

Red Rose Publishing

Taking Care of Business



Marie Rochelle

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By

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Dedication:

*Sometimes love is better
the second time around.*



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Chapter One

Cooper Bradley tried to ignore the intense pounding inside his head by snuggling down deeper into the couch and pulling the thick plaid blanket over his entire body. Why in the hell did he decide it would be a good idea to finish off a semi-empty bottle of Jack Daniels last night by himself?

Yeah, now he remembered.

It was because everyone on town thought he was an asshole because he didn't jump through hoops to please them. Even his employees weren't interested or just didn't care about making the long trip to his house to celebrate his forty-second birthday.

Not one of them bothered to think that it was *his* money and power over the last three and a half years that had kept this town up and running with steady jobs.

Hell.

Why was he wasting his time or energy even thinking about those people? It wasn't like he really gave a damn about those idiots anyway. Their judgmental views were one of the main reasons he only drove into town once a month. The

less he saw of those hypocrites the better. He still couldn't understand where he got the idea in his head to invite them to a party anyway.

Maybe because you were lonely and wanted some company for once since you moved here.

Slowly, Cooper pushed the thought out of his mind when he realized the throbbing in his head was being replaced by an irritating ringing sound.

"What in the hell is going on?" he snapped, flinging the blanket off him.

It took him a few moments, but it finally hit Cooper the banging noise wasn't his imagination, but the disturbing noise was actually coming from his front door.

I'm going to kill whoever is bothering me now. Cooper rolled off the couch and held his head as a pain shot through it as he stood up.

"Damn it! I'm coming," he hollered staggering towards the entrance of his house.

Unlocking the door, Cooper opened it and froze as his gray eyes locked with a pair of toffee colored ones. "What are you doing here!" he demanded. "I thought the last time we talked. I told you to stay away from me."

"Cooper, we need to talk," the woman said as she brushed past him and went inside carrying a small black briefcase in her hand.

This wasn't happening to him. The liquor was playing tricks on his mind. How could any of this be real? He would think he was still sleeping and all of this

was a dream, if his head wasn't still killing him.

Narrowing his eyes, Cooper opened his front door even wider wanting his unwanted visitor gone sooner rather than later. His head was still pounding like a set of drums was being played, so he didn't have time to deal with the female in front of him.

Once he got her back outside, Cooper knew he was going to hit the shower and then the bed to sleep off the rest of his hangover. He had to get her out of here. Nothing good would come from her being inside of his home.

His life was finally trying to come together after she kicked him out of her life; it was sheer pride that had told him to stay away from her during their last visit together.

"Tea, you need to leave," he said, waving his hand towards the snow covered porch as the cold air blew in hitting the side of his face.

Spinning around, Tea's long, black spiral curls bounced around her shoulders. His gut tightened as he remembered sliding his fingers through them when they made love. God, why she was here now after all of this time? What did she want from him? Wasn't ripping his heart from his chest enough for her?

"Cooper, I'm not going anywhere. We need to talk. It's important. So, why don't you shut the door before you let all of the heat out and all of the cold air in?" Tea tossed back at him with a small smile. The identical cute smile she used to

flash at him anytime she wanted her way with him and ninety-five percent of the time it worked on him.

Cooper's eyes dropped down to Tea's lips and he got lost in the last time they kissed each other.

Shit! No!

He wasn't going back there with her. She wasn't going to do this to him again.

"I'm not going to tell you again, Ms. Morning. Get out of my house!" He practically shouted the words at his ex-girlfriend trying not to get caught up in how gorgeous she still was.

Arching an eyebrow, Tea smiled grew even wider making her eyes sparkle before she turned back around and headed in the direction of the living room. "No, I think I'm going to take a seat instead."

Picking plaid blanket off the couch, she laid it to the side and then sat down then suddenly jumped. "Ouch!" Tea lifted up the empty whiskey bottle wedged between the cushions and fixed her gaze back on him.

"Is this the reason I was outside in the freezing cold knocking for almost ten minutes?" she questioned.

"No, you spent ten minutes out in the cold because I didn't want to be bothered, but some people are too dense to take the hint," Cooper snapped back

slamming the door shut. He guessed he wasn't about to get rid of Tea. He had forgotten how stubborn she could be.

"Again...why are you here?"

"Like I said, we need to talk and I want you with a clear head when we do it." Tea placed the empty liquor bottle down on the table and took a seat again on the couch.

