, bounding out to rush into the house.

Blake was faster. He circled the front of the truck, drawing Sydney into an embrace. Tucking her head against his shoulder, he stroked her back. "It's okay to cry," he said, wanting her to release that emotion. "I'll make sure the bastard never hurts you again."

She sniffled and pulled back, giving him a half-smile. "I thought we'd had this conversation before. Love sucks." She gave a hiccupping laugh then pressed her face to his shoulder as the tears consumed her once more.

Shit. Love. He should have known his spitfire Sydney would go and fall in love with the cowboy. Something visceral tightened in his gut, a protectiveness that surged through him and made him want to pummel Luke to a pulp. Damn her for falling in love with the cowboy, and damn Luke for making her fall in love.

Damn him for falling in love with Sydney. Taking a deep breath, he walked her backwards to the porch, his booted heels thumping on the wooden floor. He stopped by the front door and fished in his pocket for the key. Somehow, he managed to get the screen door open and then unlock the front door, taking them inside. His attention focused on Sydney, getting her safe and sound. He took her to the couch, where she sat down, curling in on herself.

Tears smeared her mascara. Her grief made her cheeks blotchy and red, her eyes rimmed with pain. Her lipstick had smeared, and even with her usual composure shattered, Blake still thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world. And he wanted to kill the bastard that had turned her this way.

"Hey, honey. I'm here." He sat down beside her, using an arm on her shoulders to pull her against his chest. He let her sob, each cry wrenching something deep inside him. "I won't hurt you." *Because I love you. I think I had for a long time and just didn't want to say anything.* He still didn't, knowing as skittish as she was with men. Love 'em and leave 'em, she'd told him was her philosophy, get out before they had a chance to hurt her.

But what if she hurt them? He breathed deeply, shoving his emotions deep down inside. Seeing her broken up like this? It was probably a good thing that Luke was still at the rodeo. He listened as her sobs subsided and she snuggled against his shoulder.

As soon as she quieted, he stood, scooping her into his arms. He carried her upstairs to her bedroom, liking the way she nestled against him. In other circumstances, he could really enjoy this. He gently set her on her bed, pulling a quilt that lay shoved aside over her. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he smoothed her hair and watched her sleep.

Sometime during his vigil, night came. His stomach rumbled, reminding him that he hadn't eaten. Neither had Sydney and she was still dressed. He went down stairs and fixed a quick cold meat sandwich and brought it upstairs on a paper plate. As gently as he could, he started to unbutton her shirt. She sleepily awakened enough for him to remove her shirt and bra and loosen her jeans. Before he could slide them off her legs, she fell back asleep. He ate the small meal on his way downstairs and went out to her truck.

He grabbed her purse, the flash of headlights startling him. A truck--Luke's truck--pulled into the gravel drive.

Anger welled up in Blake. He didn't even wait for Luke to park. That bastard thought he could come back here as if nothing had happened! By the time Luke opened his truck door, Blake was there.

~\* \* \*~

Luke glanced at the mostly dark house as he pulled into the driveway. The front porch and kitchen lights had been left on, but upstairs, where her bedroom was, lay in darkness. Disappointment settled in his stomach. Then again, maybe she slept. He grinned. Though he'd seen her around the house in an oversized shirt and socks, he wondered if maybe she slept in the nude. Crawling into bed and wrapping himself around her warm, slumbering body sent a shock of need through him. The kind of need he hadn't been awake enough at the rodeo to realize.

Damn, he'd screwed up. And by the time he'd realized it, both she and Blake had been long gone. He'd hoped, driven hard and fast, that he could come home—because yeah, this was home to him—and fix his error. He pulled into his usual parking spot by the yard, a shadow crossing the driveway toward him.

Blake.

He sucked in a breath, his cock tightening at the thought of the other man. He opened the truck door and stepped out.

"Hey," Luke said. "Sydney sleeping?"

"You don't deserve her," Blake snarled.

Dimly, Luke registered Blake's hand pulling back, and then the god awful crunch of a fist hitting his jaw.

~\* \* \*~

Blake swung his arm, a mean uppercut that caught Luke square in the jaw. The cowboy stumbled, falling back onto the truck seat. His elbow hit the steering wheel, evoking a muttered curse and setting off the horn.

"You bastard," Blake growled. He punched again, this time connecting with the top of Luke's nose, bloodying it.

"Hey!" Luke grabbed a bandana and pressed it to his nose. "What the fuck was that for?"

"For hurting Sydney." Blake pulled his arm back again.

Luke caught it, his other hand still pressing the handkerchief against his nose. "What do you mean hurting her?"

"You know what I mean. She went to see you and you couldn't give a shit whether we were there or not!" Blake shook his head, his stomach churning. Somehow, he'd known when they'd all given into this crazy lust between them that something like this would happen. He'd known men like Luke before, men who took their pleasure and cared little about the people she hurt.

"She's okay?" Luke actually sounded worried.

"Hell no. You broke her heart, you belt buckle-wearing bastard!"

Luke dropped Blake's arm. "Broke her heart?" He looked stunned for a moment, though maybe that was the two punches to his face. He had the start of a shiner, and he dabbed at his nose. "How could I have—? Oh hell." Luke sat down on the seat of his truck, hard. "Shit. Shit. Shit."

"Shit is right. That's exactly how you treated her." Blake crossed his arms over his chest, the expression of Luke's face mirroring the disorientation of a man who had been tossed from a horse, then kicked in the gut.

"I didn't mean to," Luke mumbled.

"You didn't mean to?" Blake expelled a breath in a whoosh of air. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Exactly what I said. I didn't mean to hurt her. Do you know how much sleep I got last night? Not a lot, because I slept in the barn, keeping an eye on our stuff. Every little noise woke me up so

I could make sure the horses were fine and no one had stolen our tack. I was catching a nap when you came, so I'm sorry if I wasn't the cordial host or whatever you guys have at your events." Luke raked his fingers through his hair, then searched on the seat behind him for the hat Blake had knocked off his head. "I really hurt her, didn't I?"

"Yeah." Blake stepped forward, drawn by more than the tiredness in Luke's eyes. He rested his hand on Luke's thigh, the heat of the man's skin burning through the denim. "You know you'll have to apologize to her."

Luke nodded. "Yeah, I screwed things up and didn't mean to. Story of my life." He snorted. "I suppose I should tell you that I'm only going along with this no-strings-attached thing that Sydney offered, because it's what she wanted. Or at least what I thought she wanted. If what you're telling me is true—"

"She loves you, man." Blake cupped Luke's cheeks in his palms and drew his head down for a kiss, because God help him, he loved the cowboy too. Not worrying about Luke's injuries, he crushed their lips together, using his tongue to pry the cowboy's mouth open. Blake kissed Luke hard, tasting a hint of mint as he possessed Luke's mouth.

Luke groaned. From pain or arousal, Blake didn't know, and frankly, from the pounding in his cock, already half-hard from undressing Sydney, Blake didn't care. He managed to reach between them and unfasten Luke's belt buckle, then unbutton his jeans. Tugging his shirt free, Blake reached into Luke's pants and curled his fingers around the cowboy's cock. It pulsed against his palm, a drop of fluid emerging from the tip.

Blake pulled away from the kiss and Luke. "Stand up," he growled. Blake unbuttoned his pants, loosening the fly to free his cock. Luke stared, then stood and turned around, shoving his jeans down to present his naked ass.

Luke bent over the truck seat, probably to give Blake better access, but then he flipped open the arm rest and pulled out a bottle of lube. He turned and handed it back to Blake.

A bottle of lube in his truck, sure sounded like everything they said about cowboys was true. Blake took the bottle and poured a dollop into his palm. Slicking his cock, he waited for Luke to position himself. A few circuits of Luke's puckered asshole, just enough to get him wet, then Blake fitted himself against the opening.

