

ELLORA'S CAVE **LAWLESS**



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Inflamed

Mari Carr

Stuck in a rut in every way possible, Keri decides her first step in a bid for change is moving back to the Texas home she left years ago. The second step? Spicing up her sex life with the crazy-hot cowboys she left behind. Too responsible (and smart) to touch her way back when, Max and Shaw filled Keri's hottest teen dreams. Now she's older, wiser – and more than ready to make up for lost time.

Max and Shaw were always fond of Keri, but the stunning woman strutting back into their lives is a far cry from the serious, studious teen they remember. She wants to take a walk on the racy side – with *both* of them – and the cowboys are only too happy to oblige. As they suspected, the sex is explosive, though Max and Shaw aren't sure Keri can really handle everything they have to give.

Nor do they know if she can handle the sexy secret they've yet to divulge.

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Dedication

This story is dedicated to Rhian Cahill, an amazing critique partner and a wonderful friend.

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Chapter One

“Dammit.” Keri Shields climbed out of her rental car, cursing the billows of steam rising from beneath the hood. The car had started sputtering and she’d managed to pull it to the side of the road before it died completely. If she recalled correctly, she was about five miles from her uncle’s ranch.

Using her sleeve, she wiped the perspiration from her forehead. No wonder the car had overheated. This Texas sun was merciless. Bending into the driver’s door, she popped the hood then walked to the front of the car. A huge wave of red-hot heat pushed her a few paces away when she opened the hood, and she cursed again.

Reaching into her pocket, she switched on her iPhone. Yep. Still in a dead zone. She’d noticed a few miles back she’d lost service. Not unusual, considering she was in the middle of nowhere. There were only four ranches spanning three hundred miles, and she’d already passed two of them.

Keri turned and stared at the straight stretch of road ahead of her. It could be hours before another car happened along. She was headed for Mockingbird Ranch, her uncle Brody’s place. After escaping four years in a disastrous relationship with the world’s biggest jackass, she was ready for a change of scenery and a new lease on life. New York had officially chewed her up and spit her out. Uncle Brody had been begging her to move back for years and she’d finally wised up and accepted the invitation.

His baby sister, her mother, had gotten pregnant in high school. When Keri’s teenage father denied his role in her surprise entrance to the world, Uncle Brody – only twenty at the time – had stepped in and become Keri’s father in every real sense of the word. She’d missed her uncle terribly, suffering from genuine homesickness lately. He never failed to make her smile, to cheer her up when she was down. And God knew she could use a healthy dose of his optimism these days.

The sound of a vehicle approaching sent a jolt of relief through her. She took two steps toward the edge of the road and waved her arms, praying the driver of the pickup truck would take mercy on her.

The truck pulled in behind her car and she suppressed a grin when she spotted the driver. Maybe today was her lucky day after all. Max Lennin stepped out from behind the steering wheel and Keri immediately felt the libido that had died a painful death several years ago spring to life again.

When Shaw Stone opened the passenger-side door, she knew fate was smiling on her.

The two cowboys had worked on Mockingbird Ranch when she'd lived there, but they now owned Bronco Ranch, the spread next to her uncle's. They had inflamed her young, girlish fantasies for years. Given that the men were seven years her senior, she'd known her childhood crush would never be more than that. She'd been cursed with practicality – never prone to the flights of fancy her other schoolmates often succumbed to. There were girls who were born to follow their hearts and others ruled firmly by their heads. Unfortunately, she'd always been in the latter group.

That was about to change.

She pushed her long hair over her shoulder seductively. It had taken months for her boring bob to grow out to the long, wavy tresses she'd highlighted before leaving New York. Always a boring brunette, she'd decided to test the *blondes have more fun* theory.

As she watched Max and Shaw approach, she couldn't stifle her emerging excitement. After all, the playing field had evened out. There was nothing inappropriate – or illegal – about a twenty-six-year-old woman flirting with two men of thirty-three.

Well, okay, flirting with *both* of them was probably tacky, but what the hell? They'd never paid her any attention before and it would be good practice. Miss Conservative had traded in her turtlenecks and eyeglasses for contacts and cleavage. From here on out, she was going to be wild and wicked.

If they were surprised to see her in a too-tight T-shirt and Daisy Dukes, they didn't give it away with their expressions.

"Keri Shields," Max drawled. "Long time, no see."

She grinned. "Hey Max, Shaw. Y'all sure are a sight for sore eyes." She'd been back in Texas four hours and already she could feel her Southern accent returning.

Max looked at her popped hood and nodded. "I can see that."

He walked toward her and she started to step back, expecting him to check the engine. She was surprised when he stopped directly in front of her, bending to give her a hug, and laughed when he picked her up and spun her around.

"Stop hogging her," Shaw complained, until Max set her down and Shaw picked up where his friend left off. "Damn, baby, you look hot."

She fanned herself. "It's this damn Texas sun. It's brutal."

Both men laughed.

"Not exactly what I meant," Shaw clarified. "You're all grown up. Gorgeous."

She fought against the usual Keri response, determined not to blush. Changing her habits was going to be harder than she'd thought. "Thanks."

Max grinned as he wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "So, sweet Keri. Sort of expected you to come back here in a power suit and practical shoes. I'm glad to see city life didn't ruin you."

Clearly Brody had told them she was returning. She shrugged. "I may have spent the last few years in the city, but it's hard to erase a lifetime of ranch living."

Shaw leaned over the hood of her car and shook his head. "Where'd you get this piece of shi – I mean, junk?"

She smiled as Shaw attempted to curb his foul language. He and Max had always regarded her as an innocent little girl, always treated her with polite, if distant, courtesy. She stepped closer to the car, bending forward slightly and pretending to study the engine. Through her peripheral vision, she watched Shaw blink rapidly as she

gave him an eyeful of her sparkplugs. She didn't even bother to hide the fact her nipples were sharp enough to scratch the car's paint. Being with the two sexy cowboys was revving her engine. "The piece of shit is a rental. I didn't own a car in the city. Traveled by subway. I plan to buy one down here, now that I'm moving back for good. This was supposed to tide me over until that happened."

"Yeah, well, I'd say the radiator's not only empty, it's shot." They both straightened before Shaw closed the hood. "Leave it here. I'll call Danny to bring his tow truck. He can deliver this back to the shyster who screwed you by putting you in the thing to begin with."

Max opened the driver's side door and pulled the keys out of the ignition. "Where are your suitcases? We'll give you a ride to Brody's."

"In the trunk. I only have a couple of bags. I shipped the rest of my stuff. Should get here tomorrow."

She leaned in the driver's side window to grab her laptop as Max retrieved her suitcases from the trunk. Once she'd recovered her computer and purse, Shaw took her hand and led her to the passenger side of their truck.

She grinned as she climbed in and scooted to the middle of the large bench seat. It had been years since she'd ridden in a pickup. Damn, it felt good to be home again.

Shaw followed her as Max threw her bags in the truck bed, then climbed in and started the vehicle. Shaw rested his arm on the seat behind her and she tried to ignore how much his close proximity was pushing her buttons. She hadn't had sex in nearly eight months and she hadn't had *good* sex in years. Texas wasn't the only thing suffering a drought.

"Your uncle says you're an artist," Shaw said.

"Graphic artist," she amended. "I do most of my creating on the computer." She tapped her laptop case.

Max pulled out onto the road. "Brody says you're really good. Says you've made quite a name for yourself."

She rolled her eyes. Her uncle had always been her biggest fan—boasting about her constantly, whether she deserved it or not. “I see Uncle Brody’s been bragging on me again. I make enough to pay the bills. How are things on Bronco Ranch? I was surprised when I heard y’all had taken it over.”

Shaw turned toward her. “Things are pretty good. Can’t complain. Max and I bought the ranch a couple years ago after old man Hawkins retired and moved to Florida. Price was right and we’d been saving our money for some property for quite a while.”

Max glanced her way. “Brody will enjoy having you back. You stayed away a long time. What’s it been? Eight years now?”

She nodded. “Yeah. Life sort of got in the way of coming back to visit. You know how it is.”

“Eight years,” Max repeated. “So fill us in. What have you been up to?”

Keri laughed uneasily. She was leery to admit how little she had to show for her time away. “You don’t really mean to tell me Brody hasn’t bored you to tears with every nitty-gritty detail of my less than exciting life?”

Shaw chuckled. “Oh, I think your uncle may have mentioned you a few or twenty-thousand times. Still rather hear it from you though.”

Keri sighed. “I went to college, got my degree and then moved to New York City for a few years.”

Both men waited for her to elaborate, but sadly, there wasn’t much more to say.

“Maybe your uncle’s version *is* more interesting,” Max teased. “What about your job? What are you going to do now that you’re living here?”

“I do freelance work and I’ve built a decent client list. Besides an occasional bit of business travel, I can set up an office at Brody’s and work from there.”

Max turned onto the long lane that would lead to her uncle’s ranch. She let her eyes soak in her first look at the beloved place. She felt like she was coming out of a self-

created cocoon. She took a deep breath of dry Texas air, ready to spread her wings and fly.

"You dating anybody?" Max asked.

"Not anymore." The admission flew from her lips and she wished she hadn't been quite so candid.

"Good," Shaw replied.

Keri's breath caught as she wondered about his response. Her schoolgirl fantasies came alive once more as she remembered all the time she'd spent spying on the two men sitting beside her. Her uncle constantly teased her about her crushes on his young ranch hands. At eighteen, she'd been nowhere near woman enough for the cowboys. Rumors of their exploits, of the two of them sharing women, had reached even her far-too-sheltered ears and she'd been fascinated. Now she was an adult, and what had seemed so taboo in her teens presently sounded pretty fucking hot.

Then she recalled Brody's penchant for telling anybody within a hundred-mile radius everything about her. No uncle ever doted more. She assumed it was because he'd never married and had no children of his own. She was his little girl and, for better or worse, his favorite topic of conversation. While there were times when that habit was flattering, there were times—like now—when it made her uneasy. Had her uncle told Max and Shaw about her disastrous relationship? Maybe Shaw's approval of her dating status was based on the fact that he agreed with Brody, that she was better off without John Callenda in her life.

Her heart lurched as she thought about John. She'd been a fool for years, blind to so many things. She closed her eyes briefly, trying to erase the pain associated with the memories. John was her past, a part of her previous life. Things were going to be different from now on.

When she opened her eyes, Shaw and Max were both looking at her. She wasn't sure what they saw on her face, but she quickly pasted on a carefree smile. The

expression became genuine when she glanced out the window once more and Uncle Brody's house came into view.

"Thank God," she whispered. "I'm home."

Brody stepped out onto the front porch, his large cowboy hat shading his eyes. He'd been expecting her arrival. Knowing him, he'd been pacing the floor all afternoon waiting for her to show up.

Max pulled in front of the house and parked the truck. Shaw hopped out then turned to help her. His large hands gripped her waist and she struggled to stifle the arousal the simple touch instilled.

"There's my girl," Brody said, coming down the porch steps.

Keri launched herself into his strong embrace, soaking in the smells that were so comforting, so thoroughly Uncle Brody—wood smoke, horses, peppermint, coffee and the slightest trace of his favorite cologne. For a moment she was so overwhelmed, her throat clogged and she found it difficult to speak.

She'd been merely going through the motions the past few months, letting her lease run out, packing up her apartment, informing her clients of her impending move. She'd crossed all the T's and dotted all the I's, patiently waiting for the day she could escape her old life and embark on a new adventure.

Brody must have sensed the emotions welling inside her, for he simply held her tight.

When she managed to pull herself together, she released him and took a small step back. Her uncle cupped her cheek with his calloused hand and studied her face. She didn't bother to hide anything she was feeling. It would be pointless. He knew her too well.

He leaned closer, speaking softly, and she was reminded that Max and Shaw were still there. "You're home now. Everything will be fine."

She smiled, blinking rapidly to stem the flow of tears his kindness provoked. He knew how badly her breakup with John had hurt her. When John walked out, he'd left her shattered, and she was forced to take a long, hard look at herself and the woman she'd become.

Brody turned to the men standing behind her. "Max. Shaw. Have to say I wasn't expecting to see you two here today."

As Max retrieved her luggage, Shaw and Keri explained about her car troubles. Brody thanked them for saving her from a long, hot walk and invited them to supper.

Keri was pleased – and more than a little excited – when they accepted.

* * * * *

It felt like old times as they sat down to dinner. Usually her uncle ate with the ranch hands in the kitchen, but tonight he'd planned a special *welcome home* meal in the dining room. She'd spent all of her life sharing meals, listening to the men discuss the ranch and their day. Having Max and Shaw with them at the table felt right. Her uncle had been struggling to find ranch hands as reliable and hardworking as them since they'd left and she knew he missed having them around on a day-to-day basis. Max and Shaw had been a part of Mockingbird Ranch from the time she'd turned twelve until two years ago. They were more than neighbors. They were family.

"So Liv married Rem Bradley," she said, as the three men attempted to catch her up on all the changes that had occurred during her absence. "I was surprised to hear that."

Max nodded. "Yep. Rumor has it they're expecting another baby around Christmastime. It'll be their third."

The Bradleys owned one of the four ranches in the area. They were good people, kind neighbors, and Keri was looking forward to reconnecting with them. "I think I remember Brody mentioning that Liv's brother Jeb married too."

Shaw speared a bit of meatloaf with his fork. "He finally convinced his high-school sweetheart Claire to marry him. They're running the ranch next to Rem's."

"That's nice. I sort of thought Jeb would follow the rodeo forever."

Brody wiped his mouth with his napkin. "Everybody's gotta grow up sometime. I've noticed even these two scoundrels are slowing down in their advanced years."

They all laughed as Shaw raised his hand in denial. "You don't have to worry about *me* growing up, and you might wanna watch yourself throwing around that *advanced years* comment, old man. People who live in glass houses..."

Brody shrugged good-naturedly. "Speaking of houses, I've put a fresh coat of paint on the walls in the office. I never use the damn room, so it's yours, Keri. You can set up your computer stuff in there, hang whatever pictures you want."

Keri smiled at her uncle's generosity. "That sounds great. Thanks, Brody. As long as your internet service works, I'll be set."

"It works," Brody said with a grin. "Only dead zone as far as internet and cell service is on that six-mile stretch of road where you managed to break down."

She laughed. "I didn't break down. The damn car did."

Her uncle's cell phone rang and he pulled it out of his pocket, waving it at her as if to prove his point. He started to turn it off but frowned when he read the caller ID. Rising, he excused himself. "I need to take this."

He surprised Keri by leaving the room. Her uncle was a stickler for the dinner hour. He never allowed phone calls during meals.

"He's missed you," Shaw said.

Keri smiled. "I've missed him too. More than I can say."

"Your mother doing okay?" Max asked.

She nodded. "Yep. She finally settled down and got married. Found a nice man, an insurance salesman. They live in Philly. She tried to convince me to move there when I said I was sick of New York, but I couldn't see the point in trading one city for another."

Shaw finished his dinner, put down his fork and wiped his mouth with a napkin. "What made you decide to move? Your uncle seemed to think you loved the hustle and bustle of city living."

She leaned back against her chair, uncertain she could explain her reasons in a way that would make sense. "I suppose I just woke up one morning and realized I was about a million miles away from where I wanted to be."

Max narrowed his eyes. Keri suspected he wanted that answer explained further. However, before he could question her, Brody came back into the room. "I need to run into town for a little while."

Keri stood up. "Is everything okay?"

"Oh yeah. Nothing serious. One of my hands got into a fight at a bar and needs somebody to bail him out. Dumbass." Brody looked at Max and Shaw in turn. "Hard to find good help. I'm afraid you were the last two trustworthy cowboys in the state."

Max smiled at her uncle's compliment. "Want us to go pick him up? It's Keri's first night home."

Brody shook his head. "No. Keri, you mind if I leave you here with these two fellas for a while? I told the sheriff I'd come in personally and vouch for him."