"I think this empty liquor bottle proves that you aren't thinking with a clear mind. I know seeing me has to be a shock and I can understand why you wanted me to leave, but I can't. So, why don't we make the best of it?" she suggested.

"Why don't you go upstairs and take a shower? Get yourself together. We can talk over coffee. Maybe both of them will help with your hangover."

Storming to the open doorway, Cooper glared at the woman sitting so prim and proper but he knew what she wore beneath that perfectly tailored *black suit*. He had removed the sexy, skimpy underwear so many wonderful and memorable times that he had truly lost count.

"I'm not hung over," Cooper denied. "You don't have a clue what's going on in my life anymore. Remember you gave up that right the night you turned down my marriage proposal a week before I was going to move here to Colorado."

Cooper didn't want to lose his temper, but he wasn't prepared to see Tea standing on his doorstep, the day after his birthday. Sure, she had called him a

couple of times a few weeks ago and left him some messages, but he deleted them the second he heard her voice.

Things between them were over and he wasn't about to let her back into his heart or life. *Not now*. He was happy being alone and it was going to stay that way. Tea could leave just as suddenly as she had appeared today.

"Tea, I want you gone when I get back from my shower. I don't want to hear a word you have to tell me. Not one little word at all."

"Cooper, I will be in the same spot when you get back down here." Leaning back on the couch, Tea crossed her legs. "You might be able to ignore my phone calls; however, you can't ignore me since I'm right here with you."

Quickly, closing the distant between them, Cooper leaned over Tea trying desperately to block out how good her perfume smelled to him. Hell! This was probably the reason he couldn't find a woman to warm his bed at night. His mind and body still belonged to Tea.

"Don't think I'm the same man who proposed to you because I'm not," he warned, inches away from her face. "I'm harder now and less likely to be won over by your big brown eyes and innocent smile. You made the choice about what you wanted back then and it wasn't me."

Tea shook her head causing her curls to move again and this time they brushed against the side of his face. "No, it wasn't like that..."

“Forget it! I’m done,” Cooper snapped, standing back up. “Don’t be sitting here when I get back downstairs.” Twirling around, he stormed out of the living room secretly wondering why his ex-girlfriend had showed up at his house in the first place.

Chapter Two

Sitting on the couch, Tea watched as Cooper practically ran from his own living room and upstairs to get away from her presence. Why did she ever think he would want to see her after ignoring her four phone calls?

While she had been standing outside in the snow and cold, she wondered how she would react once she laid eyes on her ex-boyfriend after three and a half years. She thought her senses would be more prepared for her visit with Cooper but *damn* she had been so wrong.

The second she looked into Cooper's gray eyes, she was immediately taken back to their past and how good things were between them until she turned down his marriage proposal. She had decided to stay in New York while Cooper quit his job as a stockbroker.

He ended up moving to Colorado to live out his dream which was to own a factory with a horse breeding business on the side. She never knew Cooper's need for either of them would be to the point that he might actually quit his job to get them.

For as long as she knew Cooper, he had talked about wanting to live in the

wilderness and when his opportunity came to take over a coworker's father's manufacturing company that divided its business into several fields like: food products, electrical instruments, printing and some publishing machinery.

Her boyfriend...no ex-boyfriend jumped at the chance to move away from the city for good to live out in the country. Truthfully, she did know Cooper never loved his job as a stockbroker on Wall Street, but stayed there for his mother until he just couldn't handle the fast placed position anymore.

Even back then, he had loved nature and the outdoors, so it was no wonder he had decided to move here. So, Cooper's wedding proposal had come as a complete shock to her. She was trying to get over how he had just quit his job and not ten minutes later. Cooper was down on bended knee with a small ring box in his hand. She had told him no without really giving it much thought.

Not once all during their relationship had Cooper ever mentioned that he was *ever* and she meant *ever* thinking about asking her to become his wife.

Yeah, her telling him no shocked and angered him, but she didn't know what else to tell him. Moving to Colorado wasn't her dream, but Cooper's.

Getting up from the couch, Tea removed her thick black wool coat and tossed it across the back. Back then, Cooper had been so excited about his marriage proposal to her but his excitement changed so suddenly when she told him no and handed him the ring back.

Crossing her arms across her chest, she walked over to the bay window and watched as fresh snow starting to fall on the already covered ground. She would have never found her way out to Cooper's house, if a nice person in town hadn't pointed her in the right direction. Honestly, it was really more like a small mansion if she was honest with herself.