Luke thrust back, and Blake impaled himself in the cowboy's tight channel. A low moan tumbled from his throat; Blake didn't bother holding it back. Grabbing Luke's hip, Blake pumped into Luke's body. Each thrust tightened Blake's balls. He couldn't say the words, wasn't quite sure how he felt about the cowboy, except that something deep and raw came into the equation. Here, with his balls slapping against Luke's ass, Blake could relate those feelings. He reached around and grabbed Luke's dick.

"You bastard," Blake growled against Luke's neck. His balls so tight they were killing him, Blake rode the edge of his arousal. Each thrust drove him deep into Luke's body, the cowboy's tunnel squeezing him tightly. Blake continued to stroke Luke's cock, using precum to lubricate the slide of his hand along the shaft. Finding the sensitive place just beneath the head had Luke bucking his hips into Blake's hand.

"Damn!" Luke growled. A harsh moan erupted from his chest. With each stroke, Blake sensed the cowboy's balls tightening, knew the overwhelming wash of need that had him pumping so

hard towards orgasm. With a shout, Luke came. His cum splashed all over Blake's hand, the visible evidence of his release enough to make Blake shoot off inside him.

Panting the two men leaned together. Somehow, Blake managed to step back and fasten up his pants again, leaving Luke to clean up and wriggle back into his jeans. The two of them made it into the barn and the tack room bathroom, where they cleaned up.

"I didn't mean to hurt her. In fact, I'd been thinking about going upstairs, finding her in bed, and giving her the welcome I should have done back at the rodeo. To both of you," Luke said. He ducked his head beneath the faucet, letting the water sluice over his hair. Shaking his head, Luke raked his fingers through it then grabbed one of the hand towels to dry off—the modern day equivalent of dunking his head in the horse trough. "I'm gonna apologize." He opened his mouth, and then shut it again with a quick shake of his head.

"You better," Blake said, his voice ragged. "I think she lied to us when she said she just wanted a fling. God knows I lied when I agreed to her foolish plans."

"You don't want...?" Luke's voice tapered off and he gestured to the barn beyond the door.

"I do want. I think Sydney does too." Blake wiped off his hands on a towel, and then turned for the door. "I'm going back to the house. If you know what's good for you, you'll follow." Swiveling on his heel, he headed for the house and hoped like hell the cowboy followed.

~ \* \* \* ~

The heavy weight of someone sitting on the edge of her bed woke Sydney. She kept her eyes closed, trying to figure out if it was Blake, or if Luke had come back. Her breath hitched a little at the thought that she might open her eyes to see the cowboy sitting here. His dismissal of her hurt a lot. She didn't think she could just let that go. But if it was him, and he wanted to talk, well, she'd listen. She could promise that much at least.

Sydney cracked open an eyelid. Yeah, sure enough Luke sat on the edge of the bed, his cowboy hat in his hands. His hair looked wet, freshly washed, and the tight muscle in his jaw spoke more than his worried expression. He wasn't exactly sure of his reception.

"Sydney? You awake?" He softly whispered.

"Yeah." She inched into a seated position, thankful she'd changed into her sleep shirt after Blake had left. She'd heard another car in the drive and had feared it was Luke's truck. Now she knew. She reached across to the lamp on her bedside table. Flicking it on, she noticed the shiner on Luke's face. Someone had punched him good. She smiled a little.

Movement in the doorway caught her attention. She saw Blake leaning against the doorframe, arms crossed over his chest. He, too, looked like he'd showered, and she glanced between the two men, thinking that they'd indulged in sex before coming up to her room. She supposed it ought to make her jealous. It didn't. At least they could have a happy ending, even if she didn't.

"Want me to throw his ass out?" Blake asked. His attention flicked to Luke, then to her.

She shook her head. "No, he can stay. I don't know how long he'll be here."

## Chapter Eight

"As long as you want me here." Luke held out his hands, palms up and sighed. "I screwed up, Sydney. It didn't matter that I'd had no sleep and you'd awakened me. I should have treated you better. Because when you walked away, I realized something. The next time I watch you walk away, I want to make sure you're coming back." He reached for her, finding her hand beneath the blanket and covered it with his own. "Blake gave me one black eye. You're welcome to the other."

She laughed. Leave it to her cowboy to come back and tell her she could punch him and make everything all right. Such a man! "I don't know. What if you don't want what I'm offering? What if you realize that you need a partner at every rodeo stop and I just don't fit the bill anymore?" She shrugged, then pulled her hand out from beneath his and crossed her arms over her chest. "I can't take not knowing. And I don't exactly want a fling anymore."

Communication, communication, communication, she let the word reverberate through her mind. Katie knew how to work this; surely Katie could make sure she didn't screw this up with Blake and Luke.

Luke glanced over to Blake, then back to her. "I don't understand."

Sydney laughed. "I don't really either, and at the moment, this isn't about me. It's about you. Your actions and how you're going to fix them."

"I'm sorry. Can't do anything more than apologize, darlin'. Well, and make sure it doesn't happen again." He smiled, looking so innocent and boyish, she wanted to fall into bed with him and not care about anything else.

She looked at him, not sure if an apology was enough.

Luke frowned for a moment. "I don't know if words can convince you. Seeing you changed things. I...I care for you." The words tumbled from his lips like cool water from a hose.

"I see," she said, feeling rather like the bitch because she hadn't told him how she felt yet. No, let him squirm for a moment. He might not cry his eyes out the way she did—guys just weren't wired that way—but he could wait, and wonder.

"Both of you. Hell." He raked his fingers through his hair. "I care for both of you. I'm tired of the rodeo stud life. Not the rodeos and riding. I won't give that up. But the whole fuck 'em in every town you're in, sort of thing. Things get kind of wild sometimes on the circuit. Gay or straight, I guess all cowboys are kind of wired the same way." He winked at her. "I like knowing I have a place to come back to. People to come back to. I guess what I'm trying to say, Sydney, is that I care for you a lot. Maybe it's love, I don't know. I'm not a cowboy poet. Just a bronc rider."

She chuckled, because he made it sound like such a horrible thing not to know. "That's okay. I don't know either." She inched forward in the bed, reaching for him. Her fingertips grazed his stubbled cheek, and then the edge of the bruise around his eye.

Luke winced.

"Sorry," she murmured. "He did a number on you." She glanced over Luke's shoulder at Blake. "I don't see any bruises on him. Maybe you extracted your revenge in a different way."

Luke chuckled, and oh that husky sound washed right through her body and down to her pussy. She pressed her thighs together to try and stem the urge just to push him down on the bed.

The hell with their feelings, except lust, of course. Just give in and see what happens. Since that's what had gotten her into this situation, she wasn't really keen to do it again.

"You could say that, but if it makes you feel better, you can get your revenge anyway you want." Reaching for her, Luke skimmed his fingers along her jaw, brushing her lower lip with his thumb. "I don't mind. I could even bring a riding crop from the barn."

The twinkle in his eyes told Sydney that he'd enjoy it too much. "That's okay. I'm not a revenge girl."

Blake coughed from the doorway.

"Yeah there was that one time. I didn't hurt him too much."

Luke's eyes widened.

She enjoyed toying with him. "Seriously. I'm not. So the rodeo changed things for you. What are you proposing?" She figured hearing what Luke wanted, and maybe Blake too, would be better for her peace of mind. If their desires matched hers, well she could just agree and they could continue. If not, better to know now than later. "Give it to me straight. Don't sugar-coat it." she patted her hips. "I don't need any more sugar."

"Well, I want to stay. Permanently. I don't know if what I'm feeling is love, lust, or some combination of the two, but I'm not putting any limitations on what I'm feeling right now. I figure it'll grow into love eventually, if it hasn't already. I want to know that I'm coming back to you, and to Blake. And I'll keep coming back. That's my plan and that's what I want." He paused, as if waiting to hear from her.