Keri was glad she wasn't going to be on the receiving end of the lecture Brody's ranch hand was about to get. She suspected it would be a long trip from town for the man. "It's just the first night of many. We have plenty of time to catch up. We'll be on each other's nerves in no time."

Brody gave her a quick buss on the cheek. "Never happen. I'll be back as soon as I can."

Max and Shaw rose as Brody shook their hands, thanking them again for bringing her home.

"Night, Brody," Max said. Her uncle picked up the keys to his truck. They followed Brody outside, standing on the front porch and watching him drive away.

"I guess y'all need to be getting back to Bronco Ranch. I didn't mean to keep you out all afternoon."

Shaw put a friendly arm around her shoulders. "It wasn't exactly a hardship blowing off work to spend the day with a pretty woman."

She laughed lightly and then walked down the porch steps, soaking in the fresh air and peacefulness as dusk descended. Looking up, she spotted more than a few stars in the sky. "Damn. I think I missed the stars most of all."

Kicking off her shoes, she walked barefoot through the grass until she found a nice thick patch. Then she sat down and lay back, looking up at the evening sky.

Max and Shaw walked over to stand above her, laughing.

She waved her hand. "You're blocking my view," she joked.

Max looked at Shaw, who shrugged. Then they both claimed a side, lying down next to her.

Keri sighed contentedly. "There's nothing in the world like a night sky bright with stars and complete silence."

Neither man said anything. She appreciated them giving her some time to simply enjoy the moment. She'd had a wonderful evening, laughing more than she had in months. She'd been right to come home.

"So who broke your heart?" Shaw asked after several minutes.

His question caught her unaware and she jerked slightly. "Who said anyone—"

Max's deep voice halted any denials she might make. "Don't, Keri. Maybe we haven't seen you in years, but we still know you and care about you. You don't have to pretend like everything's okay with us."

She took one last look at the sky and then closed her eyes. How many times had she confided her secret hurts to these men? All through high school they'd listened to her rage about mean girls who'd bullied her and consoled her over lost boyfriends. They'd offered advice, patience and two strong shoulders to cry on.

"His name was John. We dated four years. Lived together two of those years. I was with a company at the time, rather than doing freelance work. John worked in banking. I came home from the office one day and discovered half the place packed in boxes."

"He was moving out and hadn't bothered to tell you?" Max asked, his voice laced with disgust.

Keri smiled at him. "Yep. Pretty shitty thing to do. He came out of the kitchen, looked at me and just shrugged. I don't think he'd expected me home so early. I had a tendency to work long hours."

"Jesus. Guy's a prick," Shaw muttered.

She couldn't help but agree. "I asked him what he was doing and he said he was leaving. Said he couldn't live in the hamster cage with me anymore."

"What the fuck does that mean?" Max rolled toward her, resting his head on his hand. Shaw followed suit. Their close proximity, their intent stares, made her feel warm and cherished. It had been a very long time since she hadn't felt completely and utterly alone. She hadn't intended to tell them any of this. Even Brody only knew bits of the story. She'd hidden most of the details, feeling almost ashamed for her part in the breakup.

"He said every morning we climbed on the wheel and started walking, never going anywhere, never seeing anything different. We were both in constant motion and yet we were standing still."

Max reached over to brush a strand of hair away from her eyes. The gesture was simple, friendly, but it caused her heart to stutter.

"Anyway," she continued, "I got pissed off. I yelled at him, called him every nasty name in the book. I think I even threw a few things."

"Good for you," Shaw said.

"Didn't matter. He still left. Then I did all the classic heartbroken girl things. I cried, listened to sad love songs, ate gallons of ice cream and cursed John's name all the way to hell and back. Then I woke up one morning and realized he'd been right."

Max shook his head. "Keri, the jerk packed all his shit without even telling you he was leaving. That's not *right*."

"No. The way he left was completely wrong, but his reasons weren't. We had become everything he'd described – predictable, boring. Our days were only unique in that they were all exactly the same."

Shaw sat up, his face too serious for the normally fun-loving man. "There's nothing wrong with stability, Keri."

She pushed herself to sit cross-legged next to him. "I know that. But there's also a lot to be said for spontaneity, adventure. I started looking at my life and I realized there was a pattern. I've always been reliable, practical Keri. I wake up every morning with a plan for that day."

"That just means you're organized," Max interjected.

She laughed. Both men seemed determined to make her feel better about a situation that wasn't bothering her anymore. She'd found her own way out of the mess she'd called a life. Hell, the fact she was sitting here proved that.

"Dammit," she said, "will you two listen to me? I'm not upset about the breakup with John. In a way, he set me free, and in more ways than just changing my Facebook status to single again. His leaving was a wake-up call. I'd become complacent with my life, going through the motions, but I wasn't happy. In my too-organized, super-stable way, I'd forgotten to pencil in time for laughter and dancing and a million other tiny little things that make life worth living."

"Is that what the new hairdo and wardrobe are about?" Max asked. "Changing yourself?"

She shrugged. "I don't know that I can change totally. I mean, I'm twenty-six years old and I think, deep down, I am who I am. All I want to do is break some bad habits, escape the rut I've been traveling in."

Shaw picked a blade of grass and put it between his lips. "That's why you came back to Texas." It wasn't a question, and Keri sensed that Shaw understood what had driven her decision to return home.

"Yep. I figured if I was going to get a fresh start, a change of scenery might be the best place to begin. Texas is home to me. I figured this was the safest place for me to break out of my shell."

"So what's your plan?" Max asked.

She grinned. "That's the beauty of it. I don't have one. I'm taking life one day at a time and seeing where it leads me."

"Well, I don't know if this counts as going wild or anything, but what do you say to going out with me and Shaw on Friday night? We'll take you to one of the honky-tonks in town. We can listen to some country music, shoot some pool, drink a couple pitchers of PBR and do a little Texas two-stepping."

"You guys aren't seriously still drinking Pabst Blue Ribbon, are you?"

Shaw laughed. "I guess you're a Heineken girl now that you're citified."

She rolled her eyes. "PBR will be fine. That sounds like fun actually," she said. "I haven't gone dancing in ages, but I gotta warn you, I never got the hang of two-steppin'."

Shaw stood up and reached down to give her a hand. "That's because you never danced it with the right man. The secret to a successful two-step is to find a big guy and hang on for dear life." As he spoke, he pulled her close and started dancing her around the front yard. She laughed as he twirled her. Max rose and leaned against a tree, shaking his head and chuckling at Shaw's silliness.

When Shaw finally stopped, she clung to his arms, enjoying the dizzy, lightheaded giddiness the dance had produced.

Max walked up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. "Easy now," he murmured in her ear. "Don't fall down."

As his strong arms embraced her, pulling her tightly to his chest, Shaw stood his ground in front of her. For just a moment she let herself soak up their warmth, their vibrancy. Neither man seemed bothered by the fact that they were standing so near to each other. They'd always been best friends, closer than brothers, and their tight embrace blew her schoolgirl fantasies out of the water. She was a woman now – and her imagination was leading her down some racy, exciting paths. A wave of heat passed through her body at the thought of all the fun the three of them could have together.

She was tempted to test the waters, see if she could spark their interest. She'd been too young the last time they'd all been together, but now...

Max moved away before she could act and she feared perhaps she'd wasted her chance by standing there like a mute fool.

Get out of your head, Keri, and into the moment.

Shaw winked at her and she licked her lips, her gaze going to Shaw's mouth. What would he do if she closed the distance between them and kissed him?

Wild Keri wouldn't question, she would do.

She took a step toward Shaw but Max halted her by announcing, "Well, I guess we should be going."

She blinked, trying to put the brakes on her libido. It was hard for her to let go of the idea that she *really* wanted to kiss them. Both of them. God, she was taking this spontaneous shit to a previously unexplored level. She'd never considered herself a ménage girl. Geez, she'd been an utter failure at keeping *one* man happy. What chance did she have at pleasing two?

Neither Max nor Shaw had indicated they were interested in anything more than renewing their old friendship and here she was, contemplating seducing both of them. Two men. How the hell did she intend to accomplish that?

“Okay,” she said, wincing slightly at the too-loud tone of her voice.

She turned around quickly and walked toward their Ford, careful to stay ahead of them so they couldn’t see her blush. Her cheeks were on fire from unrequited desire and humiliation.

Practical Keri taunted her.

I would never have gotten into such a state.

She closed her eyes and told practical Keri to shut up.

When they reached the truck, Shaw stopped next to her, bending to give her a hug. She’d noticed his hulking size when they were dancing. When he wrapped his arms around her, she felt as if she could disappear inside his muscular mass. It felt good.

“Welcome home, Keri,” he murmured against the top of her head.

She accepted the embrace as a friendly gesture, taking care not to let her horny thoughts run away with her again. However, when she tried to pull back, Shaw’s grip tightened. He lifted her face with a hand under her chin. When she looked up, he was there. His lips lightly grazed hers, just a gentle brush—a quiet promise of more to come.

When Shaw pulled away she frowned, but his wolfish grin answered her unspoken question. Obviously he’d recognized her desire to kiss him. She didn’t have time to speak before Max grasped her waist and turned her toward him.

His eyes were dark with lust. Her mouth went dry. “We’ll pick you up around eight on Friday.”

She’d barely nodded before Max’s lips were on hers. Unlike Shaw, Max didn’t leave any question in her mind. Her interest was returned. Tenfold. He pushed her lips apart, his tongue teasing hers. She started to lift her arms to wrap them around his neck but he moved away before she could return the kiss properly.

Her mind and body were on system overload. She'd been home less than four hours and already she was standing in front of her uncle's house being kissed by not one, but two of the hottest cowboys in the state. Yee haw for new beginnings!

Shaw broke the silence. "Guess you better be careful what you wish for."

She looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"If you're looking to go wild, you came to the right place."

Chapter Two

Max splashed the last of the shaving cream from his face as Shaw emerged from the shower. He watched his best friend dry off through the reflection in the mirror and felt his cock twitch. He and Shaw had succumbed to their attraction to each other years ago. Regardless of the fact that they had sex more nights than not, his hunger for the man never wavered, never lessened.

Shaw caught his eye in the mirror and wiggled his eyebrows, gesturing to Max's erection. "You wanna take the edge off that before we leave or suffer all night?"

Max shook his head. "Very funny. You realize we're gonna have to work overtime to make up for that shit you pulled the other night at Brody's place."

Shaw wrapped a towel around his hips. He walked up behind Max, letting him feel his hard-on through the fluffy layer of cotton. "Shit *I* pulled? I gave Keri a neighborly little kiss goodnight. You were the one who took it to the next level."

Max sighed. His best friend was right. Shaw had innocently kissed Keri and Max's brain handed all control over to his cock. The sight of her in Shaw's arms had sent his arousal into orbit. He'd never been so turned-on. Even now, three days later, he only had to imagine Keri and Shaw kissing and his cock went brick-hard. "Yeah. You're right."

Shaw bit Max on the shoulder, making him groan. One of the main reasons sex with Shaw was so hot was the fact that they both enjoyed it rough.

"Take it easy, Max. Keri didn't seem particularly upset by either kiss."

Max turned quickly. Gripping Shaw's hips, he roughly pulled the towel off his friend, tossing it to the floor. "That's not the point, is it? It's been a long time since we've had a woman in our bed, and even then it wasn't anything more than a bar hook-up. Keri's different. You *know* that."

Shaw moaned in reply when Max grabbed his cock, rubbing it slowly, firmly. “Keri’s different,” Shaw agreed, “but not in a bad way. Not in a *wrong* way.”

Max shook his head even as he continued to caress Shaw’s erection. “I’m not gonna let you push Keri into something she isn’t ready for. Something she might not even want.”

“Oh, she wants us, Max. Make no mistake about that. She wants *both* of us. And she wants to take a walk on the wild side.”

Shaw leaned forward and kissed him with the same bullshit softness he’d offered Keri the other night. It wasn’t enough.

“Goddamn it,” Max growled. “Kiss me like you mean it or fuck off.”

Shaw grinned and pulled away. Max narrowed his eyes as Shaw instigated a round of chicken. Two could play that game. He released Shaw’s cock.

Max took satisfaction in the way Shaw shuddered slightly at the loss of his firm grip. Unfortunately, Shaw was too quick to recover. He stepped away and picked up the towel once more.

“Looks like we’re both gonna be in pain tonight.”

Shaw turned and walked toward his bedroom, while Max took a deep breath and released it in annoyance. He hated how Shaw could turn his arousal on and off so easily.

Max needed to get control of himself. He was walking around like a live wire and he ran the risk of electrocuting himself with his pent-up lust. This was Shaw’s fucking fault. He’d purposely kissed Keri, knowing it would ignite Max’s libido.

He and Shaw had been best friends since grade school, ever since Max’s family took in Shaw as a foster child. It wasn’t until they hit their twenties that they admitted their friendship stretched beyond the boundaries of what the local cowboys viewed as *normal*.

They'd always enjoyed sharing women, but one night the caresses got a bit out of hand. In the morning, the woman left but Shaw and Max remained in bed, giving in to needs they'd suppressed for years.

They hid the true nature of their relationship from everyone, though Max thought there were a few folks in the area who suspected the truth, Keri's Uncle Brody being at the top of that list. But while he and Shaw sated their baser urges with each other, Max was aware something was missing.

Occasionally they traveled to Dallas or Austin on business and it was there that they'd pick up a woman for a night or two. Max never felt closer to Shaw than at those times. While he loved the rough touch of his best friend, he missed the softness of a woman. Shaw felt the same way. Problem was finding a woman willing to take on two ornery cowboys, one who could also accept the fact she wouldn't be the only one getting fucked every night.

Max rubbed his jaw in frustration and acknowledged his cock wasn't gonna give up. "Fuck," he muttered, slamming out of the bathroom and down the hall to Shaw's room. He pushed the door open with more force than he'd intended, the wood crashing against the wall loudly.

Shaw hadn't even bothered to get dressed. Instead, he lay on the bed—naked, lightly stroking his still-hard cock. "That took longer than I'd expected. I was actually starting to worry."

Shaw laughed, but Max wasn't in the mood for his friend's jokes. He crossed the room, crawling onto the bed. "Fuck you, Shaw."

"Okay," Shaw teased, reaching for Max. They kissed roughly and Max enjoyed the feel of Shaw's unshaven jaw against his smooth one.

"We're not going to hit on Keri," Max said as he moved away from Shaw's lips, his mouth traveling down his friend's chest.

Shaw threw his head back against the mattress as Max's lips descended to his cock. "She wants us," he said through gritted teeth. "Stop being so stubborn."

Max took Shaw's cock in his hand, stroking it deeply. "Despite her hankerin' to go a little crazy, I don't see Keri as a one-night-stand kind of girl. Or a threesome one, for that matter. We're going out with her tonight as friends. Nothing more."

Shaw moaned when Max dipped his head, taking his cock all the way into his mouth on one stroke. "Goddamn it, Max. So good."

Shaw's hand tangled in Max's hair, pushing him onto his cock harder, faster. Max felt the urgency in Shaw, knew how badly his friend needed him. It had been like this since Keri crashed-landed—or should he say broke down—into their lives again. Ever since sharing goodnight kisses with her, Max and Shaw had both been insatiable, horny as fuck.

Max continued to work Shaw's cock with his mouth. Years of practice had honed his skills and Max knew exactly what to do to make his friend come. Over and over he plunged, taking Shaw to the back of his throat. When he reached down and pulled firmly on his friend's balls, he knew Shaw was a goner.

"I want her," Shaw said, the confession coming out as a gasp when he came. Max swallowed Shaw's come as the truth struck him like a blow to the head.

He wanted her too.

Max pulled away as Shaw's cock softened. He wiped his mouth with the back of his forearm, his erection throbbing in pain, demanding release, but he couldn't let go of his concern long enough to seek his own relief. He needed to convince Shaw before they left to pick up Keri or things could get real messy, real fast. "We can't, Shaw. It's Keri. Even if she doesn't balk at the idea of a threesome, what's she going to say when she realizes we won't just fuck her, but each other as well?"