The long spiral driveway was the first thing Tea noticed when she was driving up and then the huge white fence that surrounded most of the property was what caught her attention next.

Even with all of the snow, she could see it was a breathtaking place for anyone to live. Cooper really should be in heaven here. This place is exactly what Cooper dreamt about ever since he confessed his love to her for fresh air and wide open spaces.

But she doubted Cooper was taking in the joys of this beautiful spot because he had such a huge chip on his shoulder. Her appearance today might be beneficial for the both of them since she came here for a specific reason and they needed to get a lot of things settled between them... which meant she wasn't leaving Drake, Colorado until Cooper listened to her.

"I thought I told you I wanted you gone by the time I came back downstairs," Cooper snapped behind her.

Slowly, Tea looked away from the window over her shoulder at Cooper and

any response she might have lodged in her throat the second her eyes landed on him. He was standing behind her wearing well-worn jeans, pulled over a pair of black cowboy boots with a checkered shirt that stretched across his wide chest.

His chestnut hair was still slightly damp from his shower making it curl against the back of his collar. She thought Cooper had looked good in a perfectly tailored suit back at home, but she was mistaken.

This hot I-should-be-in-a-cowboy-calendar look fit Cooper better than any typical and boring suit had in the past. None of them did him any justice.

“Hmmm...I’m not leaving until we talk about some things. It’s important Cooper. You need to hear me out,” Tea answered when she finally regained her voice.

Cooper glared at her for so long that she took a step back closer to the window from the sheer intensity of it.

“You never knew how to listen, did you?” he complained. “I constantly told you to do one thing and of course you got so much pleasure out of doing exactly the opposite. Sometimes, I wondered if you ever really gave a damn about me. Or did you go out with me just to get closer to my mother?”

“No, that isn’t true at all. I dated you because I cared about you Cooper. You were very important to me.”

“She was the reason you turned down my marriage proposal, wasn’t she?”

Cooper accused like he hadn't heard a word she just told him.

Tea was too startled by his suggestion to offer any objection to Cooper's comment.

"See. I was right. My mother found a way to keep you from marrying me. All those words of love you used to whisper to me after we made love and when we dated were bold faced lies."

Tea quickly came out of her shock. Cooper was so wrong! His mother didn't have a thing to do with why she turned down his marriage proposal. She never told him his mother said a word to her because she hadn't.

"Cooper, listen to me." She took a step towards him, but he held up his hand stopping her in her tracks.

"Don't come any closer to me. I want you gone. It was dumb of you to even come here." Moving towards the couch, Cooper snatched up her belongings and made his way over to her until he was only five feet away.

"Tea take your stuff and go. I'm not going to ask you again."

A flicker of apprehension coursed through her body as she looked at the items in Cooper's outstretched hand. When was he finally going to get it through his head that she wasn't going anywhere?

"I'm sorry Cooper, but I'm not going to leave," Tea answered with a shake of her head.

“Why in the hell can’t you walk out the damn front door?” Cooper demanded as he tossed her belongings back down on the couch.

“Your mother,” came her answer.

“My mother...how is my mother who lives in another state keeping you here with me?”

“She wanted us to get married.” she answered, quickly.

Tea stared at Cooper, her heart pounding as she waited for his reaction. Then she heard his quick intake of breath as he gave her a glance of utter disbelief.

“Why in the hell would I want to marry you? I hate you.”

Chapter Three

Wave after wave of shock mingled with hurt wrapped around Tea's heart as Cooper's cruel words slammed into her full force. She blinked back the sudden tears in her eyes as she snatched her coat off the couch and shoved her arms through the sleeves.

She wasn't about to stand here and allow him to treat her like he just did. After her coat was on, Tea grabbed the rest of her items off the seat and headed for the front door, but she only moved a few steps before Cooper blocked her path.

"Where are you going?" he asked, staring down at her.

"Do you think I'm going to stay here after what you just said to me?" Tea demanded her voice shakier than she would have liked it. "I'm leaving."

Moving around Cooper's large body, Tea continued to walk towards the door. "I thought you had something to tell me. Isn't that the reason you came all the way here?" he shouted after her.

Stopping in the middle of the room, Tea opened up her purse and pulled out a large thick brown envelope. She tossed it back at Cooper watching him catch it in mid-air.