Frankly, Sydney wasn't sure how to respond. Sure, what he said sounded like what she wanted. And she needed to believe him. To keep from worrying herself over it, or maybe saying something she didn't want to, she nodded to Blake still standing in the doorway. "Come in. I'm thinking this affects you too."

Blake entered her bedroom, moving slowly, almost as if he were unsure of himself or his situation. Except, when had he ever been unsure of anything. The Blake she knew swaggered his way through horse show events, took year end award trophies and really, made sure that everyone, man and woman knew how comfortable he was with things. He looked at Luke, then walked around to the other side of the bed and sat down, keeping her between him and Luke.

She glanced between the two men; something must have happened. Something beyond the sex she guessed they'd shared, because although they had the look of satisfied men, they also appeared wary. Almost as if decisions had been made, and they weren't sure she was going to like them.

"So Blake gave you the black eye." She searched Luke's face for any sign of awareness, any betrayal of what he might be thinking with regards to the other man.

Luke nodded. "He did. Said I hurt you."

"Well, you did." She bantered the matter-of-fact words back at him. No sense in lying. "Though he didn't ask my permission before marring your handsome face."

Luke grinned.

"Besides, if he'd asked me, I might give you both of them."

Luke startled.

"I did leave the other one for you," Blake said.

She swiveled her attention to him. "So what gave you the right to punch Luke? I'm a big girl, Blake. I appreciate the care you've shown me, but I can also handle things on my own. Wasn't the first time my heart had gotten broken. I doubt it'll be the last."

"Aww, hell" Luke groaned. "I didn't mean to do that."

"I know." Sydney nodded. "Doesn't make it any difference." she licked her lips, thinking that neither man was giving any room. "Because it happened, whether you meant to or not. Now, I know what you told me about wanting a base of operations, about being tired of going from rodeo to rodeo, but why now? And why did it take hurting me to make you realize exactly what you wanted."

She posed the hard questions to him, figuring if he were made of sterner stuff than she thought, he'd answer them. Truthfully and factually. Then, she'd turn her attention to Blake.

"Because, driving here, thinking that I might have lost you with one foolish, careless action is about the hardest thing I've ever done." Luke sighed. "Look, I'm not going to say I came to these conclusions at the right time, or even at a good time. We haven't known each other very long. We've shared some great sex, and I really like you, as a person and as a lover. I want to go forward. That's what I'm offering here, Sydney, a chance to go forward and see what we really got."

In the face of words like that, she'd be a damned fool to turn them down. At least not without seeing where it led first. "What about you, Blake? What do you think?"

"About Luke? I think the black eye already says what I think of his actions. Of his proposal?" Blake shrugged. "Can't say I'm sorry to see him stay. We said our peace in the barn."

Communication. There it was again, rearing its ugly head. "And you're not going to tell me?" She inched back toward her pillows, resting against the fluffy down with a sigh. Too bad it wasn't the usual sigh of relaxation she usually gave when sliding into bed. Today, her relaxing bedroom felt more like a prison. She couldn't get up and leave though, not while something this serious was going on. "I think you should tell me what you decided. After all, I'm a part of this too."

"I love him." Blake's gruff words filled the room. "And hell, Sydney, you know I love you."

"Do I? Have you really said it?" The memory of their lovemaking filled her mind with its tenderness and its unspoken truth. Yeah, he loved her. Loved her a lot, if the past was anything to go on.

"I figured you knew." Blake drew a harsh breath. "Look, whether Luke stays or goes, I'm not going anywhere. I know I always said I wanted to be free to find my own place, but think about it. You haven't made any move to fill my stalls with your own horses, and I haven't really been looking. I like it here. I love it here, and I love you. I don't want to go anywhere, and I don't want Luke to go anywhere either." He reached across the bed, offering his hand to Luke.

The cowboy grabbed it, the strong grip bringing Blake across the bed towards him. And over her legs, they kissed. Mouths met in a carnal dance of lips and tongues, and even a groan, when Blake pulled away, only to suck on Luke's lower lip.

Sydney's pussy creamed. It was the most arousing thing she'd ever seen. Just thinking of being there, being a part of the two men's intimate moment had her on edge. She waited, watching, knowing that anticipation was the best part.

At least now she knew how Blake felt. Her plans meshed with the men's plans. Which meant that she could put her offer on the table, secure in the knowledge that they would most likely accept it. After the afternoon and night she'd had, coming to this point seemed right. Katie had harped communication; at least now, the three of them were finally getting down to some.

"So that means my original offer of a fling is no good anymore, right?" She waited for the men to stop kissing and look at her, confusion on both of their faces. Good, she didn't exactly want them to know she was going along, but she wouldn't string them out either. Just enough to know that it was good of them to figure this all out while she was sleeping. Or something like that anyway.

"If that's what you want," Luke hedged.

Blake nodded. "I could always say I'm looking for a new place."

She laughed. "And I could always say I'm the Queen of England. But that isn't going to get me a seat in Buckingham Palace either. You guys are funny, you know that. You want what you want, but if we want to call it something different, we can." She shook her head. "Not on your life. If you want something full-time, something pretty darn permanent, then that's what you're getting."

An almost comically relieved expression covered Blake's face. Did he really think she was going to kick them out for fighting, or loving, while she slept? It'd be a difficult three-way relationship if she pulled a stunt like that. Luke appeared serene, like her words had confirmed something for him that he'd been expecting all along.

"I like a woman who shoots straight," Luke told her. "Wouldn't have one any other way."

"And here, I wasn't sure you liked women at all," she joked, though she knew it to be not exactly the truth. Luke might have been bisexual, with strong leanings towards the guys, but from the very first moment he'd flirted with her, she'd known he wanted women. Or at least this woman.

"I've always known Sydney to speak the truth, even if it hurts. Just ask her to critique your riding performance sometime." Blake reached over to her and patted her ankle, the closest part he could reach. "Though we'll have to make sure to learn enough about bronc riding so we can give you the same pain she gives me at competitions."

"You know I do that only when you deserve it. Though I was thinking about inviting Katie and her men to the next show. It's not exactly high caliber competition yet, but it'll give me an idea how Knothead will do, and give them a chance to see how the colt performs." She focused on Blake, knowing that painful truth ran two ways. If he thought the colt wasn't ready, he'd say so.

"Let me set up some courses in the arena. We'll use your gaudy show jumps. Maybe have some loud music or crowd noise CDs playing to see how he reacts. But I think you'll do okay," Blake offered.

"Good. That's what I was thinking. I don't figure we'll be in the ribbons yet, but close to it, that'd be nice." She realized in her conversation about Knothead they'd kind of left Luke out in the cold. Well, he'd have to get used to that because there'd be plenty of times they wouldn't be talking rodeo, just as she'd feel the same way when he talked about his stuff, too. And he had James and Daniel to bug. Poor Katie had no one who really understood her sport.

"So, does that sound good to you?" She tossed the question to Luke.

"Sounds good. I just want the same education so I can critique you the way it sounds like you'll be critiquing my rides." His easy acceptance of her chosen sport, and of their discussion, told her all she needed to know.

"Good. Then we'll continue this thing and see where it goes. I can't guarantee there won't be rough spots. I'm sure there will be, but I want communication. Katie said that's the important part of making this work. I see she's right, not that I'd ever tell her that." Sydney winked. "But you guys know what I mean. No more making decisions and fucking in the middle of the night without my knowing. I want to be a part of things, just like you want to be a part of my life." There, she'd laid it out before them. Not that she ever expected Blake was going to look for his own farm. She'd kind of guessed he liked being here a while ago. Still, it felt good to have the decision made and to make sure that things would be moving forward. She never wanted to feel the way she did earlier. Never.