Shaw captured his gaze, refused to let it go. "She's the one for us. I just know it."

"She's been back three days. That's sort of an insane declaration to make."

Shaw shrugged. "I knew she was special years ago."

Max narrowed his eyes. "She was a kid the last time she lived here."

"I know that, asshole. I'm just saying she's always been easy to be around and talk to. She was never a typical, annoying teenage girl. Even back then she was down-to-earth—not prone to drama and all that eye-rolling shit most young girls do. I think it's obvious that hasn't changed. Hell, Max. We watched her grow up. We *know* her. Sure, she's been gone a long time and I can see she's changed a bit, but essentially she's still Keri. Besides, I think she's on to us." Shaw spoke with self-deprecating humor. "She's too sharp for us to fool her."

Max sank down onto a chair beside Shaw's bed. He suspected his friend was only partially right. He'd immediately sensed the other night that Keri knew about their penchant for sharing. If her pretty blushes were anything to go by, he'd say she was turned-on by the idea. However, he wasn't so sure she knew about their bisexuality.

Besides, regardless of Shaw's assumptions, there was a big difference between thinking something and knowing it. What if their suspicions were wrong?

"What if she freaks out? What if she tells Brody? Jesus, he'll fucking kill us."

Shaw shook his head. "No. I don't think he will. And she's not gonna freak, Max. Keri's solid, you know that."

Max lowered his head into his hands, suddenly feeling weary. Unlike Shaw and his *let the cards fall where they may* mentality, Max was too rooted in reality and all the shit that came with it. "It's too risky."

"It's right."

Max stood up, fury rising. "Goddamn it, Shaw. Think about what could happen if you're wrong. This is *Keri*. I don't want to hurt her."

Shaw sat up, his face more serious than Max had ever seen it. He was quiet for several moments. "How long do you think this will last, Max?" Shaw gestured between them and Max felt his stomach sink to his feet. "I'm not the only one who realizes this isn't what we want forever. I need more. This is companionship and great sex. I want a woman. Someone I can coddle, care for, make love to. I think you feel the same way."

Max closed his eyes, wished he could deny that he felt exactly the same way, but he couldn't. It wasn't fair to Shaw to pretend otherwise. "I want that too," he whispered.

"We're not gonna find it if we keep hiding our needs. Keri's a beautiful, sensitive, intelligent woman. We know her, and I don't think she or Brody would freak out like you said. In fact, think about it. Brody reads us her emails—all of them. For years he's told us everything about her. Sometimes I think—"

Max cut him off, shaking his head. "There's no way Brody's pushing her toward us. At least, not *both* of us."

Shaw shrugged, dropping the subject, but Max could see his friend wasn't convinced.

Then he recalled Keri's comments about the asshole who'd hurt her. It had killed him to listen to her put herself down as boring the other night after dinner. If she belonged to them, they'd find a way to prove to her that she was perfect just the way she was.

Shaw scooted to the edge of the mattress and looked at him. "You felt it the other night. Admit it. When the three of us were lying in that grass, it was like..."

Shaw paused, searching for the word, but Max knew it. "Electricity," he said, finishing his friend's thought.

"Yeah. That's it. Electric. Listen, we'll play it cool tonight if you want. Just three old friends going out for drinks, getting reacquainted. But I'm telling you right now, if Keri gives off the tiniest vibe she's interested in more, I'm not gonna hold back."

Max closed his eyes briefly and accepted he wouldn't get any more than that from his friend. It was a typical Shaw approach to life—he always lived in the moment. Now that Max thought about it, he realized Shaw was living the life Keri was aspiring to.

Shaw rose from the bed and pointed at Max's unwavering erection. "Want a little help with that?" he asked with a rueful grin. "Feelin' kind of guilty about not returning the favor."

Max shook his head. "I'm all right. It's not like I wasn't gonna walk around with a boner all night anyway. Keri inspires all sorts of wicked images in my head."

Shaw laughed. "In both heads."

Max didn't move to his own room as Shaw began to dress. Instead he watched his friend, considering everything he had said. Maybe Keri wasn't the only one who needed to break out of a rut, who needed a fresh outlook on life.

Shaw was right. The two of them had been spinning wheels for years and as much as it bugged Max to admit it, it was his fault they were stuck.

"We'll play by ear," Max finally said, hoping he wasn't making the biggest mistake of his life.

Shaw looked up from buttoning his shirt and grinned. "I got a good feeling about this, Max. You won't be sorry. Promise."

* * * * *

Shaw tossed back the last of his beer and then waved the waitress over, asking her to set them up with another round. They'd danced up a sweat, Max and Shaw each taking turns with Keri on the floor.

"Thought you said you couldn't two-step," Shaw said. She'd more than held her own, twirling to the music like a professional dancer.

She laughed. "You were right. I'd never had the right partners before."

Shaw considered her answer and the way she looked at them. Her gaze was hungry, inviting. He glanced at Max, but his friend shook his head slightly. Obviously Max was going to be stubborn. Shaw was tempted to pull him outside and tell him how often Keri's hand had grazed his ass when they were dancing. She was putting out more than a few signals, and his pigheaded friend was pointedly ignoring them.

Shaw looked at her flushed face and decided it was probably time for a break.

"How about a game of pool?" he suggested. "There's a small room off the back of the bar that doesn't get used much."

Keri nodded quickly. "Sounds like fun. I haven't played pool since college."

Shaw rubbed his hands together as they rose and started toward the back room. He gave her an appraising look. "Is that right? Hmmm. Maybe we should come up with a wager then."

Max shook his head, laughing. "He's a shark, Keri. Beware."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about me," Keri replied. She stood and let Shaw tug her toward the pool room before continuing. "I may have been gone awhile but I have a very long memory. Don't think I've forgotten about you scamming me out of two weeks' allowance while teaching me how to play Texas Hold 'Em my sophomore year."

Shaw laughed at the memory. "Hey, darlin'. I warned you before you joined that game, if you played with the big dogs, you were bound to get bit."

"Maybe so, but be warned, sometimes the puppy bites back."

Her sexy innuendo was accompanied by a quick glance below his waist. Shaw reconciled himself to the fact that his cock—which had been residing at half-mast most of the night—was finished fooling around and had made a full-fledged appearance. Nothing short of sex or a quick hand-job in the bathroom was going to cure that affliction. Keri noticed his problem and gave him a wicked grin.

"By the way," she said, "you can't claim that as a handicap."

Shaw's mouth went dry at her red-hot tease and he looked around to see if Max had heard. Sadly, his friend was still at the table handing the waitress some money and grabbing their fresh beers. Fuck. It was going to be a long night.

They walked into the back room and claimed the pool table just being vacated by a couple of cowboys. The room was dark and dingy and the table wasn't exactly level, which explained why no one ever used it. Shaw was simply using it as an excuse to get Keri alone for a little while. The loud music was dimmed by the walls, so there was no way Max could continue to pretend not to hear that she was coming on to them.

Shaw narrowed his eyes as one of the men leaving the room slowed his departure to check out Keri more thoroughly. She was wearing a miniskirt that was two inches too close to baring too much for Shaw's comfort. While he hadn't minded getting a good look at her long, luscious legs in the truck on the way here, he'd been battling the impulse to pulverize every man who'd leered at her since they'd entered the bar.

"So how do you want to do this?" Keri asked as she picked up a pool cue. "Kind of hard to play pool with three people."

"You're on my team," Max replied, entering the room and setting the beers down on the lone table. "We'll take turns shooting against Shaw."

Shaw narrowed his eyes. "How come you get Keri? Maybe I want her on my team."

Keri laughed. "Believe me, I'm going to be the weakest link. Personally, I think you two should be fighting over who has to take me."

Shaw suppressed a groan. He wanted to take her, all right. "I don't think that's ever gonna be a fight Max and I will have."

Max threw him a warning glance as he bent down to rack the balls. "We'll take turns. I get Keri for the first game. You can have her next time."

"Or," Shaw said, rubbing chalk over the tip of his cue, "we could share her. She'll play with both of us." Shaw walked up behind her, bending her slightly over the table. "In the interest of sharing our vast experience with you, of course." He handed her the stick and wrapped his arms around her, pretending to show her how to hold the pool cue. The move was purely sensual. Shaw ignored the daggers he could feel Max shooting in his direction as his friend finished racking the balls. Shaw was done pretending so that Max could soothe his guilty conscience. She may still be sweet Keri, but she wasn't an innocent by any stretch of the imagination. Time to take off the kid gloves.

Keri grinned as she looked over her shoulder. His wicked intentions weren't lost on her. She bent lower and pushed back slightly, her ass rubbing against Shaw's cock.

"Like this?" she purred.

He gritted his teeth in an attempt to withstand her sneak attack. She'd taken him down with his own weapon. There was no way to mistake her movements as anything other than a pure come-on.

All bets were off.

He'd warned Max. Told him he wouldn't resist this. Keri was waving a red flag and he was more than prepared to charge. He gave Max a look to say just that, but his friend's gaze had been captured and Shaw knew the fight was over. Max licked his lips as he stared at Keri's breasts. Obviously, while her ass was tormenting Shaw's cock, she was also making sure Max got a bird's-eye view of her ample cleavage.

She was seducing both of them. Inflaming their senses with light touches, subtle caresses and not so innocent teasing. God. She was incredible.

"So I hold the stick like this?" she asked, running her hand along the pool cue seductively—making Shaw wish it was his cock in her grip instead—until her hands were in the proper position.

Shaw struggled to answer. He was suffering from a serious lack of blood to the brain. He swallowed heavily and then, simply because he couldn't resist the desire to touch her, he moved closer, pressing his cock against her ass and adjusting her hands slightly. "Hold your hand lower on the base." Shaw placed his hand over hers and slowly slid it into position. "Make sure you keep a nice, firm grip."

She nodded, but before she could reply Max cleared his throat.

"Why don't *you* break, Shaw?" His friend's voice was tight. Max was on edge. Shaw glanced at him, expecting to see recrimination, disapproval. He was surprised by the sheer determination and unrelenting hunger on his best friend's face. While the blowjob Max had given him earlier had taken the slightest pressure off Shaw's arousal, Max looked like a powder keg about to blow. "What do you say we get this show on the road?"

Shaw heard the double meaning in Max's question. His friend was on board. Shaw grinned. They were in this together. Operation Future was underway and Keri Shields wasn't going to know what hit her.

Shaw eased back to let Keri stand, immediately missing her body. Luckily the back room remained empty. There was no way he could shield the erection straining against the front of his jeans. Given the fact that they were alone, he didn't even bother to try. Keri handed him the stick and, as he positioned the cue ball, he could practically feel her gaze lingering beneath his waist.

"When you start the game," he said, looking at Keri, "you want to make sure your aim is true. You need to hit the first ball head on with a lot of power."

She nodded and licked her lips. "Lots of power. Got it."

He made his shot, sending the colorful balls bouncing all around the green felt and sinking the nine ball. "Looks like I have stripes."

Max acknowledged his comment with a brief nod. His best friend had walked around the table and was standing next to Keri. Shaw could see her breathing was erratic, heavier than normal, her chest rising and falling rapidly. While she was pushing every hot button inside them, it was clear she was just as susceptible to the increased temperature in the room. How long would they continue to tease, to skirt around the inevitable outcome of this game?

Shaw lined up his next shot but missed when Keri moved directly into his line of vision and pushed her pretty blonde hair off her shoulder, her hand lightly grazing her breast as she moved.

He narrowed his eyes when Max chuckled at his miss. "Tough luck, buddy. My turn." Max sized up the table and then reached for Keri.

"Come here," Max said. Shaw felt his cock twitch at the deep tone of command in his friend's voice. While he considered himself a laid-back, easy lover, there was no denying he enjoyed Max's dominant side. The idea of watching Max take control of

Keri sent a shard of exhilaration slicing through his body, the impact more fierce than being hit by lightning. No doubt Max would want to tie her up, blindfold her, gag her.

The image was a potent one and, unable to resist, Shaw ran his hand over his covered cock, trying to find the tiniest bit of relief. Keri sucked in a deep breath as she watched. Max released a muttered curse.

Keri stood in front of Max, and Shaw saw exactly what his friend had seen earlier, when Shaw had held her in a similar position. Her nipples were pushing through the thin material of her low-cut T-shirt. Shaw's mouth watered, desperate to suck on the tight nubs. One of the things he missed most about sleeping with a woman was breasts. He looked at Keri's large, full mounds and knew he could play with hers for hours on end and still want more.

Max pushed on Keri's back, pressing her lower to the playing surface. "The secret to this game," his friend murmured, "is to be very sure of every move you make, because from this point on, things get serious."

Damn Max and his warnings.

Keri's eyes drifted shut and Shaw watched her shudder lightly. He didn't realize he'd started praying silently until she disrupted his unspoken mantra.

"I'm sure," she whispered, opening her eyes to look at Shaw and then over her shoulder at Max. "Very, *very* sure."

Max released a long breath, covered her hands on the stick and together they made the next shot. They sank the three ball in the corner pocket.

"Perfect," Max said, turning his head and pressing a soft kiss to Keri's cheek.

Her eyes drifted closed once more. Shaw leaned toward her from his position at the side of the table. Keri was still bent forward. They were face-to-face with only a few inches of green felt between them. "Open your eyes, darlin'. Look at me."

She blinked rapidly, struggling to focus her gaze. Keri's desire was so thick that Shaw thought it was almost tangible. He reached over and placed his hand on the cue stick she and Max were gripping.

A quick glance around confirmed they were still alone in the pool room. He grinned as a wicked idea hatched. He moved the thick base of the stick until it rested at the juncture of Keri's thighs.

She straightened, then trembled when he dipped the stick beneath her skirt and pressed it against her panties, stroking along her slit.

"You want to be spontaneous?"

She nodded. He watched her closely, looking for any reluctance, hesitation on her part. All he saw written on her pretty face was excitement, need.

"Will you go wild for us?" he whispered.

She nodded again. "Yes."

Max reached around her waist, thrusting the pool cue to the side and replacing it with his hand, delving beneath her skirt, touching her between her legs. "I don't want anything near your pussy that doesn't belong to me or Shaw."

Keri shivered in response as Shaw moved the pool cue. "Put your hands back on the stick, Keri. Bend over like you're going to take a shot."

She assumed the position, her hands shaking as Max's fingers moved between her legs. Shaw wished he could see what sweet spot his friend was rubbing that made her squirm so.

"She's wet," Max said, looking at Shaw. "Her panties are soaking."

Shaw took a deep breath, trying to calm his own overwhelming arousal. "Here's what we're going to do." He moved, making sure his body stood directly between Keri and Max and the doorway to the bar. The strains of a slow country song drifted in, George Strait crossing his heart.

"You're going to play this whole round alone while Max and I take turns playing you."

He watched Max demonstrate exactly what Shaw meant, and Keri gasped.

Max grinned at him. "She likes having her clit pinched. We sank a solid, Keri. Time for another shot."

She took a deep breath, steadying herself, and Shaw admired her daring. They were pushing her hard yet she didn't shy away, didn't resist. As she bent to take her next shot, Max was right there, behind her, his arm wrapped around her waist while his fingers teased her beneath her skirt. Keri missed, the cue ball not connecting with a single ball on the table. Max chuckled and released her. "Shaw's turn," he said, kissing her lightly on the cheek.

Shaw met her halfway, at the far end of the table. "I think this might be the best place to take our shot," he said, pointing at the cue ball. Keri nodded, licking her lips before taking her position in front of him. Shaw had chosen the placement because it left them in a corner, away from the door and the view of the patrons out in the main part of the bar.

Keri lined the stick up when Shaw placed his hand on her ass. He intended to take a different route than Max. She froze, not moving, as he slowly slid his fingers beneath the flimsy material of her skirt from behind.

"God, Shaw," she whispered when he dragged his index finger along the damp material of her panties from clit to ass.

"Take your shot," he prompted as he moved the scrap of lace aside and pushed a finger inside her hot pussy.

She took the shot, missing the cue ball completely.