“Mr. Bradley, you don’t need me here to read what’s inside that envelope and after you’re done everything should be crystal clear to you. I can still see you have the bad habit of jumping to conclusions first without hearing all of the facts.” Turning back around, Tea continued for the door. Opening it, she went out slamming it hard behind her.



Cooper held the envelope in his hand listening as Tea started her car and drove away. Why did he open his damn mouth and said those words to her? He didn’t hate Tea.

Shit!

Honestly, he was still in love with her.

However, between the horrible birthday he spent alone last night and the slight hangover he was still experiencing even after his shower, the words just seemed to come out of his mouth before he found a filter to stop them.

The momentary look of hurt that passed over Tea’s pretty face cut him deeper than he thought it would since she had been out of his life for so long.

God! He had to find a way to apologize to her, but first he should read whatever was in the envelope Tea tossed at him before she left in tears. It probably was something important and his big ass mouth made his former girlfriend leave before she could tell him what it was.

Well... he was about to find out.

Going over to his favorite recliner, Cooper tore open the envelope and pulled out a thick, stack of papers that were stapled together. His heart suddenly dropped to his stomach as he read the bold black words 'The Last Will and Testament of Myrna Bradley'.

No! This couldn't be right.

His mother wasn't dead because he would have known or felt something was wrong with her. Sure, they didn't have the best relationship in the world, but he would have been there for her at the end.

Was this the reason why Tea had been calling him so much? Why didn't he answer the phone or return any of her phone calls? Had he gotten so caught up in his own misery and anger that he couldn't sense his own mother was dying?

Cooper's hand brushed away the tears that he hadn't realized was there until he felt them sliding down his cheeks. He took a deep quick breath and blew it out as he tried to relax and come to terms that he missed his own mother's funeral.

What kind of asshole did that make him?

He should have been man enough to patch things over with his mother years ago instead of hiding out like some child. Now, it was too late for him to do anything about it.

Just as he was about to start reading the will again the sound of the front door opening and then closing caught his attention. Glancing up, Cooper found Tea standing in the entrance way to the living room staring at him.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have let you find out about your mother’s death like that. It was wrong,” she apologized. “I’m not a mean person and what I just did was cruel. You weren’t supposed to find out like that.”

Walking further into the room, Tea took a seat on the couch and placed her hand on top of his. “I tried calling you several times when her last days were approaching but you never returned any of my calls.”

Cooper now realized what a horrible mistake he had made by brushing Tea off.

“I thought I was getting something over you by deleting your messages the second I heard your voice,” Cooper confessed tossing the will down on the table next to him.

How could he have been so stupid?

“Cooper, you should have known if I was calling you now after so long it was something important. Did you really not want to hear from me that badly?” Tea asked, watching him closely.

The question hung in the air while Cooper thought of the best way to answer it.

Chapter Four

Since moving to Colorado from New York Cooper had gotten used to being by himself especially since the woman he wanted to be with more than anything in the world gave his engagement ring back to him.

So after he worked night and day to get his manufacturing business running the way he wanted, Cooper had found ways to be alone with his own thoughts and interests because he didn't want to risk his heart again on another woman.. Over half of his employees considered him arrogant, withdrawn, and stubborn, the rest thought he alienated them on purpose by giving them more work.

However, the female employees had a total different view of him because they nicknamed him 'the woman hater' because he shot down their dinner invitations or hints they were interested in seeing him outside the work place.

Cooper thought all of their preconceived notions about him were wrong. He considered himself focused, perceptive and most of all open-minded, but he didn't think getting involved with any of the woman who worked for him would be in his best interest.

Shit!

He couldn't recall the last time he had sex with a woman or even wanted to have a woman in his bed.

So, when he had heard Tea's soft, sexy voice on the phone. It brought back hot memories of their time together giving him an instant hard-on which was the main reason he deleted every single one of her calls.

If he was honest with himself, he knew he had gotten pissed that only Tea's voice could get him aroused in less than five seconds. Tea was right. He had to admit the truth as much as it killed him. He should have known if Tea was calling him there had to be a good reason behind it.

No matter how much Cooper might want to blame Tea for not trying harder to contact him. He was truly the only person to blame about his mother.

"Cooper did you hear my question?" Tea asked, cutting into his thoughts.

"Yes, I heard you," Cooper finally answered. "A lot of things made me not call you back but your reason wasn't one of them."

He wasn't ready to think any deeper into why Tea's voice still got a reaction out of his body when no other woman could even when she tried her hardest.