She pushed back the blankets, thinking that they needed to seal this one with a kiss. Kicking her legs aside, she drew them beneath her so she could kneel. Licking her lips, she glanced first at one man, then the other. Kiss Luke? Kiss Blake? Or maybe just sit here and wait for the guys to figure it out. No, she couldn't do that. She turned to her friend, her good and dear friend, and crawled across the bed to him. Cupping his cheek, she smiled. Then slowly, oh so slowly, she leaned forward and kissed him.

Just the subtle caress of his lips across hers, but enough for him to melt against her. She stroked the seam of his mouth with her tongue, urging him to open and allow her to explore his mouth.

Luke cleared his throat. Reaching across the space between them, he cupped her elbow, pulling her towards him. "What about me?"

"Don't worry, cowboy. I'd never forget about you." Leaning to her left, she brushed her lips across his, and then coyishly pulled away. "There, that good enough?"

"Not on your life, darlin'." He bore her down to the mattress and with his second kiss, she had to agree, her first certainly hadn't been enough.

## Chapter Nine

Aware of Blake sitting on the edge of the bed, Sydney could no more push Luke out of the way than she could deny her own desires. She shifted her legs, inviting Luke into the cradle of her thighs. Winding her arms around him, she held him to her, running her hands up and down his back. In some ways, she longed to savor this moment. A little voice in the back of her mind struggled to remind her that he was a cowboy and everyone knew that cowboys didn't make the most faithful of lovers.

Reaching between them, Sydney pulled the snaps on Luke's shirt apart. Each bit of tanned skin her actions revealed, gave her more room to lick and kiss. She ducked her head, pressing it against the hot, smooth skin of his chest. Luke's scent, a luscious blend of leather and woods that screamed to every feminine cell in her body, filled her nostrils. She breathed it in then flicked her tongue over the bud of one of his nipples.

Her own tightened with the thoughts of Luke doing the same thing to her. Wriggling beneath him, she managed to free his shirt. He shoved it off his arms and tossed it to the edge of the bed. She heard the shuffle of clothing as Blake undressed, and then he stretched out alongside her. He reached for Luke, stroking the cowboy's back. His fingers brushed over Sydney's. She shivered.

Luke shifted just enough to bend down and kiss Sydney's lips. He claimed her mouth, the soft seduction in his touch not evident in his mouth. His lips slanted over hers, his tongue sweeping along the seal, and when she opened beneath him, he plunged it into her mouth. He claimed her, fucking her mouth with bold, carnal strokes. Sydney moaned against Luke's lips.

Her fingers tightened on his back. Knees lifting, she cradled his hips between her thighs. Arching her back, she thrust against him, the hard ridge of his cock evident even through his jeans. Closing her eyes, she gave a tiny, breathy moan when the kiss ended so they both could draw shaky breaths. Delicious. Perfectly delicious being pinned beneath him like this; his loving her bringing her close to orgasm even though he'd done nothing but kiss her.

Then, his lips trailed down her jaw and the length of her neck. She waited, her breath held, while he laved the hollow of her collarbone and swept kisses from one side to the other. Then, he found the slope of her right breast. His lips hovered over her nipple. He turned and looked at Blake. "Join me?"

Hunger darkened his eyes. "I never thought you'd ask."

The few moments it took for Blake to move across the bed stretched out forever. Sydney watched, her breath caught, as he inched closer. Blake glanced at her hard nipple, his tongue sliding out to moisten his lips. Just thinking about the warm, wet heat of his mouth sent a fresh rush of arousal to her slick folds. Damn, she wanted one of them, both of them, it didn't matter. Her body vibrated with the need to take them inside her and to have them love her.

Finally, Blake paused, his mouth hovering over her nipple. A puff of warm air blew across the nub. "We do this together."

Though she couldn't tell, she swore his words were meant for Luke, because as one, both men lowered their heads. Warm lips surrounded her nipples, sucking at exactly the same moment. She cried out, back arching, as lightning bolts of pleasure wound through her body. Everything she wanted, and more, poured through her body as the men sucked on her breasts. Her hands came up and tangled in their hair, her left in dark brown, her right in tawny gold.

"Oh yes!" She moaned.

Why she ever wanted to deny herself this, Sydney didn't know. The guys moved as if they thought in unison, or at least knew her body well enough to give her exactly what they wanted. At nearly the same time, both men shifted, still kissing and licking her breasts, their hands caressing her body. They stopped, one on either side of her sex, and she spread her legs, aware that sometime during the kiss Luke must have moved off of her.

"Touch me," she whispered, tightening her fingers in their hair, before quickly releasing it. She lifted her hips, hoping they could see, or feel, her wet labia. "Please." She bit her lip to keep from crying out—or worse, begging.

One finger—she didn't know whose—stroked her. Up and down. Up and down along her labia, gathering her wetness on the tip of his finger.

"Damn, you're so wet for us," Luke growled.

"Yes," she agreed.

Blake's finger joined Luke's, and he groaned masculine appreciation when he found her as wet as Luke had said. Together, the men drove her crazy, their lazy stroking making her hurt oh so good. Her body tightened.

Oh damn, she was going to come. From this, just the sweeps of their fingers up and down her pussy, not even touching her clit, and their mouths on her nipples. She pumped her hips, tilting them, trying to get one of them, both of them, to stroke her clit. "You're killing me," she panted.

Blake chuckled. "I don't think we've even begun." He dipped the tip of his finger inside her, and just the slightest amount of penetration had her crying out. She released the backs of their head, not wanting to yank out their hair, to grab the comforter.

"Oh God!" She moaned. "Blake. Please."

He did it again, that sexy flick of his finger. And again. Until he teased her with every stroke of his hips.

Her whimpers escalated. She bit her lip. No, she couldn't come—wouldn't come—without their touching her clit or fucking her hard. And yet, her body betrayed her, spiraling higher and higher until all she could do was hold on to the comforter and try to silence her cries. And then, it didn't matter, because her body tightened, the pressure building, until she had to come. With a keening cry, her orgasm hit. The waves pounded through her body, the pleasure so exquisite that the touch of the men's fingers and mouths was almost too much to take. She cried out, riding through her release, and when she opened her eyes again, she saw both men on either side of her, staring at her like they'd won and she was the prize.

"Damn," she whispered, wiping her hair from her sweaty forehead. "I've never—"

Blake stood and started to remove his jeans, his movement cutting off her words. Luke did the same, and soon, she had two gloriously naked men in her bed.

She had enough strength and presence of mind to roll over to the nightstand and grab the bottle of lube. "Rock, paper, scissors to figure it out? Because I want both of you inside me."

Blake grabbed the bottle from her. "I had your pussy earlier. I'll let Luke have it this time."

She loved the growl in his voice when he said *this time*, like maybe, later, they'd switch roles. She wasn't sure if she could survive if they did anything else tonight, though watching Blake pour a large amount of lube into his palm, then stroke it on his hard cock made her think that maybe

they might. His shaft, so thick the head had turned purple, glistened with lubricant, and he stretched out beside her again, rolling her onto her side. He nestled his cock between her butt cheeks. A few experimental pumps of his hips had them both moaning, and Luke settled down in front of her.

"This way I can kiss Blake over your shoulder," he whispered, sliding his hand along the underside of her thigh and drawing it up and over his hip, opening her. "You ready?"

"Yeah," she admitted, and behind her Blake said the same thing.

Luke guided himself to her opening. A tilt of his hips sheathed the head of his cock inside her. Together, they moaned. Slowly, like he wanted to savor the moment, he filled her. Fully inside her, he waited, stroking her hip before he started to pull out.

Blake thrust forward. The head of his cock pressed against her anus.

She leaned back against him, needing, wanting, to be filled by both of these men. Her body relaxed, widened to accommodate him, and then he slid inside. He thrust forward, a low groan emanating from his throat until his balls bumped against her. For a heartbeat he waited, and then he began to withdraw.

At Blake's movement, Luke pushed forward again. The feel of both cocks moving inside her nearly drove Sydney insane. She lifted her hip, opening herself more to the feel of Luke's broad shaft filling her. When at last Luke filled her, and Blake rested just inside, then they began to shift positions again.