Max laughed quietly. "Try again, sunshine. We've got all night."

Shaw added another finger. Keri dropped lower to the table, her elbows resting against the green felt as she pressed back against his thrusting digits.

"Harder," she begged.

Shaw glanced toward his friend. Max caught his gaze and walked around the table, placing himself right next to Keri while blocking the door. This was going a hell of a lot faster than either of them had intended.

"Do you want to come?" Max asked.

She nodded, trembling.

Max placed his hand on Shaw's wrists, halting his movement. Shaw knew they'd hit the moment of truth. Max would make sure they gave her what she wanted, but there needed to be an understanding between them.

"Keri." Max waited until she lifted her eyes to his face. "We'll give you everything you want, sunshine. I promise. But I need to know..." He paused and looked at Shaw. "We need to know if you're sure, because it won't stop here. If we continue, this won't end until you're back at our house, in our bed, with both of us buried deep inside you."

Keri lowered her head, whimpering at the image Max painted for her, her pussy clenching tightly around Shaw's fingers. She was painfully close to coming. Shaw knew it wouldn't take more than a few more thrusts, a hard press on her clit, and she'd disintegrate.

"You want that, don't you, darlin'?" Shaw asked.

She nodded but Max wasn't appeased.

"You want both of us? Say it, Keri. Please, baby. I need to hear you say the words."

Keri slowly raised her gaze to Max, and Shaw could see the effort it was taking. Her breathing was rapid, labored. "I want you, Max. I want you *and* Shaw. I want you both to fuck me, long and hard."

Shaw's cock throbbed and he groaned. "Fuck," he muttered.

Max released his hold on Shaw's wrist, his gaze never leaving Keri's face. "Come for us, then. Let me watch while Shaw drives you over the edge."

Shaw started to thrust his fingers inside her tight sheath once more. Keri moved her hips in unison, pressing back as he moved forward, so that she could get every pounding inch.

Max cupped her cheek, forcing her to look at him, capturing her gaze.

Shaw increased the speed and force and Keri followed him, accepted every rough touch. Her pussy began to pulsate, announcing her orgasm.

Max bent down until his face was even with hers. "Come, sunshine."

She opened her mouth and, for a moment, Shaw feared she'd give them away with her cries. Max covered her lips, capturing the sound. Keri's cunt compressed against Shaw's fingers tightly and he had to close his eyes, counting the spots behind his eyelids in an attempt to keep from blowing himself.

Finally her breathing evened out, her body relaxed, but Shaw was reluctant to pull away. She was warm, tight and *so* fucking sexy.

For several moments, none of them moved. Then Max stood up, looking over his shoulder. The entire interlude hadn't lasted more than ten minutes, but they were pushing their luck. Shaw slid his fingers out while her pussy clenched as if to hold him in. He gently wrapped his other arm around Keri, pulling her upright as she quivered in the aftermath of one of the hottest sexual experiences of Shaw's life.

Shaw held her back against his chest, giving her time to recover from her powerful climax. He needed some time too. His cock felt like it was going to explode and he was fairly certain he wouldn't make it to the parking lot without embarrassing himself, let alone survive the twenty-minute drive home.

"Spend the night with us," Max said. Shaw nodded. It was time they got out of here.

"Okay. I want to. I *really* want to."

Her easy acquiescence pleased Shaw and he thanked whatever lucky star he was living under.

Then Keri sighed. "God. I hate to sound like a kid here, but I need to call Brody."

"What?" Shaw asked.

"I've only been home a few days. I should tell him I'm not coming home or he'll worry. You know how he is."

Shaw was perfectly aware of her close relationship with her uncle. She'd always been respectful of Brody's feelings and rules. They shared a close family bond that Shaw had coveted more than a few times in his life. The product of a dysfunctional family, he'd learned what it meant to love someone unconditionally from Max's parents and Brody.

Problem was, Brody was worse than a mother hen with his niece and the phone call wasn't going to be an easy one. For a moment, Shaw considered Brody's response, imagining his former boss coming over to Bronco Ranch with a rifle to defend Keri's honor.

Max had said this wouldn't be easy but Shaw had dismissed the concern. Now, faced with the reality...

Max nodded. "You're right. You should call him."

"What the hell should I say?" Keri asked, laughing lightly. "I mean, the word *awkward* keeps racing through my mind."

Shaw grinned. "Damn. I was hoping you already had a plan."

"Big help, Shaw," she joked.

Max gave him a dirty look. "Sit down, Keri. I think maybe we should have a little talk before you call your uncle."

Keri took a seat, waiting as Max and Shaw each claimed a chair on either side of her. Shaw should have known it was all too easy. He'd been ready to make his escape. Perfectly willing to drag her to his truck, drive her to the house and tie her to his bed for the rest of eternity.

Unfortunately, Max had a conscience.

"Have you ever participated in a threesome?" Max asked.

Keri laughed. "Good God, no. It's not exactly a common occurrence, is it?"

Max shook his head. Shaw could see his friend was worried, but Keri's reply made him smile.

"It is in our world," Shaw said, placing his arm around the back of her chair so he could play with her soft hair. He found it impossible to be near her and not touch her.

"I know."

Her answer surprised Shaw. "What do you know?"

"I heard stories about you guys when I was in high school. Some of the women you hooked up with had younger sisters, and there was talk. Sort of inevitable. It's not like we live in a big town. Besides, you guys were the stars of a lot of teenage girls' fantasies. Twenty-five-year-old cowboys and sexy as hell. I can't tell you how many girlfriends tried to finagle invites to my house just so they could watch you two work."

Shaw leaned closer and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead. "Were we in *your* fantasies too?"

She scoffed at his question but her blush gave her away.

"Tell me one of your fantasies," Shaw whispered.

Max scowled and tried to adjust his pants. "Can we wait until we get her home for this? I'm in agony."

Shaw gave him a look, started to tease his friend about not letting him take the edge off earlier, but something in Max's eyes stopped him.

Shaw took Keri's hand in his. "You sure you don't want to take a night to think about what we're offering? It's an open invitation. No need to rush into anything if you're not sure."

Keri smiled. "I told you. Practical Keri is gone. From now on, I'm taking my chances as they come."

Max sighed. "Keri. I think this might be an exception to that new lifestyle of yours. If you go home with us tonight, it's not gonna be a one-night stand."

Her forehead creased as she considered Max's comment. "I don't understand. You guys never date women for long."

Shaw turned her face toward his, cupping her cheek with his hand. "You're not some bar hook-up, Keri. You're different. You're special."

"Special," she whispered. Shaw could see how much the word affected her. Hadn't that bastard she'd wasted four years of her life with ever told her how amazing she was?

"Of course you are," Max replied.

She took a deep breath and Shaw could see her decision had been made. She lifted her phone, searching her contact list. "Well, here goes nothing."

"What are you going to tell him?" Shaw asked.

She shrugged. "I'm gonna wing it."

They all laughed lightly until Keri's expression told Shaw her uncle had answered the phone.

"Hey, Brody. Listen. I wanted to let you know I'm not coming home tonight. I didn't want you to worry or anything."

She fell silent for a moment.

"No, no. Everything's fine. It's just—" She blew out a long breath. "I'm gonna stay with Max and Shaw tonight."

Shaw held his breath, wondering what Brody was saying on the other end of the line.

"Yes," she said in answer to some question. "I'm sure."

Silence again, and Shaw wiped his sweaty palms on his jeans. He'd worked for Brody Shields for years and he respected the hell out of the man. Perhaps it was too

much to hope that Brody would understand or accept this, but damn, Shaw really hoped he would.

"Um, okay," Keri said—before holding the phone out to Shaw. "He wants to talk to you."

Shaw froze for a moment, surprised by Brody's request. He wasn't shocked the man wanted to talk to one of them, but he'd have bet his half of the ranch that Brody would ask for Max. Max was the practical one, the reasonable one. If Brody intended to talk them out of this, Max was the better bet.

Shaw took the phone. "Brody."

"Do I need to issue the warning?" Brody asked.

"No. You don't."

"Gonna do it anyway. You boys hurt my girl and we're gonna have a problem. A big one. You understand?"

Shaw tried to process exactly what Brody was saying. While he was warning them to be careful with Keri, he definitely wasn't kicking up a fuss about her spending the night.

Shaw was struck by the realization that Brody wasn't opposed to their suit.

"Waste of breath, Brody. We'd never hurt her. You know that."

Brody was silent for a moment, and then Shaw heard a long sigh at the other end of the line. "Does she know the score?"

Shaw sucked in a surprised breath. "What do you mean?"

"You boys come clean about *everything*?"

Shaw's suspicions were right. Brody knew. His body still went numb at having those suspicions confirmed.

"I can tell by your silence you haven't," Brody continued. "Tell her. Before anything more happens. She needs to know."

Shaw closed his eyes, acknowledging the truth. "Okay."

"Good. I'm trusting you to take care of her, son. You pass that word on to Max as well."

"I will."

He said goodbye and hung up the phone.

"What did he say?" Keri asked.

Shaw handed her the phone. "He told us to take care of you."

Chapter Three

Keri sat for a moment in stunned silence. Her uncle had given his blessing for her to participate in a ménage with Max and Shaw? Her mind whirled as she considered that fact. While she was an adult and more than capable of making her own decisions, she'd called Brody with the expectation that he'd at least *try* to talk her out of this. Not that she wanted to bail, but practical Keri was having a hard time believing what wild Keri was up to, and was looking for an out.

"Keri," Max said. "You okay, baby?"

Shit, she was failing in her resolution, dropping the ball on her plan to re-create herself. She shoved aside her doubts and looked at the two men she'd adored for a lifetime. They were offering her a night of excitement and adventure. Hell, Shaw had offered her more than a night. She'd be a fool to pass up this experience.

And she wasn't a fool.

Not anymore.

"I'm fine. I am one hundred and twenty percent fine." And she was.

Shaw grinned.

"Well, that's good," Max said. "But we have a problem."

"What's that?" She personally couldn't foresee any clouds in their immediate future. She was about to have blow-your-socks-off sex with two of the hottest men in the state. God bless Texas.

Max frowned. "It's a twenty-minute drive back to the ranch and I'm not sure I'm gonna make it without my cock exploding. Especially considering the fact you've been undressing us with your eyes all night."

Keri sighed sarcastically. "Damn. That *is* a problem."

Shaw stood up and took her hand. "Yeah, well, bitching about it isn't going to make it go any faster. Let's hit the road. Sooner we leave, the sooner we can strip you outta that little-bitty skirt."

Keri laughed at their impatience. She allowed Shaw to lead her through the bar. Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Max hot on their heels and she giggled at their haste, excited by their desire to show her a good time.

She climbed into the pickup truck as Shaw crossed to the driver's side to take the keys from Max. The men had a quiet, brief conversation outside and Keri wondered what they were saying, especially when Max shook his head vehemently. She had a feeling they'd wanted to talk to her about something all night, but every time, they'd change the subject at the last minute. Shaw shrugged and she sensed he'd lost his side of the argument.

Shaw hopped in and started the truck.

"Everything okay?" she asked.

He nodded as Max climbed into the passenger's seat. "Yeah, we sort of had an old debt to settle," Shaw said.

She was confused by his comment. "What sort of debt?"

Max leaned over her to buckle her seat belt as Shaw pulled the truck onto the road. "Shaw's just jerking my chain. Ignore him."

Shaw's face darkened. "Let's just say it's Max's turn to have a little bit of fun with you, so I'm driving."

"More taking turns, huh? Thought maybe that was just in pool," she teased.

Shaw grinned. "We're very diplomatic. Besides, it seems a shame to waste twenty minutes. We thought we'd put the time to good use."

She squirmed as Shaw's comment fired up her arousal once more. "How?"

Max grinned. "You're gonna tell us some of those naughty fantasies you had about us when you were in school."

She narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "That's it?"

Max shook his head. "While you talk, I'm going to touch."

She licked her lips. "Touch what?"

Max ran his hand along her bare leg. She'd purposely worn a short skirt to entice them. Now she was grateful for the easy access it afforded.

"Everything," Max whispered.

"Since I'm resigned to driving duties, you're going to have to keep me entertained with your words. So start sharing. Hit us with one of your hottest fantasies."

Her mind raced, trying to think of something she could share. She was having trouble making her brain focus on anything besides Max's hand as it drifted beneath her skirt.

"Lift up," he said, his voice dark, demanding. She'd always sensed a strong will underneath Max's calm, serious exterior. There had been times when she'd wondered what it would feel like to surrender her body to his commands.

She lifted her hips as much as the seat belt would allow and he slid her panties over her hips, not stopping until he'd pulled them off completely.

Shaw held out a hand and Max slipped the damp fabric into it. Shaw rubbed the material between his fingers, lifting the panties to his nose.

She wanted to close her eyes in embarrassment but was too spellbound by his actions.

"So sweet," Shaw muttered. "I'm going to take a taste of that sugar later, Keri. I'm going to bury my face between your legs and gorge myself."

She shuddered, but didn't have time to respond before Max's hand returned to her pussy.

"Open your legs. Let me in." It was an order, not a request, and as she obeyed, Keri felt her body's juices covering the tops of her thighs.

Max groaned as he dipped his finger inside her. "How long has it been since you've had a man's cock in here?"

She moved her hips forward slightly on the seat, cursing the seat belt. She knew she wouldn't be fully satisfied until Max and Shaw were filling her with their cocks, rather than just their fingers. "Eight months," she replied.

"I'm not hearing any fantasies," Shaw prompted.

Keri glanced at the speedometer and grinned. Shaw was hovering at least ten miles over the speed limit and she prayed they didn't get pulled over. Her panties were currently lying on Shaw's lap and Max didn't seem inclined to leave the heat of her body anytime soon.

Max crooked his finger inside her, hitting a spot that sent shivers down her spine.

"God," she cried. "That feels so good."

Max pressed a kiss to her brow but his finger stopped moving. "Tell us a fantasy, Keri. Tell us how naughty you want to be."

She closed her eyes, leaning her head against the back of the seat. "When I was younger, I used to wonder what it would be like to kiss you."

Max smiled. "Come here."

She turned her face to him and he was there, giving Keri her heart's desire in a kiss hot enough to scorch the pavement. His free hand gripped her hair tightly, twisting her head just enough to allow him to thoroughly claim her lips, her tongue, her teeth. The finger in her pussy began to mimic the thrusting of his tongue, and for a moment she felt lightheaded, overwhelmed. She'd never been kissed like this. Never had someone take her so forcefully, so completely. Max kissed like it mattered.

"Jesus." Shaw's softly spoken word penetrated the haze that surrounded them. She and Max pulled apart.

She started to smile, wanting to offer Max a sexy look, but his dark gaze stopped her. He'd warned her at the bar things would get serious. His face proved just how serious as he pushed another finger deep inside her.

"I want you." It was a simple confession, but she could see how strong that hunger was. "I want to tie you to our bed, Keri. I want spank your ass just to watch it glow. I want to possess you. Utterly. Absolutely."

There was silence in the vehicle as Keri tried to gather her wits.

Shaw sighed. "When you decide to move forward, bro, you really hit the ground running."

Keri sensed Shaw was trying to lighten the moment after Max's intense confession. It was a very Shaw-like response. He'd always been the one to make her laugh when she was sad, to cheer her up when she'd been hurt, to distract her when she was scared or stressed out about something. But she wasn't feeling any of those things now.

She licked her lips, her mouth suddenly dry. "I want that too," she whispered. "I want all of that."

Shaw looked at her. She faced him and smiled, punctuating the truth with a self-assured nod.

Max turning her with a gentle finger under her chin, his eyes narrowed. He studied her face. "You sure?"

She nodded. She'd had more than an occasional daydream about the men flanking her—her fantasies about them not stopping when she moved away. Too many times over the past few years, she'd found her thoughts drifting to Max and Shaw as she lay in bed at night. Some of the few good sexual experiences she'd had with her ex were actually a result of her pretending she was with *them* instead. Guess she should have seen the writing on the wall in regards to her relationship with John years ago. "I've wondered what it would be like to be bound, helpless, as the two of you take me."