"How did my mother die? Why do you have her will?" He had to get the topic on something different or he might end up giving in to his urge to kiss her. Because he wasn't too sure how well it would go over with Tea, if he suddenly did what his mind was pushing him to do.

Sighing, Tea started to remove her hand off his, but he wrapped his fingers around hers holding them in place. She glanced down at their entwined hands then her eyes darted back up to his, but she didn't try to remove them again and for some reason her acceptance of them touching gave him a hint of encouragement.

"Your mother hadn't been feeling good for a month or so and since she couldn't ever get you to return any of her phone calls. She got in touch with me hoping I would be able to get through to you. I tired calling you as you already know, but you didn't bother returning any of my calls either. Your mother went into the hospital two weeks ago with a bad case of pneumonia and she died in her sleep."

Cooper closed his eyes at the thought of his mother dying alone in a cold hospital with no one at her side. What kind of son did that make him? He should have been there for her in the end.

She probably couldn't help being over protective of him. In her own way, she was showing him how much she loved him. Maybe it had been hard for her to realize her son was a grown man and not some little kid who still needed to hold her hand to cross the street.

"Cooper, your mother wasn't alone I was there with her," Tea said, surprising him, voicing his inner thoughts.

He shouldn't be surprised Tea knew what was going on in his head because she always possessed the ability to know what he was thinking when they were dating. It was one of the qualities that he found so attractive about her.

"I still don't understand why you have a copy of my mother's will. Did something happen between the two of you? I thought my mother hated you which was why you decided not to marry me."

Sliding her hand away from his, Tea got up from the couch. She moved completely away from him and stood by the bay window. "Cooper, your mother didn't hate me. She never told me to turn down your proposal."

What!

Cooper couldn't believe what he was hearing. Tea didn't give his ring back because of his mother's involvement? He had believed for years his mother had done something to force Tea out of his life.

For over three years, he distanced himself from his mother for that sole reason. Now, Tea appeared out of the blue and was telling him the idea he harbored for so long wasn't true.

If his manipulative mother wasn't the reason Tea gave his engagement ring back then why wasn't she his wife now?

"Tell me why you gave the ring back to me?" Cooper asked as he got up from his seat and then crossed the room until he was standing inches behind Tea. He

wanted to get to the bottom of this.

“No, I can’t get into that right now. First, I need to tell you about your mother and then we can discuss anything else you want later.” Turning back around, Tea looked up at him and she wondered if Cooper was going to give her the chance to explain everything.

Cooper knew at that moment he wasn’t going to let Tea walk back out of his life for a second time. He might have been harsh with her earlier, but it was just his defensive wall going up. Deep down he wanted Tea to stay here with him. He had finally accomplished all of his dreams and she was still the only woman he wanted to share it with.

She was his.

This meant he would find a way to make Tea see the love they still shared with each other. Yes, he might have to dig out the love she had for him. Because Cooper was positive Tea had buried it deep, but she wasn’t fooling him. Her emotions were still there if not, he wouldn’t feel this sizzling attraction between them.

Taking his finger, Cooper ran it down the side of Tea’s smooth jaw loving how her breath caught in the back of her throat. Yes! She still felt the pull as much as him. Now, all he had to do was find a way to make her stay instead of leave.

“Cooper,” she whispered, softly touching the back of his hand with her

fingers. “You shouldn’t—”

“Shhh.” Cooper slid his hand behind Tea’s neck pulling her closer to his body until her breasts brushed against his chest. He had always loved how her head only came to the middle of his chest.

“All I want to do is kiss you,” he confessed lowering his head towards hers.

“I thought you hated me. Isn’t that what you just told me a few minutes ago?” Tea placed her hands on his chest as she tried to hold him off.

“You know that I don’t hate you. There was always too much passion between us to ever truly hate each other,” Cooper admitted right before he captured Tea’s mouth with his.

Chapter Five

Something was *different*. Cooper couldn't quite put his finger on it, but there was something about the way Tea tasted.

Taking the tip of his tongue, he ran it along the side of Tea's mouth coaxing her to open up and give him what he desired most. He hadn't dreamt about Tea every single night since leaving New York to have a small, innocent kiss that neither of them would care to remember.

No, he wanted something hot and steady. Crushing Tea to him, Cooper slipped his tongue inside her mouth when she opened them like he craved.