She expected fast and frantic, the urge to find release as fast as possible. Perhaps her earlier orgasm had taken the edge off and the men had more control than she. Either way, they gave her a long-dicking that left her breathless and fully aroused. She gave herself over to the rhythm, noticing the nuanced differences between the men's cocks. The thrust and retreat drew her closer to orgasm, each brush of Luke's pelvis against her clit, the touch of his fingers along her breasts and arms, Blake's kisses along her shoulders, all of them drove her higher.

Blake's breathing grew ragged, his thrusts harder and quicker. She relished the fact that she could bring both men to come, and she tightened her vaginal muscles, willing Luke to do the same.

He groaned. "I'm not going to last long, darlin'. I don't want to hurt you." He gripped her hip and for a moment she feared he might push her away.

"You won't." She pressed a kiss against his chest, and then with a low groan, Luke thrust into her once more.

He stiffened, her name a cry on his lips as he came. His cock twitched deep inside her. His seed splashed against her cervix.

Sydney clung to him, her inner muscles holding him tight inside.

Blake gave one, final thrust and then he, too, came deep inside her.

She moaned at both men, seated deep, her leg high across his hips, an undeniable sensation of rightness filling her. Closing her eyes, she pressed her face against Luke's chest as she came. Her pussy milked Luke's cock, her ass doing the same thing to Blake. The three of them, locked together in an orgasmic embrace, made her eyes roll back in her head. Stars swam around the edges of her vision, the pleasure so intense she feared she might wake to find it all a dream.

When at last her body stilled, as did those of the men, Blake slipped from her. He rolled away, and she heard the rustle of the tissue box, then he returned to her. Luke moved, rolling onto his back and drawing her across his chest. His hand lazily stroked her back.

She grinned against Luke's chest. In two point proposition, the rider balanced her weight on her legs and thighs to keep the horse free to jump. Considering the men in her life, she figured she had the same thing here. Balance and communication. Hadn't that been what Katie had told her from the beginning. She pressed a kiss over Luke's heart, then turned and did the same thing to Blake.

"We're good?" he asked.

"Oh yeah," Sydney replied. "We're very good." She rolled onto her back between the men, and placed her hands on their chests. And for a woman who'd told Katie that she'd given up on men, she thought she was doing quite well, indeed.

*If you liked TWO POINT PROPOSITION, then see how Katie found her men in TWO IN HAND. The first chapter is below for your enjoyment. Available now from Pink Petal Books.*

## **Two In Hand by Mary Winter**

### **Chapter One**

Katie curled her fingers around the cool metal bleachers and stared into the arena below. Her drink sat forgotten by her side. She barely noticed the sweat that dripped down the back of her neck, seeping into the collar of her t-shirt. The action in the arena fascinated her far more than it probably should have. Maybe it was because Daniel had invited her here.

The announcer called out the winner of the steer wrestling and the arena emptied for the team roping, Daniel's event. Around her, the usual trappings of the rodeo, fans in bleachers cheering and stomping their hands, the prerequisite cowboys, horses, steers, broncs, and bulls waited in the chutes and back lot areas. Livestock milled in pens, cattle bawling, the smell of beer and popcorn, all of it was familiar to her. Yet, parts of it made it seem strange and new.

Two rows down a couple of men snuggled together. A banner in the arena proclaimed this as an event held by the Oklahoma Gay Rodeo Association. Katie stared at the sign, listening to the announcer giving some air time to the event's sponsors. She shook her head, still not believing she'd been invited here.

By Daniel, her ex-boyfriend.

Katie barely contained the grin that turned her lips upward. She'd have laughed out loud if she had thought her amusement wouldn't draw attention to herself. Daniel Westin, high school heartthrob—completely and totally gay. Well, technically bisexual, but she assumed since he'd invited her to a gay rodeo he wasn't going to ask her to the dance afterwards. That was a leap of reason she'd made on her own, reminding her of the logic puzzles they'd filled out in "gifted"

classes back in school. There was no need to even ask; she just knew. But Daniel at a gay event was something she had to see for herself. As teenagers they'd made out nearly every way, in nearly every location possible. Just thinking about it sent a wave of heat through her strong enough to ward off the unseasonable April chill.

"Next up is the team of Daniel Westin and James Stanton. Last year, this duo narrowly missed the championship. You can bet they'll be in the hunt this season," the announcer said.

Katie tuned out the announcer who would obviously be going on about James' work as a stock contractor, focusing instead on the two men on horseback at the far end of the arena. She easily recognized Daniel riding a muscled dun horse. He had always sat a horse well and today was no exception. With his hat pulled low, his rope loose in his right hand, he held his horse in the back corner of the starting box. A heartbeat later he nodded and the calf burst from the chute.

Daniel followed. The thin rope barrier pulled across the front of the starting box, whipping past Daniel's horse's chest a moment before the horse would have hit it. Next to him, James surged forward on his big bay horse. One loop, two, Daniel worked the rope above his head, and Katie's breath caught as she remembered exactly what those talented fingers could do. The rope settled easily against the calf's head, hooking his horns.

Daniel tied off the rope, turning his horse to give James a good shot at the calf's hind legs. A swooping loop ducked beneath the back hooves, and the calf hung suspended between the two men.

Katie glanced quickly at the scoreboard. The timer read six seconds flat and she breathed a sigh of relief. She'd seen good cowboys work, great ones even, and these two men were the perfect team. Amidst cheers from the crowd they released the calf and trotted their horses back toward the gates. James pulled alongside, their horses nearly perfect in size and muscling. Leaning over he grabbed Daniel by the arm and the two men shared a hot, heated kiss on their way out of the arena.

*Yep, no doubt about it. Daniel liked men.*

Whoops and whistles erupted all over the arena. Katie's cheeks burned with heat. From what she'd seen of James, she wouldn't mind kissing him either. Moisture flooded her pussy and all she could think of was how damn sexy their embrace had been.

She closed her mouth, suddenly aware she was staring gape-jawed at the men. She fumbled for her soda, sipping it to ease the sudden dryness in her throat. Behind her ribs, her heart hammered, and before she could second guess her intentions, she rose to her feet and hurried down the bleacher steps. She chucked her empty soda cup in the trash can, her gaze fixed on the two men behind the chutes.

Daniel had kissed another man.

Somehow wrapping her head around the notion made her ache in places that had been dormant for a while. *He's making me horny again, except this time he's not going to do anything about it.* She bit back a groan. Damn fine time for her hormones to wake up again. After her last relationship had ended with a whimper and a mutual agreement, she'd thought she was done with men for good. She gave too much of herself to her horses and her sport—or so she'd been told. At least she knew Daniel wouldn't have a problem with hay or manure.

She blended in with the crowd of people behind the chute and quickly made her way over to the guys. "Hey," she said when she drew near enough to Daniel, who now led his horse back to the barns. She reached up and patted the dun mare on the neck. "Nice ride."

"Katie!" Daniel turned and captured her in a huge bear hug, drawing her against his well-muscled body. She had just a glimpse of his sandy blond hair beneath the brim of his cowboy hat. Excitement twinkled in his deep green eyes. When he pulled back, she saw age had turned his blocky features into mature planes and angles. His shoulders had broadened, giving him that perfect inverted triangle-shaped torso. His flat stomach led to lean hips and muscled thighs and calves. He'd turned out very nicely indeed.

Her nipples tingled where they pressed against his chest and butterflies hit her stomach hard. "Hope I'm not disturbing anything."

The competitors in the arena failed to rope their calf and the announcer called a no time.

"No. I needed something to take my mind off whether we're winning or not." Daniel gestured to James. "Come here, I want you to meet someone. Katie, this is James."