"Have you ever been tied up in bed before?"

She shook her head, giving them a rueful grin. "Boring, practical Keri, remember? I think it's safe to say my sexual experiences were about as vanilla as they come."

"So no spanking?" Max asked. "No anal play."

Heat suffused her cheeks as she shook her head. Holy fuck. It was official. She'd left Dullsville and was setting up residence in Sex Heaven. "No," she said. "I've never done any of that, but I'd like to."

Shaw groaned at her response. "Christ. My cock just tripled in size. Any more of this talk and I'm pretty sure it's gonna burst."

Keri laughed, loving that she could drive them to such heights. They were attracted to her. They found her sexy. She wasn't sure she'd ever inspired such naughty dreams in anyone, but Max and Shaw seemed to find everything she did and said hot and sensual. A girl could get used to this.

Max wiggled his fingers inside her pussy once more and she gasped at the pure sizzling impulse that flowed through her body.

"So here's how this is gonna play out. When we get you back to the house, you're going to dance for us while you take off that skimpy excuse for a skirt and shirt."

Her body tingled at his command—equal parts nervousness and anticipation. "Dance?"

He nodded. "You're beautiful, Keri, but I get the feeling you don't realize it. You said you wanted to go wild. Tonight we're gonna push you beyond all those limitations, all those boundaries you've kept yourself confined to. You ready for it?"

Was she? Her thoughts were racing as quickly as her heart.

Max pressed in a third finger and she reached out, her hands landing on the dashboard as she sought something solid, something to keep her grounded to this place, this moment.

Shaw turned onto the long driveway to Bronco Ranch, to Max and Shaw's home. He stopped the truck and put it in park. Turning to look at her, he pulled her face

toward his with a strong hand on her cheek. "We're almost home, Keri. We'll stop at any point tonight if this gets to be too much, but if you're having any doubts, any at all, say so now and I'll take you on to Brody's house."

Max withdrew from her pussy, obviously wanting her to formulate her decision with a clear head. She struggled to catch her breath.

"I want to go home with you. With both of you. I've never wanted anything more."

Shaw's gaze captured hers and she knew the moment her confession penetrated. A grin broke free, covering his face. "Hot damn. Best night ever." He put the truck in gear and started driving again while she laughed.

"You might want to wait until after the deed to make that determination."

Max reached over and turned her toward him. Leaning forward, he pressed his forehead against hers. She savored the smell of his cologne and the slight tang of beer on his breath. "I can see we're gonna have to work on your self-esteem issues tonight."

She shrugged. "My issues really only come out in the bedroom. I mean, I'm pretty confident when it comes to my professional life. I've just never been able to get that self-reliance to carry over to sex."

"It's because you've dated duds who didn't appreciate you," Shaw interjected.

She smiled, shaking her head. "God, you guys are good for my ego."

Max ran his hand along her neck, moving downward until he gripped her breast lightly. "We're gonna be good for your body too."

She shuddered as he pinched her nipple, the sharp pain sending a sensual jolt all the way to her toes. She closed her eyes and savored the touch.

"Finally," Shaw said, pulling his Ford up to the front door of their house and hitting the brakes a little too strongly.

"Eager, buddy?" Max asked sardonically.

Shaw frowned. "You might wanna bear in mind you're the only one who's been getting play time for the past few minutes. My turn now."

Shaw got out and was waiting at the passenger side as Max opened the door. Max stepped out of the way, allowing Shaw to reach in. He lifted her out of the truck as Keri giggled. Shaw's hands cupped her ass as she wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist. His denim-clad erection rubbed against her bare mons as he carried her up the front steps and inside the door Max had opened for them.

"Bedroom now," Max demanded.

Shaw continued to carry her down a long hallway as Keri took brief glimpses of her surroundings. She was curious about the house these two men shared. From her quick peeks, it appeared warm, comfortable and inviting. There were family pictures lining the hall.

"No tour?" she asked when Shaw entered a large master bedroom. A king-size four-poster bed dominated one wall and she briefly wondered whose room they'd brought her too – Max's or Shaw's. She didn't have a chance to ask before Shaw put her down and stepped away.

"We'll do the grand tour after," Shaw said.

"After?" she teased, feigning ignorance.

Max claimed a chair by the bed while Shaw sat on the edge of the mattress.

"You promised us a show," Max prompted.

Keri narrowed her eyes, prolonging the anticipation. "Hmmm. I don't remember making any promises."

Max gave her a wicked grin. "You really want a punishment so soon?"

She shuddered slightly and actually considered his question. Did she? There was something rather forbidden and exciting about the idea of placing herself over Max's lap.

He started to stand, seemingly intent on following through with his threat, but she raised her hand to halt him. "How can I dance without music?"

Shaw chuckled and then reached toward the nightstand. There was an iPod docked on speakers. Turning it on, he searched until he found a slow, easy country ballad.

Keri toed off her cowboy boots, swallowing heavily. She closed her eyes briefly, praying for the strength to give them a good show. When she opened them again, she shoved her damn discomfiture aside, letting the adoration in their gazes drive her motions.

Slowly, she started to sway, reaching down to the hem of her T-shirt. *Moment of truth* drifted through her mind as she tried to make herself believe she was really here with these two incredible men.

She lifted the cotton in time with the music, inch by tantalizing inch, drawing out the actions when Shaw and Max both leaned closer, spellbound by her movements. That realization encouraged her to tease even more. When she finally pulled the shirt over her head, she heard both men groan in unison and she gave them a seductive smile, feeling like the most beautiful woman in the world.

Turning her back to them, she slid down the zipper at the side of her skirt. Taking a deep breath, she wiggled her hips seductively, undulating as she pushed her skirt down. When the material hit the floor, she stepped out of it.

She was about to turn around and remove her bra when two strong hands rested briefly on her waist, halting her. Looking over her shoulder, she watched as Max unhooked the fastening of her bra.

"I thought this was *my* striptease." She grinned at the heat in his gaze.

"I'm taking over."

Her pussy clenched at his dark, sensual tone. She *wanted* him to take over, to take *her*.

Stripping off her lacy bra, he turned her around with gentle hands on her shoulders. Glancing to her right, she discovered Shaw still on the bed. He'd taken off his shirt and the image of his tanned, muscular chest sent flashes of arousal to every part of her body.

"You remember what we said in the truck?"

Max's question drew her attention back to him. "We said a lot of things in the truck."

He grinned, pushing her toward the bed until her back touched the tall end post. He lifted her arms above her head.

"Hold on to that post," he commanded.

She gripped it, liking the way the position thrust out her breasts. From the look on Max's face, he had her exactly where he wanted her. Using her bra, he bound her wrists to the post. The speed of his actions took her by surprise.

"Hey," she said when she tugged on the binding, shocked to find it too tight to break.

Max cupped her cheek. "You said you wanted this."

She licked her lips and nodded. She *had* said that. And she did want it.

"Just for a few minutes," Max added. "I'm afraid I don't have the patience to drag this out much longer. There's nothing I want more than to have you on your back in that bed with me buried deep inside your body."

She shuddered. "Do it."

He chuckled. "Not yet."

Max pulled his T-shirt over his head. Keri leaned her head against the post. After years in the city, she'd forgotten that there were men like this in the world. Men who did a hard day's work to earn their muscles and tans. Max and Shaw didn't waste time in gyms or tanning salons. Everything about them was all-natural. And gorgeous.

Shaw's light chuckle drew her gaze from Max's chest. "He's not too bad on the eyes, is he?"

She laughed at Shaw's joke, though Max scowled. Again she wondered about the truth behind their relationship. It was obvious they were best friends, but she couldn't give up the idea there was more to it than that.

"He's hot," she said in reply. "You both are."

"Well, you know what they say about Texas summers."

She laughed. "Brutal."

Max reclaimed the chair and pulled off his cowboy boots. Shaw did the same as Keri squeezed her legs together. She was in some serious need of stimulation.

When Max stood once more and undid the button and zipper to his jeans, she got lightheaded.

"Breathe, Keri," Shaw said, rising to stand in front of her. She yanked at her bondage, wishing she could run her fingers along their chiseled chests. She wanted to be the one to remove every stitch of clothing from their bodies.

Shaw reached above her head and placed his hands on hers. "Shhh. You'll have plenty of time to touch us. For right now, let us take care of you."

"I need..." She faltered. God. She needed so much. She had no idea how to put that into words.

"We know what you need." Shaw kissed her softly and she fell into his hypnotic embrace. While Max kissed with power and strength and dominance, Shaw's kisses were deep and slow and sexy as hell. She could spend a lifetime kissing these men and never get bored, never want for more.

When Shaw stepped away, Max was there to take his place. Over and over, they took turns kissing her until her body was unable to contain the heat and she felt as though she would burst into flame. The fact that neither man had done more than caress her face or grip her waist as they covered her lips wasn't lost on her.

"Please," she whispered.

Taking mercy on her, they both moved away. While Max had opened his pants, he hadn't removed them. Now he did.

She gasped for air as he shed his jeans, revealing a long, thick cock that looked as strong and powerful as Max.

"Wow," she muttered.

Shaw laughed, breaking the sexual tension that had grown thick in the room. She looked over and watched him remove his pants as well.

Christ. What had she signed on for here? Neither man was hurting in the well-endowed department. For a moment, she felt the slightest bit of panic rise in her chest.

Max stepped closer and cupped her cheek. "Nothing too tough tonight. Promise. We're just going to take some time, get used to one another."

She bit her lip and wondered if he was a mind reader. Either that or she had the crappiest poker face in history. No wonder Shaw had cleaned her out at Texas Hold 'Em when she was a kid.

She didn't have time to consider the idea further as each man bent, grasped one of her breasts and sucked on her nipples. Her head flew back against the post hard, but she wasn't sure if it was the pain from that or their lips on her body that was causing the stars to swim before her eyes.

"Holy shit," she muttered. While she felt Shaw's lips tip up—no doubt to smile—neither man released her. She tried to focus on what they were doing, but her power to think was washed away by the flood of arousal building in her body.

"Open your legs, Keri." Max followed his demand with a slight push against her knee. He pulled her thighs apart, putting her legs where he wanted them. She'd spent years with this man and she wasn't surprised to discover him so controlling in the bedroom. God knew he was in charge of every aspect of his life—work or play. He'd always taken his job on Mockingbird Ranch seriously. Brody had remarked more than a few times on Max's thoroughness and attention to detail.

She was suddenly pleased to be on the receiving end of his diligence. His fingers grazed her clit and she reared back against the post again at the sparks he ignited.

Shaw cupped the back of her head with his hand, lightly pinching her nipple as his lips rubbed her cheek. "Easy, baby. Don't want you to get a concussion."

She started to laugh, but the sound turned into a moan when Max dropped to his knees before her and sucked her clit into his mouth.

“God,” she groaned.

As Shaw played with her breasts, worshipping every part of her face and neck with his kisses, Max drove her to the brink of an orgasm as he worked the flesh below her waist.

He thrust two fingers inside her pussy and she gasped at his strength, the speed of his motions. Pressing his tongue against her clit, Max continued to push her higher and higher. She was a goner. After a few minutes of the hottest foreplay in the history of humankind, Shaw moved his lips to her ear and whispered, “Come.”

She went off like a bottle rocket on the Fourth of July. She strained against the bindings at her wrists, her body trembling in the aftermath of the incredible orgasm, but neither man was inclined to allow her time to recover.

Shaw released the knot, pulling her arms away from the post. Max pushed her down onto the bed, coming over her to kiss her. She tasted her own essence on his lips, the tang igniting her need once more.

She heard the tearing of a wrapper. Max rose as Shaw handed him the condom. He donned it quickly, placing the head of his cock at her opening.

“So beautiful,” he murmured as he pushed into her body. She’d never come more than once in a single night. That realization depressed her for only a moment until Max wiped the thought away. There was no doubt that pitiful record was going to be shattered tonight.

Max’s motions were hard, fast, unrelenting. She struggled to breathe under his glorious assault and felt herself reaching the peak too soon.

“Too much,” she gasped. “Too good.”

Max grinned and shook his head. "Not enough." He touched her clit, stroking it in time with his thrusts, and she screamed as her second climax erupted. Max followed her over and she reveled in the sweet sound of his growled compliments.

"Gorgeous. Hot. Amazing." Each word he uttered pounded its way into her head and her heart. God help her if they weren't serious about pursuing a relationship, because she was way more than halfway in love with both of them already.

Max pulled out. Keri wasn't surprised when Shaw was there to immediately take his place. Unlike his friend's, Shaw's entrance to her body was slow and smooth.

"You hanging in there, darlin'?" he asked once he was lodged to the hilt.

She nodded, unable to speak. The night had been unbearably wonderful. How could she tell him that?

Shaw smiled sweetly, bending lower to kiss her. "Max has always been too impatient. That's why I let him go first. Now we can take our time."

She glanced to her left. Max was lying on his side, watching them. He didn't take offense at his friend's jibe. He grinned and shrugged as if to confess Shaw was spot on.

Shaw was true to his word and as he moved inside her body, Keri embraced the fact that she'd never felt more cherished. He didn't push her to the brink, rather, he took her by the hand and they sauntered together. Each retreat, each tiny moan and small touch building until her body trembled under the impact, the beauty of the moment.

"Come with me," he whispered.

His request, coupled with a deep thrust into her body, pushed her the extra inch, and she came. It wasn't until she felt Max's hand on her face, wiping away her tears, that she realized she was crying.

"Are you okay?" Shaw asked.

She opened her eyes, saw their matching looks of concern. All night she'd fought to find the words to describe what this evening meant to her.

She smiled. "I'm perfect. Everything," she whispered, "is perfect."

Chapter Four

Shaw opened his eyes, blinking several times, forcing his eyes to adapt to the darkness of the room. He lay on his side, spooning a naked Keri as she embraced Max, her head on his chest.

It had been an incredible evening. While the practice of a ménage was nothing new to him and Max, tonight's experience was different. Usually they would find a willing woman and spend the night fucking relentlessly until they passed out from sheer exhaustion.

With Keri, they weren't working toward some blow-your-mind sex frenzy. Instead, it felt as if they'd made love to her. Shaw sighed, trying to remember if he'd ever made love to a woman. His past lovers had served a purpose—to help him get his rocks off. He'd never approached sex with any deeper emotion than excitement or anticipation.

Shaw looked across the pillow at Max's sleeping face. He'd spent the drive home torn between horniness as he'd listened to Max's and Keri's fantasies, and annoyance at Max's insistence that they not enlighten her about the true nature of their relationship.

The fight they'd waged outside the truck as Keri waited patiently inside the cab had been quick and quiet. Shaw told Max about Brody's demand that they confess. Max dismissed it, insisting they wait until later. Max wanted the night to be about Keri and he'd said adding anything more to the mix would overwhelm her. As always, Shaw had capitulated to Max's wishes, but now, as he lay beside them, he felt the secret gnawing at him like a toothache.

Max had always demanded they remain silent about their sexual relationship. It had never bothered Shaw before, but now he couldn't help wondering why Max wanted to keep it a secret. Was Max ashamed of it? Embarrassed about it? Both reasons cut through Shaw like a knife.

Keri sighed and rolled over. Her ass brushed against his semi-erect cock, sending the thing from zero to sixty in a millisecond. She lay on her back, allowing Shaw to study her face. Never in his wildest dreams would he have imagined sharing a bed with Keri Shields.

She'd been a kid when she'd left Texas, a far-too-serious teenager intent on making her way in the world. Even then he'd admired her spunk, her courage.

But now? Christ. Now she was rocking his world, threatening to crumble the very foundation. He'd gotten through life by following Max's lead. Given his shitty upbringing, he'd learned early on that if he ever wanted to make something of his life, he needed to find a positive role model to mimic. He sure as fuck wasn't going to follow the example set by his abusive, alcoholic father and drink his way into an early grave. He also wasn't going to turn into a tramp like his mother, fucking his way through life as a way to get food or shelter.

The best day of his young existence had been the day the Lennins took him in. Max's folks were a normal, nice couple who'd given him their love unconditionally. The groundwork they'd laid in helping a young Shaw overcome the demons of his past was solidified by Max. They were the same age, so it was a simple task to follow the other boy's direction. Max was a born leader and Shaw had been only too happy to trail along behind his friend. Max had gotten good grades, so Shaw had taken his studies seriously, graduating with honors. Max had found a job on Mockingbird Ranch and Shaw had been thrilled by the profession his friend had chosen, signing up to work alongside him. When Max suggested they save their money to purchase their own land, Shaw had been perfectly content to throw his earnings into the pot.

However, for the first time in his life, Shaw felt like Max was screwing up. He was leading them in the wrong direction and Shaw wished to hell he knew how to change that course.

Then another thought occurred to Shaw. What if, now that Keri was in their bed, Max decided he didn't want to continue the sexual relationship with Shaw? Regardless of Keri's presence in their bed, Shaw still wanted Max.

He sighed. Keri opened her eyes.

"Shit," he whispered. "Did I wake you?"

She shook her head. "No. It's been months since I shared a bed with someone. Guess I'm out of practice."

He was torn between scowling about her reference to her shithead ex and grinning like a fool over the fact she was sharing a bed with him.

"It's like riding a bicycle," he teased. "Besides, I intend to see you get plenty of practice."

She smiled but he sensed an uneasiness behind her expression. "What's wrong?"

She rolled her eyes. "How do you two do that?"

He frowned. "Do what?"

"Always know when something is wrong?"

Shaw chuckled and shrugged. "You're not exactly hard to read, Keri. Plus, I watched you grow up. I've had years to study your moods."

"I didn't think you and Max even noticed me much when I lived here. I mean, I was just a kid and you two were always busy working or hitting the bars and chasing..."

Her voice trailed off. Shaw's grin grew. "Chasing anything in a skirt?"

She nodded.

"I guess I paid closer attention to you than even I realized. I've missed having you around these last few years."

She leaned forward, initiating a kiss. Shaw loved how at ease she was with them. A lifetime as friends had forged a trust between them that he'd never shared with another woman. Never shared with anyone other than Max.

The thought sent a pang through his chest and Shaw pulled back.

Keri looked at him intently. "Now it's my turn. What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he said too hastily. Reality was clawing at his chest, trying to fight its way out. She deserved to know about him and Max. "I mean —"

Max cut him off before Shaw could finish. "Hell yeah, there's something wrong. It's been three hours since either of us has been inside that pretty little body of yours."

Shaw forced a lighthearted smile, not missing the uneasy tone in Max's voice. Max rolled over toward the nightstand and lit a candle. They kept candles in most rooms since it wasn't unusual for the power to go out from time to time.

The candlelight provided romantic lighting. It also allowed him to see Max's face more clearly. His friend was definitely trying to keep him from telling Keri about them. He clenched his jaw in frustration and felt a twinge of pain he didn't want to admit, even to himself. They'd always described their relationship as friends with benefits. Problem was, while Shaw did miss the added companionship of a woman, his feelings for Max apparently ran deeper than he'd realized. Shaw's emotions became perfectly clear when he faced the possibility of losing his longtime lover.

He wanted Keri with all his heart, but he still needed Max too.

Max reached for Keri, kissing her deeply. Shaw licked his lips and wished *he* was the recipient of that touch. What would Max do if he leaned in and took over, kissing both Keri and Max into oblivion?

After several moments, Max moved away. His gaze met Shaw's. Shaw sucked in a deep breath at the silent pleading in his friend's eyes. Max knew what he wanted but still held Shaw back.

A kernel of anger sprouted. Shaw narrowed his eyes, acknowledging Max's request. His friend might deny them this pleasure tonight, but come hell or high water, there would be a reckoning tomorrow. Max better have a good fucking explanation for keeping their secret from Keri, and God help Shaw if it was any of his current suspicions.

"You ready to notch up the play a little?" Max asked.

Keri shivered, though Shaw knew it wasn't in fear, but anticipation. The image forced a genuine smile from his lips. There would be time to deal with Max in the morning. Tonight was about Keri and about wrapping her up in their velvet ties tight enough that she'd never want to leave. He'd simply never get enough of her, or of this.

"What did you have in mind?" she asked.

Max pushed himself up, back resting against the headboard. "I was thinking maybe you could wrap those pretty lips of yours around my cock while Shaw takes you from behind."

Keri sat up quickly, eagerly. Shaw chuckled. She was nothing if not enthusiastic. It was clear she'd been through a bit of a dry spell as far as sex was concerned. Truth be told, Shaw hadn't had a warm, willing woman in his bed in far too long and he was ready to love Ms. Shields right down to the tips of her pretty little toes.

She straddled Max's legs and crawled forward until their lips touched. Max put his hands in her hair, holding her tightly. Shaw wasn't sure, but he thought he detected the slightest tremble in Max's hands as he reached for her. Obviously Shaw wasn't the only one deeply affected by the night's events. Shaw watched his best friend and his best girl kiss for several minutes, letting the image of their tongues tangling drive his arousal higher. He wasn't sure what it said about him that he enjoyed watching, but damn if he wasn't harder than a fence post right now.

Finally, Max pushed Keri away with a quick kiss on the end of her nose. "Suck my cock, sunshine." Then he added a word Shaw had never heard him utter with another woman. "Please." The tone of his plea was the last bit of proof Shaw needed. His friend was falling hard and fast for Keri.

Shit, they both were. Shaw tried to be happy about that fact, but until Keri knew everything and Max came clean about the reasons for his reticence, Shaw wouldn't let himself believe in a happy ending.

Keri moved down until her lips were poised at the head of Max's hard-on. Before she took his cock into her mouth, she turned to look at Shaw. "Come inside me."

Shaw's chest tightened at her request, overcome as he was with pride and desire. She wanted him.

He raised his hand reflexively when something shiny flew toward him. He caught the condom Max tossed at him.

Keri giggled at their antics, but the sound was cut off by Max's groan when she engulfed the head of his cock in her mouth.

"Goddamn, Keri," Max said, his hands tangling her long, blonde tresses. Shaw figured they were a matched set, the three of them. Keri's light hair, pale skin and blue eyes perfect complements to their chestnut hair, dark coloring and brown eyes.

Shaw placed his hands gently around her waist, in awe of her courage once more. She was a tiny thing, not much more than five foot five. He was impressed by her willingness to put herself in the hands of two men who had her by almost a foot and a hundred pounds each. They would definitely need to take care not to hurt her. While he enjoyed Max's rough touch in bed, he'd make certain his friend didn't employ it against their girl. He flashed Max a warning glance when his friend pushed Keri's head down against his flesh.

"Take me deeper, sunshine. Let me feel the back of your throat."

Max's fingers tightened in her hair. Shaw started to take his friend to task, but Keri squirmed in response, halting his words. Curiosity struck and he reached out to touch her pussy. Sure enough, she was soaking wet. Unable to resist, Shaw pushed two fingers into her tight warmth.

Max's hands tugged her hair harder and Shaw felt Keri's inner muscles clench against his fingers. He looked up and caught Max's smug grin. His friend understood his concern. Max pushed her deeper onto his cock and, sure enough, Shaw felt more of her body's juices gush over his fingers. Christ. The idea that Keri would welcome their stronger advances left Shaw feeling lightheaded. He thrust his fingers inside her, harder than he normally would. Keri groaned, arching her back, inviting him deeper. He began to move in unison with her motions on Max's cock.

Max's head rested against the headboard, his tan face flushed. Shaw grinned. Apparently Keri gave one hell of a blowjob. Shaw couldn't wait until it was *his* cock in her mouth.

When her pussy tightened and Shaw felt her coming orgasm, he retreated, removing his hand from her completely. Keri's hands fisted in the sheets beside Max and, though she didn't speak, Shaw could sense her frustration.

Max had suggested they notch up the play and Keri's willing submission to their advances encouraged him. He pressed one of his fingers, dripping with her body's arousal, against her anus. Keri froze, shivering slightly.

Max's eyes rested on where Shaw's hand lingered. The eagerness in his friend's gaze told him Shaw had hit on one of Max's fantasy as well. Though they'd never taken a woman at the same time, it was a dream they'd discussed on more than a few occasions.

Max pulled Keri away from his cock. "Shaw's going to fuck your ass with his finger while you suck me. Remember, Keri, you can always say no."

Shaw wished he could see her face, perturbed by his limited view of her back. Was she afraid? Excited?

"I want that," she said, her voice husky with need.

"You're incredible, Keri," Max said, allowing her to bend forward to engulf his cock once more. "I'm glad you're here."

Shaw ran his hand along her lower back and ass, caressing her soft skin. "So am I," he added.

Max looked at Shaw. "Make it good for her," he whispered.

Shaw nodded, accepting the importance of this act. He grinned when Keri wiggled her ass invitingly. Before he could consider his response, he placed a light smack on her right cheek.

She stilled beneath him, but Max's groan answered his curiosity. "Jesus," Max said. "Do that again. She's a wildcat."

Shaw placed another spank on the opposite cheek, harder this time. Max's head flew back against the headboard, making a loud bang. Shaw chuckled. They were gonna have to pad every inch of the room at this rate or else they'd all have brain damage.

Shaw struck Keri three more times, each blow building in intensity. She was panting around Max's cock and his friend looked like he was close to biting off his tongue in an attempt not to come too soon.

Shaw pushed three digits back inside her pussy, relishing the abundance of arousal there. Coating his fingers, he pulled out once more, returning with one finger at the entrance to her ass. Slowly he inched the finger inside her tight hole. Keri's inability to hide her thoughts and feelings wasn't restricted to her facial expressions. Every twitch and twitter of her body told him exactly how much she liked this. Soon he began to thrust his finger in and out of her ass and Keri met him, blow for blow.

Max was groaning, cursing, muttering every sweet nothing Shaw had ever heard as Keri continued to suck his friend's cock. Finally, Max cried uncle.

"Jesus, man. Fuck her. Do it now because I'm not gonna make it much longer."

Shaw pulled his finger out and quickly donned the condom. He didn't bother to go slow and easy this time. Keri and Max were definitely way beyond the need for special care or kid gloves. Keri was squirming, seeking out his cock while Max white-knuckled the sheets beneath him, his eyes closed, his face scrunched up in excruciating pleasure-pain.

Shaw slammed inside her pussy, driving to the hilt in one thrust. Keri screamed around Max's cock. At the sound of her voice, Shaw released the reins on his normal restraint, giving in to the demands of his body.

He pounded into her flesh, relishing her moans.

“Holy fuck,” Max called out loudly. Shaw continued to move into Keri’s body, his gaze mesmerized by the vision of Max as he came. He loved the sight of his friend’s hard-chiseled jaw clenched in pleasure and Shaw could almost taste the salty essence of Max’s come.

Shaw continued to move, pushing Keri higher. She released Max’s cock, coming almost immediately, but Shaw wanted more. He needed more. From her. From Max. From this. He started to reach for Max, desperate for his friend’s lips on his.

Max moved forward, inched closer. The look in Max’s eyes told Shaw he wanted him too. Their lips nearly touched, Shaw could feel the heat from his friend’s rapid breathing.

Then Max stopped, froze. Shaw continued to thrust into Keri’s pussy as she trembled beneath him, oblivious to the drama unfolding above her. Max’s face closed down and he sighed heavily. Shaking his head, Max leaned against the headboard, looking shaken, shell-shocked.

Shaw felt like he’d been slapped.

Closing his eyes, he pushed Max from his mind, refusing to acknowledge anything except the incredible, loving woman beneath him. As her second orgasm hit her, he gave himself up to the sensations – and it was Keri’s name on his lips when he came.

* * * * *

Max lay on his back, staring at the ceiling, as the sounds of Keri’s and Shaw’s deep, even breathing filled the silent night.

He’d fucked up everything. Shaw had insisted outside the bar that they come clean with Keri about their relationship, but Max panicked. He’d put too much importance on the outcome of this evening and he’d made a bad fucking call. Christ, talk about failing Relationships 101. At his age, he should know better, but he’d known going into the date that he wanted too much. The past few years with Shaw had been great, but until Keri had arrived on the scene, he hadn’t realized how much was missing.

He'd hurt Shaw tonight by rebuffing him. Shaw had always been content to follow Max's lead. Always counted on him to do the right thing. His friend was laid-back, with an easygoing approach to life that Max had always envied. He wished he could take things in stride, let the cards fall where they may. Unfortunately, he'd never been able to loosen up his take-charge attitude.

However, now, for the first time in his life, he felt completely *out* of control. His head was pounding and his stomach was in knots. Shaw had been right. They should have been upfront with Keri from the beginning.

Now that things had progressed to this level, Max was worried about her response to their omission. Tonight had turned out so much better than he'd hoped. It had been special, amazing. He was falling fast and hard for Keri. Christ, tonight had only been their first date yet Max was already envisioning a future for the three of them.

The three of them...

Would Keri be angry when she discovered they'd kept the truth about their relationship a secret? Or worse – would she be disgusted by their bisexuality?

He glanced at her delicate face. Her soft hair was spread out on the pillow and he idly wondered if the sweet scent of her perfume would linger on the sheets tomorrow. He reached over to brush a strand of hair away from her eyes. She sighed deeply and he smiled.

Even as a girl, Keri had possessed a no-nonsense approach to the world, which he'd admired. She'd always held a little piece of his heart. Tonight, she'd staked a larger claim.

Shaw rolled over, his arm drifting over Keri, nuzzling her closer in his sleep. Max had never spent the night in Shaw's bed. Never slept the entire night with his best friend. Typically, after a night of rough sex, Max would stagger back to his own room and his cold bed. It was easier to control his relationship with Shaw if he held his emotions at bay. He sighed as he considered what those emotions entailed.

Love. He was in love with Shaw. Perhaps he'd always felt that way, but he'd never allowed himself to admit it. Now, as he felt himself falling for Keri, he realized the same feelings she inspired in him already resided there in regards to Shaw.

He wasn't sure what to do with that information. He'd never let Shaw think of their relationship as anything more than a means to an end, a scratch to the itch.

Shaw's face as they'd taken Keri flashed through Max's mind. His friend had been angry at him for pulling away and Max knew the day of reckoning had arrived. Control be damned. It was time Max adopted a bit of Keri and Shaw's attitude toward life and started reaching for what he wanted. Tomorrow he'd come clean. With both of them.

As he looked at the couple lying next to him, he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he wanted to stay in this bed. Every night.

And he wanted to share it with both of them.

Chapter Five

Max came in from the yard and headed to the sink to wash his hands. Closing his eyes, he tried to ward off the headache hovering, ready to attack.

He and Shaw had woken up Saturday morning and made love to Keri once more. They'd both promised to call her and they'd reiterated their desire to continue to date her. He could still recall the taste of her lips from the kiss she'd given him when they'd dropped her off at Mockingbird Ranch. Fortune had smiled on them, as Brody had been away from the main house when they'd arrived. Though the reprieve was temporary, Max was grateful he hadn't been forced to face Keri's too-perceptive uncle before he got his feelings under control.

Unfortunately, Keri had an emergency come up with one of her clients—some sort of website issue—and she'd been busy for the last two days. Max was anxious to see her again, determined to prove to himself that Friday night hadn't been a fluke. That it had been as amazing as he'd believed.

He glanced at the clock. It was nearly lunchtime on Monday. Most of their hands were out in one of the far pastures doing some much-needed fence work. They'd packed their lunches, so they wouldn't return for several hours. He'd stayed behind to work on the farm-use truck, but so far the entire morning had been a bust. Damn thing still wouldn't start. It didn't help that he couldn't seem to focus on actually fixing the problem. He spent the better part of an hour changing sparkplugs, only to realize they were new and not in need of replacement.

So far, he'd also avoided having any serious conversation with Shaw. His resolve to speak his mind had wavered by the time the sun rose on Saturday and, since then, he'd found a million excuses to work his ass off away from the house—and away from his best friend.