"Pleased to meet you." James held out a gloved hand, his brown eyes open and friendly. He had a scar high on his cheek and a bump that suggested a broken nose. "Danny's talked a lot about you. I feel like I know you already."

"Oh," she said, momentarily taken aback by the fact that Daniel would mention her at all. "I hope it was all good."

"Very good." James cocked his head toward the arena. "Another pair goes out with no time."

"Maybe you shouldn't breed such ornery stock," Daniel teased.

Katie thought for a moment, putting that fact along with James' name together. "You're the stock contractor on the outside of town, aren't you? I was on the county rodeo committee a couple of years ago and I think we worked with you then."

"Probably. I do most of the local events and ship some of my stock out to the larger ones too. I happened to have a fresh bunch of calves that peaked in time for this event, so I offered them. We used someone else's stock for our run, just in case you think we had an edge." He grinned, open and friendly.

"Nah, Katie knows that I'm naturally good." Daniel slung his arm around her waist, pulling her against him.

She melted into him, her body remembering what it felt like to be snuggled against him. She caught James eyeing them speculatively, and she wondered if she shouldn't push Daniel away or something. She'd just seen him kissing another man!

James coughed. "There were two of us in the arena."

"I'm sure you're both very talented." She stared at her boots. Oh God, she'd just spoken aloud. Her mind turned every comment into an innuendo, and with her hip brushing against Daniel's side, she couldn't think straight.

"I'd like to think we are." James replied casually.

"James is the best healer I've worked with," Daniel said. "I think he's spoiled me for any other partner." He paused a moment to listen to the announcer. They'd gone first. "Let's lead the horses back a ways. We probably have ten more pairs to go yet."

He released her hand, leaving her with a sense of abandonment, and strode through the tangle of people and livestock to head for a clearing near the low barn on the edge of the fairground. Katie followed, familiar with the layout. She'd stabled her horses here many times for competitions. James walked a bit behind her, leading his horse. Funny to have reunited with him so recently, and yet, feel so connected to him. It was like their time apart faded away.

They stopped in the clearing, well away from the in-gate, and Katie found herself between the two men. She yearned to ask Daniel about his invitation, about the kiss she'd witnessed in the arena. She didn't. Instead, she turned to the dun horse, patting its neck as Daniel loosened the cinch on the saddle. His rope hung coiled from the saddle horn.

"Shouldn't you stay close so you can go back into the arena for the victory gallop?"

Daniel offered her a sexy grin. "It'll be awhile. Let's get away from the bustle so we can talk."

Talk. His words conjured up the memory of his invitation and of their past. She looked at the horse's dun hide to avoid searching Daniel's face for any clues. "So did you end up with a place around here?" Katie asked Daniel. The last time she'd talked with Daniel he had moved across the state, but was trying to find a closer farm.

Daniel glanced at James and the two men shared a slow, intimate smile. "You could say that," he replied.

"That's nice," Katie said, the platitude the only thing she could think of at the moment. *Just ask him about the kiss!* Another team completed their run to thunderous applause. The announcer gave the time as only a few tenths of a second slower than Daniel and James'.

"Good going!" a cowboy called on his way to the barn. "You guys are going to be tough to beat this year."

Daniel grinned an all-too-familiar smile Katie recognized from the football field.

"When you got it, you got it. You're not too bad yourself. I heard you're at the top of the steer wrestling standings."

The cowboy shrugged. "Well like you said, when you got it, you got it." He tipped his hat to James and Katie and hurried into the barn.

Katie watched him go, her mind rolling a hundred miles an hour, wondering what connection the unnamed cowboy had to Daniel and James, other than fellow competitor. He didn't look familiar, though his black cowboy hat hid dark brown hair, and his face had the same weatherworn look as most of the guys. He was tall and heavily muscled, like most steer wrestlers she'd seen.

Daniel reached out and touched the small of her back. "You're trying to figure this all out, aren't you?" he whispered in her ear.

The brim of his hat brushed the top of her head, the soft caress sending shivers down her spine. She licked her lips, not really wanting to give into his teasing. Even back when they'd been dating, Daniel had liked to tease...in and out of bed.

"You're remembering, aren't you, honey?" he asked.

She nodded, her throat too tight to speak. James moved in to her other side, presumably to shield her from view. Her nipples ached and poked against the cotton of her long-sleeved shirt. She'd gone braless, not from any attempt at seduction, but because she'd taken a fall yesterday

and had a nasty scrape along her left shoulder blade. Luckily, she was endowed just enough so she could go without support if she needed it. When she'd dressed to come here, she'd forgotten the instantaneous affect Daniel had always had on her. Of course, when she'd accepted the invitation, she hadn't known he really was off limits.

The announcer gave the last team's time, several tenths of a second behind Daniel and James' time.

"That's it," Daniel said as if the previous few moments hadn't happened. "I think we got it. Let's go back to the arena." He tightened the cinch on his horse in preparation for a victory gallop.

The speakers crackled, the static drawing Katie back to herself. For a moment with James on one side of her and Daniel on the other she'd imagined the feel of their calloused hands on her skin, imagined the taste of their masculine lips and the hard thrust of their cocks against and inside her. She suppressed her desires, even as she lingered and caught a glimpse of Daniel's hard, denim-clad ass. Damn, he always had looked fine in jeans.

~\* \* \*~

Daniel paused by the in-gate and swung into Diamond's saddle. He supposed he shouldn't mention that the horse—Bright Diamond Katie—was named after her. The buckskin foal had a ton of spunk and wasn't afraid of anything, just like the Katie he remembered. Daniel nodded to James as they rode into the arena. Thunderous applause greeted them, the roar of the crowd fueling the adrenaline rushing through his veins.

He itched to find out what James thought about Katie. Damn, seeing her again was like a punch in the gut. She'd been fine back in high school, all long legs and tousled sun-kissed brown hair. As a woman, she rocked him back on the heels of his cowboy boots. Her smallish curves had rounded, pressing against the cotton shirt she wore. Her hard nipples made him want to palm her flesh and see if they felt as good as he remembered.

After all the personal confusion and social phobias he'd encountered where his sexuality was concerned, it was good to know that life held one constant. Katie Kendall still made him hard.

Luckily, he could ride victory laps in his sleep and after the perfunctory (enter a number) times around the ring he left the arena to the cheers of his fellow competitors and the crowd. The next event was announced and Daniel remained mounted as he headed for the barn. He hadn't made it far when Katie pushed through the crowd, jogging toward him.

"Hey, is there anything I can do to help?" she called.

He admired the sway of her breasts for a moment before James cleared his throat beside him. With a grin, he stopped Diamond.

"Sure." Glancing around, he dismounted and waited for James to do the same. "You can help with the horses."

He slid the reins over Diamond's head. James fell into step beside him and Daniel shot him a sideways glance, surprised by the man's shuttered expression. For a normally taciturn guy, James remained especially quiet.

Daniel didn't let it bother him as they headed to the barn, Katie on the other side of Diamond. It felt right...having one of them flanking him. He grinned, the winner's check he'd receive having nothing to do with the spring in his step. He paused at the threshold to the barn, letting his eyes adjust to the darkness.

"Which stall is yours?" Katie asked.

James stopped behind her, so close that he nearly bumped into that gorgeous heart-shaped ass of hers. His horse, Midnight, always a pushy son of a gun, nuzzled Katie's shoulder and James curled his hand around Katie's hip to steady her.

A tiny gasp escaped her lips and Daniel's cock tightened swiftly.

Daniel bet she made noises like that in bed too. The desire to find out had prompted his spontaneous call to her. Kind of like when he went on the gay rodeo circuit, a half-assed joke and a challenge had turned into something more. Then again, if he hadn't gone on the circuit, he wouldn't have met James and that turned out pretty good. He only hoped his phone call to Katie would have the same result. He eyed James' hand on Katie's hip. Maybe he wouldn't need to ask his lover what he thought about Katie. That lingering caress said it all.

James leaned in so close his breath teased the strands of her hair around her ear. "Third aisle. All the way down."

He released her with a little squeeze that caused a quick shiver to roll through her slight frame and Daniel glanced at her pert nipples pressing against her shirt. A slight hitch in her breath told him she was aroused. He grinned as she scurried down the aisle and toward their stall.

"All the way down, huh?" Daniel leaned in and whispered.

James grinned. "A man's gotta try. I think this is going to be fun." He patted Daniel on the ass and hurried after Katie.

Daniel watched his lover, noting the sinfully tight fit of his jeans and those long, muscled legs wrapped in denim. Of course they were better wrapped around him, and he discreetly adjusted himself before following. When James had told him to stop mooning over Katie and just hook up with her, he'd been eager for the chance. Now, uncertainty fluttered in his stomach, making him wonder if he'd made the right decision.

James looked over his shoulder and winked at Daniel. Yeah, he'd made the right choice. He hurried down the aisle, the clapping of Diamond's hooves music to his ears. He watched Katie unfasten Midnight's girth and lift saddle and pad from the big black gelding. She swung it over to the stand, effortlessly sliding the saddle over and turning the pad upside down on top.

"We should bring her along to all our rodeos." James took a stiff brush to Midnight's coat. "Free help and pretty too." He gave an exaggerated wink.

Katie opened her mouth to say something, then closed it again. She glanced at him, a speculative look on her face. Daniel truly wanted to know what was running through her mind.

Daniel removed the saddle and watched James relinquish the brush to Katie. Both men watched her groom the horse. Daniel figured his partner, like he, imagined what Katie's small hands would feel like touching him.

Her slender hands moved over the soft black hide. She spoke under her breath, a calming tone that Daniel bet she wasn't even aware of making. She focused her entire attention on the horse, tuning out everything around her. He knew she made love with that same intensity and he bit back a groan at the thought.

"Hey," James asked on his way to the saddle rack. "You want to head out for a drink? I could use something to eat and I bet Daniel could too."

“Sure. That’d be great.” She led Midnight into the stall across the aisle with James’ name on it and the horse immediately buried his head in the hay manger. “Looks like your horse has the same idea,” she chuckled.

A memory of them, years younger, standing in the barn, filled his mind. Daniel grinned and led Diamond into the neighboring stall. “There’s a great place just down the road. Let’s go.” He gave both horses a final check, saw that James had picked up the tack area. Any day he rodeoed was a good day. Going out with Katie and James made it a perfect one.

## About the Author

Mary commutes between her dream home near the Mark Twain national forest in Missouri and her current residence in Iowa. She lives with a menagerie of animals including an opinionated horse and a cat that was a dog in past life. When not writing spicy tales of erotic romance, she enjoys writing science fiction and fantasy, spending time with her horse, and enjoying the outdoors. Lucky for her, her partner (hero) shares these same passions, and usually both of them can be found in their respective dens writing.

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## Good Medicine

by Mary Winter

*Available now at Pink Petal Books*

When Sadie thought about her perfect Friday night, she didn't imagine herself covered with manure and blood. She should have been used to it by now. Working as a vet in a small town just outside of Kansas City meant she would tend to a child's hamster on one appointment and the very next one would send her out to vaccinate cattle. Or as in this case, stitch up a badly wounded calf.

Sadie unlocked the door and slipped inside the veterinary office, ignoring the sign out front that had Dr. Devon Markier III, DVM listed as the owner. The banking gods had frowned on her purchasing this clinic, never mind that Devon and she were the same age. Being from a wealthy family had its perks in this town.

She closed the door behind her, wishing she could just as easily shut out her uncharitable thoughts about her boss. Humming equipment provided the only sounds in the dark office, illuminated only by the soft glow of safety lights over the exits. From memory, she made her way to the locker room. Her shoes squished across the linoleum. For a moment, she debated about going home, but she wanted to document the call and leave notes for Devon since he'd be working tomorrow. And she really didn't want to bring the mess clinging to her coveralls home with her.

That calf had been tangled in barbed wire, and Sadie didn't even want to contemplate the number of stitches she'd put in the wounded animal's body. She'd administered fluids and antibiotics, finally proclaiming the creature stable enough for her to leave. Had the calf been anything but a 4-H project, she probably would have just put it down, but looking into the tear-filled brown eyes of the creature's eight-year-old owner had made that impossible. She hoped the tiny thing made it through the night.

A small light shone through the open bathroom door. *Devon must have left it on for her.* She tried not to be thankful he had, nor contemplate the thoughtfulness the gesture. It was much easier to dwell on the fact that she hadn't been able to muster the funds to buy out Dr. Kirkpatrick's half of the vet practice when he had retired. Devon and his thoughtful gestures could go straight to hell. But damn, he'd look good going.

Sadie headed for the light like a beacon, dragging her tired body along with her. Turning the corner, she stopped. Devon stood in front of the sink, rinsing off a razor. His sable hair still dripped water where it curled along the back of his neck. She followed a drop along the long line of his naked back, tanned and muscled, to where the blue waistband of his designer underwear soaked up the bit of moisture.

Sadie's mouth went dry.

Dressed, Devon Markier III looked like he stepped off a male fashion show runway. which was why she probably was angrier at him for buying out the vet practice than she should have been. Wearing only a pair of very high-cut briefs, he looked like a dream come to life. And she hated herself for having those dreams.

"I'm sorry." Sadie backed away from the door, her breath whooshing from her lungs.

He turned his piercing blue stare on her and smiled. "Sadie, you're back. I thought you would probably head back to your place since it's so late. I'll be out of here in a minute. Had a guinea pig with an abscess that came in at the last minute, and I wanted to clean up before heading out."

Sadie pressed her back against the wall, fiercely staring anywhere but toward the door from which Devon's voice emerged. She sucked in gulps of air. With each breath, she reminded herself that she worked for Devon. The fact she lusted after his body didn't change a thing. Not their employer-employee relationship and certainly not the fact that his family money had obtained the vet practice for him. She heard rustling from the small bathroom, and a few moments later, Devon emerged wearing only a worn pair of jeans and carrying the rest of his clothing.

He glanced over her dirty coveralls. The heat of his gaze burned through her, and even reeking of cow and covered with blood and fluids, Devon's focused held the power to make her breath catch in her throat. *Water over the bridge, under the bridge. It doesn't really matter. We're from two different worlds. I put myself through vet school, and he was born with the platinum spoon in his mouth. I've been through that once and won't do it again.* "Thanks," she muttered, racing into the room and closing the door behind her.

## **Juli's Choice**

*By Mary Winter*

*Available Now from Pink Petal Books*

The birth of a foal never failed to move Juli. She watched as Lacey gave two more pushes, then the baby slid to the ground. Instantly, Juli moved to its side.

She finished ripping the sac from its head, and then used a cloth to wipe the foal's nostrils. It took its first breath of fresh air and raised its head. Juli smiled down into its eyes.

"A colt," Riley said, kneeling by the foal's side and beginning to briskly rub him down with towels. "Windfree's first son," he breathed, the awe more than apparent in his voice.

Juli finished tying off the umbilical cord. She watched Riley stare at the colt, all his hopes and dreams visible on his face. She'd seen it before with other owners and their foals. Watching the tiny foal take in his surroundings, she had a feeling this one would surpass all expectations.

Behind them, the mare lumbered to her feet, and Riley and Juli backed off to allow the new mother to greet her baby. Lacey sniffed the colt before licking it.

Juli backed out of the stall. "I want to stay until he passes the meconium, and to make sure that all is well with mother and baby."

The colt lurched to his feet, standing and falling in a comical splay of limbs. He shook his head, looking disgusted with himself, and then tried to stand again.