How the hell could he tell Shaw he was in love with him? What if Shaw didn't feel the same way? What if he was happy with the sex-and-companionship deal?

He knew Shaw felt the same overwhelming attraction to Keri, but they hadn't discussed that issue either. Max had worked late the past two days, not coming in until he was sure Shaw was asleep. Then he'd dragged himself to his empty bed, tossing and turning all night until he thought he would go crazy.

"Hey, stranger."

Max looked up to discover Shaw leaning against the kitchen counter. He'd been so engrossed in his own thoughts, he hadn't even heard him walk in.

"Hey," Max returned. "Thought you were working on the fence with the other guys."

Shaw shrugged. "They're making good progress. I wanted to check on Lucy. She threw a shoe the other day and I'm worried she might have hurt herself."

Max nodded. Lucy was the oldest, most beat-up horse in the state of Texas, but Shaw adored her. Doted on the animal. Max dreaded the day the old girl up and died. He knew Shaw wouldn't take her death well.

"You ready to talk or you plan on running off like a coward again?" Shaw asked.

Max closed his eyes and sighed. When he opened them, he found Shaw smirking and it prodded the smartass in him. "You call me a coward again and the only one of us who'll be running is you, from *me* when I beat your ass."

Shaw's grin grew. "You might try," he taunted.

Max felt like a fool for staying away the past few days. They were best friends. Hell, more than that, they were lovers. Regardless of the issues facing them, Max had been wrong to hide, stupid to refuse to stick around and talk it out. He owed Shaw more respect than that.

Taking a deep breath, he plunged in.

"I was wrong. About Keri. We should have told her about us."

Shaw nodded and rubbed his hand over his face. The movement drew Max's attention to the dark circles under his friend's eyes. Clearly Shaw hadn't been sleeping either.

"Why didn't you want to tell her?"

Max shrugged. He'd considered his answer to that question all damn weekend. Now faced with it, he found his words failing. "A lot of reasons," he finally replied.

Shaw grabbed a chair at the kitchen table and sat down. "Tell me a few of them."

Max leaned against the counter and crossed his arms over his chest. His mind whirled over what to say first. "I was worried she'd freak out. Demand that we take her home."

Shaw narrowed his eyes in annoyance. "So you *are* a fucking coward. Don't you think she deserved the chance to make that call right from the beginning...without us hiding the truth?"

Max nodded. "Like I said, I was wrong."

Shaw massaged his temple wearily, his tone calmer when he spoke again. "After spending Friday night with her, I don't think she'd freak. She seems pretty liberal-minded to me. I mean, she took to the threesome idea like a fish takes to water."

Max shrugged. "Keri's awesome. There's no doubt about that. But it's a far cry from a woman experimenting sexually with two friends to a woman entering a relationship with two bisexual men."

"Yeah. That's true. But I still don't think it's an issue." Shaw sighed and gestured for him to continue. "You said you had a lot of reasons for keeping the secret. I hope to hell the rest of them aren't as dimwitted as that one."

"That date with her was different. I knew it the whole time we were in the bar. Usually we pick up a woman, flirt a bit, try to keep things casual, even though the whole time I'm feeling an edge of discomfort, unease. With every other woman we've

ever shared, I felt like I was trying too hard. Nothing felt forced with Keri. Everything clicked into place. I could be myself with her."

Shaw nodded but he didn't reply right away. "I felt that too, which is exactly why we should have been upfront with her. I know we've never had sex with each other in front of another woman, but I really feel like Keri would have understood."

"I shouldn't have pushed away from you the other night."

"Why did you?" Shaw asked.

Max shrugged. "I don't know."

Shaw rose angrily. "Bullshit. Why don't you stop tiptoeing around the truth, Max? Did you want to kiss me or not?"

Max nodded.

"Then why didn't you?"

Max's temper exploded. He was riding on empty. Frustrated. Tired. "Because it wasn't just the experience with Keri that was different!"

Shaw raised his hands, confusion written on his face. "What the fuck does that mean?"

"I wanted to kiss you. I wanted to make love to you."

Shaw didn't move, just stared at him. "So?"

"So, I've never wanted to do that before."

"Max. We fuck all the time."

Max shook his head. "You're not listening to me. I wanted to..." He paused and licked his lips. His mouth was suddenly dry and his heart was racing. "I wanted to *make love* to you."

Shaw paused, his shoulders slumping as he expelled a long breath. Max forced himself to remain quiet. He refused to break the silence with backtracking or false denials, even though his head was screaming at him to abort, pull out now.

Finally Shaw moved. He took a step closer and then another. He didn't stop until he was standing right in front of Max.

"I wouldn't have minded."

Max blinked twice, trying to make sure he'd heard Shaw correctly. "You wouldn't have?"

Shaw shook his head. He bent forward slowly and pressed his lips to Max's, proving the truth of his statement, not with words but with action. Max returned the kiss. For the first time, neither of them fought for dominance or to prove their strength. They simply touched, shared, gave.

"I want you," Shaw growled.

Max reached down to unbutton Shaw's pants, his fingers working rapidly to release his friend from the constraining denim.

Shaw followed suit. Together they stripped away their clothing, kissing and caressing each step of the way. It seemed that their confession had fueled their desires. It didn't help that they'd been celibate the past two days. Max felt as if his cock would burst.

Once they were naked, Shaw pulled him closer again and kissed him the way Max had always dreamed of being kissed by his friend. It was a touch fraught with emotion and understanding.

When Shaw took a step back, Max took a deep breath. He'd never felt so overwhelmed with need. "I want you inside me."

"Lube's in the bathroom." Max looked around the kitchen but Shaw shook his head. "Forget it. Oil's not safe. Lube or spit."

Max grinned and dropped to his knees. Shaw hissed when Max took him into his mouth. Licking his lover's cock from balls to tip, Max took care to make sure Shaw's cock was very, very wet.

"Jesus," Shaw muttered. "This isn't the way I wanted to do this, Max."

Max stood slowly. "You've taken my ass a thousand times, Shaw."

Shaw shrugged and Max fought not to laugh at the disappointment in his friend's face. "Maybe so, but I wanted this time to be special."

Max laughed, pulling Shaw closer and kissing him. "Every time with you is special. I love you, man."

Shaw rested his forehead against Max's. "Turn around."

Max pivoted, gripping the edge of the kitchen counter as he bent over. In the past, they'd always used lube. He glanced over his shoulder and watched the same thought cross Shaw's face.

"Do it," Max prodded.

Shaw stuck two fingers in his mouth, licking them, getting them wet. He pushed them into Max's anus, working for several moments, loosening the muscles of Max's ass before pulling out and replacing his fingers with his cock.

Max gritted his teeth at the slight pinch as Shaw slowly worked his way in. When he was seated to the hilt, they both released a deep breath.

Shaw leaned forward and placed a soft kiss in the center of Max's shoulder blades. "You ready?"

Max nodded. "Fuck yeah."

Shaw began to move in and out, slowly at first, but then he built up the speed and strength of his thrusts. Max trembled when Shaw's hand reached around his waist, gripping his cock tightly.

Max reveled in the feeling of being taken by this man he'd spent a lifetime loving, even as the image of Keri's face flashed before his eyes. He never would have admitted his feelings for Shaw if Keri hadn't reappeared, making him yearn for a future full of love and happiness. As Shaw moved behind him, driving him to the peak, Max realized they'd been living a half-life, all the time waiting for the glue that would bond them together forever. Keri was the answer to a prayer.

Shaw's grip on his cock tightened and Max knew he was a goner. When he heard Shaw's cry of release and felt the first hot spurt of come fill his ass, he gave himself up to the moment.

For several minutes they panted heavily, but neither of them moved to separate. They were connected now. And not just physically.

Finally Shaw withdrew, drawing his hand gently down Max's back. Max rose and turned, pulling Shaw toward him for a kiss.

"Shower?" Shaw suggested.

Max nodded, giving his friend, his lover, a small smile. "Sounds great."

* * * * *

Thirty minutes later they were back in the kitchen, clean and fully dressed, eating lunch. Shaw gave him a rueful look as they finished up the last of their sandwiches. "We've fucked up royally with Keri. You know that, right?"

Max nodded. "Yeah. I know. I should have listened to you."

Shaw ran his hand through his still-damp hair. "You're right. You should have."

"You know, I didn't exactly hear you kicking up a fuss. If you felt so strongly about it, you should have demanded that we tell her. You should have put your damn foot down."

"Yeah, right," Shaw replied. "You're not exactly the easiest guy to dissuade, Max. I think it has something to do with the fact you think you're always fucking right."

Max chuckled. "Hey, bro. What can I say? I was born with—"

Shaw silenced him with what Max suspected was intended to be a quick, hard kiss. However, somewhere along the line, it evolved into a long, hot one that woke up Max's sated cock with style.

"Thought I'd stop you there before you said something really stupid."

"Works for me. I may have to make it a habit to say inane things."

They laughed.

"I loved making love with you," Max admitted. He wasn't sure where that confession had come from, but after spending a lifetime hiding the truth, it felt good to be able to say it aloud.

Shaw grinned. "Me too." Then he sighed, though Max could see how much his confession had pleased Shaw. "Still doesn't resolve the issue with Keri. I mean, if it's not my fault and it's not yours, then who are we blaming?"

"I guess it's Keri's fault," Max joked.

"You shouldn't blame someone if they aren't around to defend themselves."

Keri's voice took them both unaware.

They turned and found her standing just inside the doorway. Max felt a kernel of panic emerge in his gut. How long had she been there? How much had she seen? Heard?

She smiled ruefully. "Guess you didn't hear my car when I pulled up."

"Keri," Shaw said, rising quickly and walking toward her.

Keri halted him, raising her hand and shaking her head. "I'm not gonna run away in horror, if that's what you're expecting."

Max ran a hand through his hair and tried to ignore the fact it was trembling. "Keri. We can explain."

She walked into the kitchen, grabbing a chair at the table and sitting down next to him. "I'm sure you can. And you will. But I get to go first. You owe me."

Shaw joined them, claiming the chair on the other side of her. They'd deceived her. Kept her in the dark about something she had the right to know. Both of them had alluded to hopes for a relationship, but they'd failed to tell her the whole plan. She had every right to rake them over the coals and Max wouldn't blame her if she wanted to take a few swings at them as well.

"You're right," Shaw said. "Hit us with your best shot."

Max glanced at Shaw, saw the understanding in his best friend's face. Max felt guilty for causing this. Shaw had wanted to tell Keri, wanted to come clean at the start. He'd let both of them down.

"You held back the other night," she started.

Max nodded. "It was my fault, Keri. Shaw wanted to —"

Keri interrupted him. "Regardless of what Shaw wanted, he followed your lead. Therefore, both of you will pay the price."

Max was surprised by her comment. "Pay how?"

"I wanna see what you were hiding from me."

Shaw leaned closer at her request. "You wanna see? You mean you want to watch me and Max having...us getting —"

Keri smirked. "Having sex? Getting laid? Fucking?" She shook her head. "No. I want to see what Max mentioned. I want to watch the two of you make love."

The silence in the room was deafening.

As always, Shaw broke it. He pushed his chair back, the wood scraping along the floor loudly. Rising, he reached out for Keri's hand and then for Max's.

"Fine. Let's go."

Keri accepted Shaw's hand and wondered what the hell she was thinking. She'd finished her work on her project only an hour earlier. She'd considered calling to invite them both to dinner but changed her mind at the last minute. It had been two days since she'd had the most amazing sex of her life and her body overruled her brain, demanding that she seek out more. Immediately. Deciding to surprise them, she'd hopped in her car on a whim.

The front door had been open and she'd considered knocking until she'd heard raised voices coming from the kitchen. Practical Keri told her to turn around and go home. Wild Keri gave in to sheer curiosity. She couldn't recall ever seeing Max and

Shaw argue, so the fact they were doing so now worried her. Her first concern had been that they were fighting over *her*. That was the fear that prompted her to walk to the kitchen. If they'd changed their minds about her, she wanted to know now. She wasn't going to waste another four years of her life living in denial about her lovers' feelings.

By the time she reached the kitchen, her stomach was in knots. What if they didn't want to continue seeing her? She realized losing Shaw and Max would hurt a thousand times more than her breakup with John. How had they captured her heart so quickly?

The answer came to her in an instant. They'd always owned a piece of her heart.

She walked into the kitchen in time to see them share a kiss. Shock froze her in place—then she wondered if she'd ever seen a more beautiful sight. But she'd been completely blown away to hear Max confess to making love with Shaw.

Keri was confused about the men's feelings for each other *and* for her, but that emotion was overruled by righteous indignation. They'd kept a pretty big damn secret. And there was a foolish part of her that thought if she could simply see for herself, she'd know where they all stood. Know if there was room in this house, in this relationship, for her.

She wasn't sure where she was getting the courage to take such a risk, but some weird instinct told her this was the right thing to do. What *all* of them needed to do.

Shaw led them to the bedroom and, despite her anxiety, she was besieged with anticipation. Watching the two men kiss had been a major turn-on. Who knew wild Keri had such kinky tastes?

They stepped into the same room where they'd spent countless hours exploring each other's bodies three nights before, and another thought occurred to her.

"Whose bedroom is this?" she asked.

Shaw squeezed her hand. "Mine." Then he shook his head. "No. Actually, it's not anymore. Now it's ours."

He looked at her as he spoke and Keri wondered if his comment was directed at her. "Ours?"

He nodded. "Yours. Mine. Max's. Ours."

Leave it to Shaw to wipe away so many of her fears with just four words. She smiled, blinking against the tears threatening to fall. Her heart wanted to believe him, her body wanted to climb into his arms and never let go, but she'd loved and lost before. She'd felt the pain of a broken heart. Before she could accept his words at face value, she needed more.

Max, ever the caretaker, stepped closer, cupping her cheek in his large, calloused hand. "You sure about this, sunshine?"

She nodded, turning to place a soft kiss on his palm. She'd never been surer of anything. "You're stalling," she said, prompting Shaw's loud laughter. The cowboy had taught her from an early age that laughter was the best medicine. Using humor helped to dispel some of the tension ebbing its way through her body.

"Your poker face sucks, sweetheart," Shaw said. "But if it's proof you want, well then, I guess we can't keep our girl waiting, Max. She's an impatient little thing."

He'd seen through her. For some foolish reason that fact made her feel better. Though she'd been gone for years, Shaw and Max knew her. They saw inside her soul and they recognized the girl who used to reside there. The one who wanted a second chance at happiness and love.

Max's smile grew and Keri's breath caught. Had she ever seen such a genuine, true smile on his face? She wasn't sure she had. The realization of exactly how much Max had been hiding—not just from her but from everyone—rocked her a bit. Today, for the first time, she was seeing the real Max Lennin. And he was stunning.

She moved to the chair, gesturing regally toward the bed. "Any day now." She wasn't sure where she was finding the audacity to speak to them so, but something about her cowboys brought out a side of her very few had ever seen. She felt confident, beautiful, sure of herself.

Shaw shook his head, his grin not dimming. "Oh darlin', you go ahead and enjoy this little bit of power for now. Because I can assure you, once our penance is paid, you are definitely gonna do a bit of paying up as well."

Practical Keri vanished with his taunt, banished forever, as wicked Keri claimed her throne. "Promises, promises."

Max rubbed his hands together in anticipation. "We're gonna tie you to this bed and we're never going to let you go. That's a pledge you can count on."

His vow penetrated her lonely heart, filling it with warmth and music and she prayed it was true. There was nothing she wanted more than to revel in this moment forever.

"I look forward to it." Her mind drifted back to what she'd seen in the kitchen. She knew exactly what her heart's desire was at this moment. "Kiss each other again."

Shaw didn't hesitate, didn't waver. He simply walked to Max and pulled his friend's face toward his own. Keri stared in silent wonder until her sudden lightheadedness reminded her to take a breath. Max and Shaw didn't hold anything back as their lips and tongues tangled, touched, took.