Juli stepped just outside the stall door, followed by Riley. He stood just behind her, his body heat radiating into her back. Watching the foal struggle to his feet, finally getting his spindly limbs beneath him, made her smile. She loved this part of the deliveries. Seeing a healthy foal nurse from its attentive mother made the eleven months of waiting and her own efforts worthwhile. She looked up at Riley and saw him starting at the foal. Love shone from his eyes.

"Is this Lacey's first foal?" Juli had heard of the mare's retirement two years ago.

Riley nodded. "We thought we had her bred last year, but it didn't take. Windfree had a pretty heavy competition schedule, so we couldn't get her settled."

Juli nodded. The foal nudged his mother with his skinny head. The two touched noses, then on wobbly legs, the foal stepped back. Ducking its head beneath Lacey's belly, it grabbed onto a teat and began to nurse.

Lacey lifted a leg, and Juli tensed, afraid the mare might try and hurt the foal. The first nursing always hurt, and some mares took it better than others. Lacey turned her head, stared at her baby, then snorted, but stood completely still.

Riley rested his arm around her shoulder. "You did it," he said, giving her a tiny squeeze. "I'm sorry, I didn't catch your first name."

"Juli. And thanks. I just helped the little guy into the world. You're the one who cared for Lacey for eleven months. That's the hard part."

She stood there, her heart hammering in her chest. Juli tried to chalk it up to the adrenaline of delivering a healthy foal. She couldn't quite. All of Harris' inadequacies came to mind, how he wouldn't be caught dead out in the barn anytime, let alone in the early hours of the morning. Feeling Riley's body pressed next to hers, she felt as if the two of them were in synch,

both wishing for a healthy mare and foal. Comparing her relationship with Harris to her and Riley at this moment was like watching a horse fighting the bit and a beautiful high-level dressage performance. There was nothing remotely similar between the two.

Aware she stood next to him, her coveralls covered in bodily fluids, she stepped away. "Is there somewhere I can wash up?"

Riley looked down at her. His eyes widened when he saw the extent of the damage on her coveralls. "I have a shower just off my back porch if you want to clean up? Otherwise, there's a utility sink next to the tack room."

Juli plucked at the sodden fabric. A change of clothes waited in her truck. Riley's gaze followed the motion. His gaze lingered on her curves beneath the heavy fabric. Birth moved people different ways, and watching his eyes darken, she suspected how it affected Riley. He raised his hand, and then rested it on the stall door.

"A shower would be great." She realized her voice was huskier than usual. Looking at him for a moment longer, she wished her eyes weren't drawn to his full lips. She turned and fled for the safety of the dark night.

## Her Hungers

*By Mary Winter*

*Available Now from Pink Petal Books*

### BLURB:

Lilah knew werewolves. Growing up as a human in the Northwoods Pack territory, Lilah also knew Roarke Connelly. But a human would never be good enough to love a werewolf, and broken-hearted, Lilah left the Northwoods vowing never to come back.

And she kept her promise, until a vampire turned her and she needed, one more time, to see her home. A brutal attack there left her wounded and infected with lycanthropy. She became a werepyre, both vampire and werewolf and hated by both species.

Under the protection of Adrian Fitzreal, brother to the vampire who turned her, Lilah knows he'll never be the Alpha, her wolf, and she, craves. But she accepts, because with Adrian's help, she's staying alive, which is all a werepyre can ask for.

Until Roarke shows up. He's got trouble at home. A rogue group of werewolves known as the Dark Moon Dogs wants to take over his pack. But when he finds out Lilah was attacked in his territory, he goes to find out why.

And discovers that she's no longer the teenage girl who hero-worshipped him. She's a grown woman, with a woman's needs and two beasts raging inside her. And right now, they hunger for her Alpha, and for her vampire.

**Warning: This book contains scenes of M/F/M sex and sex while in shifted form.**

### EXCERPT:

Slumped against him, Lilah felt Adrian slowly lower her to the floor. The hardwood should have cooled her heated body. It didn't.

Fingers curled into claws, shifting and shaping into pads and toes. Legs bent, changed, as one beast emerged dominant over the other.

Lilah rolled away. She curled into the fetal position, battling the change. Behind her, Adrian sat up, one leg bent. "What is it?"

"The change." Pain stabbed through her, a fierce ache in her temples as she fought the beast within. "I'm sorry." Still wearing human form, she rose onto all fours and crawled into the corner of the room.

Adrian stood. He grabbed his jeans and pulled them on.

Looking up at him through her hair, Lilah saw revulsion in his eyes. Adrian swallowed hard, battling his inner demons as much as she. Damn him. She tore her gaze away and concentrated on stopping the change.

Her sensitive hearing heard the crunch of boots against dried grass. Her enhanced lupine senses, so close to the surface, allowed her to sense the intruders. Three of them made their way

across the yard, one alongside the house, two in front. Lilah didn't like it. She hadn't stayed alive by ignoring her instincts.

"Lilah," Adrian said. He opened his mouth to continue to speak.

She held up her hand and cocked her head toward the outside wall. Flaring her nostrils, she scented the men. Tobacco hung heavily in the air around them and mingled with the bite of alcohol. Lilah frowned. She doubted these were professionals. She'd evaded members of the werewolf's Luna Guard sent to protect pack secrets. Even those sent by the vampire's Immortal Council had been smarter than these men. She let the beast out, shifting in a single move from woman to wolf.

Adrian stepped back.

Raising her muzzle to the ceiling, Lilah ignored him. Instead, she padded on soft paws to the door. A tiny growl erupted from her throat, lips pulled back to reveal sharp teeth. Hair rose on the back of her neck as she inhaled the intruder's scent. The urge to squat and piss to mark her territory nearly overtook her, until she shook her head and loped toward the front door.

Patience didn't come easily to the wolf, though Lilah retained enough of her human senses to know better than to rush outside. They thought to catch her asleep during the day, unable to move. Even now, she heard Adrian pull on clothes, cautious during the daylight hours. Lilah padded to the closed door and growled. They wouldn't get in here, not into her territory. Adrian and she had struggled long and hard to find a sanctuary, a place where she could feel safe.

She didn't ask for her dual nature, didn't want it, but now that she had two beasts she fought just to stay alive. The werewolves among whom she'd spent her human childhood hated her vampire side, and the vampires hated her recently-acquired wolf. If she ever saw Adrian's brother again, she'd kill him for starting all of this with a single bite. Sadly, the men outside weren't connected to the foolish, immature young vampire. In her werewolf form, she couldn't speak with Adrian to relay her plan. Not that she had one, but it would have been nice to communicate with her vampire lover. The men outside emitted the distinct smell of human and that made them dangerous to both of her and Adrian.

Lilah padded back to the bedroom, careful to keep her claws from clicking on the hardwood floors.

Her violet eyes locked with Adrian's rich, amber gaze, her look silently urging him to let her handle things. She doubted he'd obey, but she had to try. If he got hurt protecting her, she'd never forgive herself.

The door rattled. Behind the heavy, darkening curtains, the window crashed.

Instinctively, Lilah threw herself between the window and her lover, knowing her lupine body couldn't completely shield him from the sun.

The intruder spilled through the broken glass and torn fabric.

Lilah leapt. Fangs bared she bowled the man onto his back. Glass crunched beneath him. His heart pounded, the blood in his veins calling to her. Trapped in her wolf form, her canines couldn't lengthen, but she wanted to sink her teeth into his veins and taste the hot spray of his blood.

She pounced. Paws pressed to his shoulders, hind legs straddling his hips, she lowered her muzzle. A growl rumbled from her throat. Saliva dripped from her maw as she opened her mouth.

“Lilah! The door!” Adrian whirled to face the man, the heavy darkening curtains once again in place over the window.

In her bloodlust, she hadn’t heard the pounding on the door, but now the sounds of wood giving away filled her ears. With a nip at the man’s neck, she whirled off of him and into the living room. Claws gouged into the floor. Just as she stepped into the foyer, the door burst open and two men rushed through.

Lilah charged.