For the first time in her memory, Max's patience ran out first. He pushed away from Shaw, grasping his friend's T-shirt and pulling it over his head. Keri licked her lips. She freaking loved Shaw's rock-hard abs and muscular arms. She wiggled in the chair, trying to send a bit of relief to her very needy girlie parts. Never a fan of porno movies, she decided she might have to reconsider that stance. There was something very potent, amazingly hot about watching the two men she cared for loving each other.

Slowly more clothes were shed as Max and Shaw took care to caress and kiss each newly exposed bit of skin.

Keri and Max both sucked in a harsh breath when Shaw dropped to his knees and took the head of Max's cock into his mouth.

"Fuck," Max said through gritted teeth.

Keri leaned forward, spellbound by the sight. She watched Shaw's performance, tucking away the little tricks he'd clearly discovered over the years that drove Max wild.

Max's hands gripped Shaw's hair tightly and Keri could almost feel the tingling in her own scalp as she recalled him doing the same thing to her Friday night. She loved his rough touches, the way he pulled her hair. Max always worked hard to be in charge of every aspect of his life. She reveled in the knowledge that she—and Shaw—could push him to such heights, make him lose that control. If Max's groans were anything to go by, Shaw was clearly making him forget everything right now.

She was surprised when Max pushed away, pulled Shaw's mouth off his cock, shaking his head.

"More," he said, his voice gruff. "I need more than this."

Shaw rose and Keri tried to covertly touch herself through her shorts. She needed more too, but there was no way she was going to miss a moment.

Max caught her movement. "Take off your clothes, Keri."

She started to refuse but Shaw cut her off. "You're gonna get your show, darlin', but why don't you make it easier on yourself while you do? I know I wouldn't mind watching *you* while you watch us. Sort of doubles the pleasure."

She couldn't argue with logic like that. As Shaw and Max climbed onto the bed, she quickly shed her own clothing before resuming her seat.

Max pushed Shaw to his back and gave him a hard, long kiss. Keri squirmed once more, playing with her turgid nipples as she watched Shaw's fingers tense around Max's strong arms. She loved the power of their touches and the barely restrained strength as they found their pleasure with each other.

Max pushed himself up and both men glanced in her direction. "Open your legs, sunshine."

She pressed them together, knowing she'd never be able to contain the juices of her arousal if she didn't.

"Your chair," she whispered.

"Is about to get christened," Shaw replied. "Do what Max says. Now."

Max's commands never failed to send sparks flashing throughout her body, but hearing the same deep-voiced demand from Shaw pushed her into the flames.

She opened her legs and reached for her clit. This wasn't going to take long. She was too enthralled, too fucking hot. She'd dreamed of being back in this bedroom with them for two long, lonely nights. Like everything else with Shaw and Max, the reality of this moment far surpassed the mediocre fantasies she'd believed to be so naughty.

Max twisted on the bed and Keri gasped as she watched her men move into a sixty-nine position, both of them reaching for the other man's cock in unison.

Her mouth went dry as her finger rubbed her clit harder, faster. She'd never seen anything sexier, hotter, as her two men deep-throated each other, sucking and moving in tandem.

Unable to resist any longer, she pushed two fingers into her pussy, matching her thrusts to the motions of Shaw's and Max's mouths. Even as she added another finger, she knew it would never be enough. She needed her men – filling her, taking her harder than she'd ever been taken before.

She whimpered when Max sank his teeth into the tip of Shaw's cock, causing the latter to moan. The sound seemed to distract both men and they paused, looking at her. She didn't even want to consider what she looked like. She'd lost control of her body ages ago. She continued to move her hips toward her questing fingers. Her breathing was heavy, her movements erratic, her fingers not quite satisfying.

"Fuck," Shaw murmured, his eyes narrowing. Max seconded the motion, moving away from his friend's body, crawling off the bed and coming toward her.

"No," she said weakly. "Don't stop."

"We aren't," Max said, reaching for her. "But if you think we're going to finish this show without you, you're crazy."

He lifted her from the chair, carrying her to bed. Her body was flushed and his hands on her bare skin sent shivers along her spine. She was so fucking close.

"Goddamn it, baby," Shaw said when Max placed her on the bed beside him. "You're incredible."

She didn't feel incredible. She felt insane, insatiable, in too damn deep.

He leaned over and kissed her. She snarled, "Now. Need you now."

"Wildcat," Max whispered as Shaw reached toward the nightstand.

She stilled his hand. "On birth control. Just you and me. Nothing else."

Shaw looked like he might argue for a moment. He glanced over at Max and her temper flared. "Do you use condoms when you fuck each other?" she asked.

Their faces answered her question.

"No," Max admitted.

"I trust you. Please!"

Shaw rolled atop her and thrust inside her pussy with one hard, deep shove. If her orgasm hadn't distracted her, she would have felt instant relief. As it was, Shaw's fast motions pushed her to the precipice immediately. She screamed as she came, feeling slightly amazed by her response. Jesus. She'd never screamed in bed until these two men came into her life.

As her climax began to subside, she realized Shaw was still buried deep inside her but was no longer moving.

"Better?" he asked, placing a light kiss on the end of her nose.

She giggled and nodded. "So much better," she replied breathlessly.

"Mind if I join the party?"

She looked to her left and discovered Max sitting on the edge of the mattress, looking at them. She gave him a guilty grin. "Sort of crashed *your* party, didn't I?"

Max bent and gave her a quick kiss. "You're never gonna be a gatecrasher here, Keri. You've got a lifelong invitation."

His words touched her. "So what's next?" she asked.

"Time for the big ending." Max reached into the nightstand drawer and pulled out a tube of lubrication.

She and Shaw looked at each other for a minute. It was clear Max intended to use the lube on one of them.

"Flip you for it," Shaw said, teasing her.

She rolled her eyes as she laughed. Never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined this scenario. "Guess this is sort of old hat for you guys."

Shaw chuckled. "We've been around this block a time or two."

She bit her lip. "I've never had..." She waved her hand, unable to say the word.

"A cock in your ass?" Max asked.

She closed her eyes, fighting to restrain her nervousness.

"Open your eyes, Keri. Look at me," Shaw demanded.

She obeyed him, taking comfort from the compassion in his gaze. "Max and I have never taken a woman together, at the same time."

She felt surprisingly relieved by his admission. "Really?"

He nodded. "We'd never hurt you, you know that, right?"

"I know."

Max reached over and ran a comforting hand through her hair. "It's your call, sunshine."

"I'd like to be your first," she whispered, certain she'd never uttered a truer statement. Neither man grinned or gloated. Shaw wrapped his arms around her back and gently turned, careful not to leave the shelter of her body. His cock moved deeper when she claimed the top spot and she shivered with new excitement.

Max lightly pressed on her shoulders, silently bidding her to lie on top of Shaw's chest. She trembled when she felt the cold lube hit her anus but Shaw stilled the motions, holding her tightly against him.

As Max slowly worked the lube in, first with one finger, then two, Shaw whispered sweet words to her, kissing her gently. At one point Shaw gripped her knees, pulling them higher against his sides, opening her for Max's forbidden, wicked touch.

Finally she felt Max move behind her.

"You okay, darlin'?" Shaw had remained motionless during Max's preparations and Keri wondered at his stamina.

"I already had one orgasm and I feel like I'm about to blow again. How are you doing this?" she asked, the words escaping her mind. She expected Shaw to laugh at her, but instead he sighed heavily.

"I'm planning out my chores for the rest of the week," he confessed. "If I let myself think about what we're about to do, I would have come ten minutes ago."

She laughed lightly...until she felt Max's cock brush against the opening to her ass.

"Keri," Max said. "If it hurts, say so and it's over. I don't want you to try to take more than—"

"Max," she interrupted. "Hurry."

Shaw contradicted her. "Don't you dare, Max. Take it slow and easy."

Shaw lay beneath the two most important people in his life and decided he was living in a perfect moment. He was still a bit amazed by Max's admission of love in the kitchen, but with Keri's arrival and the fast-forward pace of their journey to this place, he hadn't had time to think about much more than what the next sixty seconds would hold.

Though he and Max had shared lots of women, they'd never attempted double penetration. The act had seemed too special, too personal to do with a stranger. As Max

slowly worked his way into Keri's body, Shaw had to grit his teeth against the powerful streak of pleasure flowing through his body.

It felt like Max was fucking both of them at the same time. There was no way he could withstand the magic of this act for long. He was already a hairsbreadth away from coming.

"Fuck," Max groaned when he was finally seated to the hilt. "Jesus, Shaw. I can feel you."

Shaw tried to respond but his throat was tight.

"You okay, Keri?" Max asked, and Shaw was ashamed for not thinking to ask the question himself.

She nodded, trembling. "So good. Need to move." She gasped for air.

Shaw shared her need for motion.

He moved his hips slightly, dragging his cock out just a bit. He had to close his eyes against the intense sensation as he felt Max move as well. As if being in Keri's body wasn't sweet enough, this escalated him to a plane he'd heard of but didn't know truly existed. Heaven on earth.

Keri's inner muscles compressed against his retreating cock and he clenched his teeth. Jesus. This was gonna be over before it started.

"Keri," Shaw said, "I can't hold off. This is too—"

"Don't wait. We have all the time in the world to make this last."

She set him free. He gripped her hips as he caught Max's gaze. His best friend was on the same page. One look at Max's pained face told him he'd been fighting his own needs tooth and nail too.

Max nodded once before pulling out until only the head of his cock remained lodged in Keri's ass. Shaw countered the movement, pushing in. Soon they set a rhythm that had Keri shuddering between them, the grip of her orgasm driving Shaw over the edge.

He filled her with his come, cherishing the incredible gift of trust she'd given them. There was no way he was letting her go. She was the missing piece of the puzzle and with Keri in their bed, Shaw felt the invisible barriers that had always existed between him and Max crumble once and for all.

They were a trio – three people who made one perfect union.

Max pulled out first, falling to his side as Keri collapsed onto Shaw's chest. He was surrounded by their warmth and love. Turning, he kissed Max as Keri's drowsy gaze rested on their faces.

"I love to watch you guys kiss."

Max chuckled. "You know. Some women would have flipped out if they'd walked in on their lovers making out in the kitchen."

"I always told you Keri was different." Shaw ran his knuckles along her cheek. "Special."

Her smile grew. "Special," she whispered. "I'll take that."

Epilogue

Keri leaned against the porch railing and waved as Rem and Liv loaded their three kids into their minivan. She listened to Max and Shaw give Rem shit about his mode of transportation and she laughed. She'd only been dating her two cowboys for six months, but both of them were dropping daily hints about the three of them moving to a more permanent arrangement.

Brody walked out to the porch and stood beside her. "That was a nice Sunday."

She nodded. They'd decided to hold an impromptu picnic with their closest neighbors. Keri had become good friends over the past few months with Liv and her sister-in-law, Claire. Neither woman judged her in regards to her unusual relationship with Max and Shaw, or the fact that her lovers had come out of the closet about their own special bond.

While others in the area had sneered, Keri knew she'd been blessed with true friends in Liv and Claire.

Brody put his arm around her shoulders as Max and Shaw headed toward the stable. They'd promised Brody they'd take a look at one of his horses that had fallen ill. "I know I say it all the time, but I sure am damn glad you came home, sweetheart."

Keri smiled and wrapped her arm around Brody's waist. He'd been her biggest champion since her return home, making sure no one in the surrounding area ever said anything to her face about her life choices. "Me too."

"The fellas and I were talking after dinner."

"What about?" she asked, though she had a very good suspicion.

"They want you to move to Bronco Ranch with them."

She rolled her eyes. Max and Shaw had been relentless in their attempts to get her to come live with them. She'd been hesitant to depart from Uncle Brody so soon. He'd been happy about her return to Texas and she hated to leave him alone after only a few months. "I told them I'd think about it."

"They seem to think I'm the reason you won't go."

She narrowed her eyes. She'd kill them. "Brody," she began, but her uncle stopped her.

"I told them that's ridiculous, because anybody with two eyes would know that all I've ever wanted was for my little girl to be happy."

"I know that," she said. "It's just—"

"It's just nothing. I've lived alone for years, Keri, and gotten along fine. Besides, it's not like you're going to be half a country away. You'll only be over on the next ranch. We can have Sunday dinners together and we'll see each other all the time."

She nodded. "That sounds nice."

"Do you wanna move in with those boys?"

She grinned at her uncle referring to two of the most masculine men she'd ever known as *boys*. "Yeah. I think I do."

Brody narrowed his eyes. "You think?"

She laughed. "I do. I definitely do."

Her uncle grinned and gave her a big hug. Then he surprised her by yelling across the yard. "Okay fellas. She's all yours."

Keri put her hands on her hips as she watched Max and Shaw head back to the house, wearing the biggest shit-eating grins she'd ever seen.

"You set me up," she accused as they walked up the porch steps.

Max shrugged. "You were being stubborn. We knew you wouldn't be able to say no to Brody."

Brody chuckled as he placed his hand on Shaw's shoulder. "Y'all just remember that I'm not so old I can't whoop both your asses good if you ever hurt her."

Max reached for Keri's hand, kissing it. "Never happen, Brody. Love her too much to ever think of hurting her."

Brody nodded. "Good answer."

Keri watched as her uncle returned to the house, leaving them alone on the front porch. The sun was setting and the sky had turned a beautiful shade of pink. Keri kicked off her sandals, walked out into the yard. She headed over to the same patch of grass she'd lain upon on her first night back in Texas.

Dropping down and reclining on her back, she grinned when Max and Shaw followed suit.

"Beautiful sky," Shaw said as they lay in silence watching the earth turn.

"I love you," she said, "both of you." She said the words a dozen times a day, determined that she'd never hide her feelings from them.

Max grasped her hand, squeezing it tight, while Shaw rolled over to his side and placed a kiss on her cheek. "We love you too, darlin'. Best day of our lives was the day your car broke down."

She grinned. "Mine was the day y'all decided to teach me how to play pool."

Max chuckled. "That reminds me. We ordered a pool table for Bronco Ranch. Should be delivered by the end of the week."

"You didn't," she said.

Shaw placed his arm around her waist. "We did. You really need to work on your stick handling."

"Jesus. That's all I've been doing for the past six months."

Max roared at her response. "And believe me, sunshine, we appreciate your efforts."

Shaw bent down and kissed her. "In fact, maybe we could go back to our place right now and..." He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively.

"Just bear in mind that after I practice my *stick handling*, you fellas better plan on sinking some balls."

"Deal," Max said, rising quickly before reaching down to help her up.

"Double deal." Shaw grasped her hand, pulling her toward the truck.

"Shouldn't we say goodbye to Brody?" she asked, pulling back.

Max scooped her up and carried her to the Ford. "You can call him from the road."

She laughed at their haste, loving their insatiable hunger for her. "What about the dead zone?"

"Sweetheart," Shaw said as they climbed into the truck, "the only zone I'm worried about right now is an erogenous one. If I recall correctly, there's one right about here." As Max started the truck, Shaw placed his lips on the spot at the back of her neck they'd discovered drove her crazy with lust.

"Mmmm," she hummed. "I like that zone. I'll call Brody later."

Shaw lifted his head briefly. "Much later."

The End

About the Author

Some people fall apart on their 30th birthday, others on their 40th. For Mari Carr, 34 was the year that took her down. After she spent the day crying and saying, “I haven’t done anything I thought I would,” her husband finally asked what was left undone. Her answer was simple—she hadn’t written a book or decorated her house. “So do it,” he said.

Five years later, the house is sparkling with fresh paint and new furniture and her computer is jammed full of stories—novels, novellas, short stories and dead-ends. The lesson: It’s never too late to achieve a goal or two!

High school librarian and English teacher by day and mother of two busy teenagers, Mari Carr finds time for writing by squeezing it into the hours between 3 a.m. and daybreak when her family is asleep and the house is quiet.

With the publication of her first book, her latest goal—publishing before 40—has been achieved with a couple of years to spare. Phew!

Mari welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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