The second his tongue touched hers, the taste of her sent a jolt throughout his body making his cock even harder until it throbbed inside of his jeans. One thing he knew for sure was the memory of kissing Tea wasn't anything compared to the reality.

She was just as sweet and hot as it had been in the past...no. He was wrong Tea tasted better because she was really wrapped up in his arms.

Cooper eased his hands between their bodies and quickly worked on the buttons that were keeping her body from him. Once they were completely undone

he slipped the coat from her arms until it hit the floor behind them.

He continued to move his mouth over hers devouring its softness. He was surprised by how freely Tea was giving into the passion of his kiss.

Sliding his hands up her body, Cooper brushed the pad of his thumbs over her straining nipples smiling when Tea gasped softly.

“Do you know how good you feel in my arms?” His lips brushed against hers as he spoke. Grabbing Tea by the hips, he brushed her body over his hard-on biting back a moan of pleasure that shot through him.

“Cooper,” Tea whimpered as she stood up on her tiptoes sliding her fingers through his hair.

“Yes, baby,” Cooper answered holding Tea’s body tightly to his.

“We need to stop.” Placing her hand in the center of his chest, Tea pushed him away from her.

Cooper was so stunned that he didn’t know how to react at first, so he just stood there staring at Tea like she had completely lost her mind. Why was she putting the brakes on? Surely, she felt how much he wanted her.

What was going on?

“Tea, come here,” he coaxed gently holding out his hand to her. All he had to do was get Tea back in his arms and the rest would be history.

Tea shook her head. “No, I came here for a purpose and making out with you

wasn't one of them."

"Are you saying that you didn't enjoy what we just did?" Cooper took a step closer and could barely hide his smile when Tea didn't move back from him.



Tea couldn't and wouldn't let Cooper do this to her. She had gotten so carried away by her own response. She almost failed to notice how Cooper was undressing her. God. How was it possible this man still had so much power over her?

It always seemed once they started making out it led to the bedroom and them spending days in their getting to know each other over and over again.

Cooper had a way about him that made her lose focus. It happened the very first time she saw him while running in the park. She noticed when he turned back and looked at her because she had been checking him out too. She was so taken back that she tripped over her own two feet hitting the ground.

As she was pulling herself up off the pavement totally embarrassed by what had just happened. She was positive her clumsiness had scared Cooper off. However, seconds later he ran over to her and asked if she was alright then he grabbed her helping her up the rest of the way.

After getting over her instant shock at him being there with her instead of half way down the running trail, she mumbled a quick yes. After that crazy

incident, it seemed like everything between them moved pretty fast. They even went out to dinner the same night and Cooper told her a little bit about himself.

The more Tea learned about Cooper the harder she had fallen for him until they spent everyday and every night with each other. Their relationship had been going perfectly in her mind until Cooper stunned her with his marriage proposal.

“Tea, are you listening to me?” Cooper asked, interrupting her thoughts.

“Yes. I heard you and my answer is still no. We aren’t going to sleep together. I came here to talk to you about your mother’s will.”

Turning around, Tea picked up her coat off the floor tossing it in a nearby chair. “Didn’t you ask me why I had it? Do you want to find out now?” She took a seat on the couch and crossed her legs noticing how Cooper’s gaze landed on her thighs.

“You always found a way to change the subject when something got too hot for you. I can see that hasn’t changed over the years.”

Cooper looked at her like he might say something else, but ended up changing his mind. “Sure tell me why you have my mother’s will.” Cooper came across the room sitting down next to her so their legs were touching.

Tea tried to move over but Cooper laid his hand on her knee stopping her. The slight touch sent tiny electrical currents shooting through her body. God, she had to get away from Cooper soon or she might let him take things to the next

level... a place she might not be able to resist if she allowed herself to travel that road again.

Chapter Six

Cooper sensed that Tea was trying hard not to fall back into his arms and her stubborn attitude was one of the main reasons he had fallen so hard for her in the first place.

Tea's best qualities besides being drop dead gorgeous were she had an accepting, nonjudgmental and unpretentious attitude. She was everything he wanted in a woman which was why it cut so deep when she pushed him away.

She was the only female who understood he needed to be self-sufficient and how he worked hard not to have things given to him on a silver platter. He didn't mind at all working hard to achieve his ultimate dreams.

The days he wanted to spend alone with his own interests and thoughts Tea encouraged him to do it without thinking he didn't want her around. She captured a part of his heart the day she tripped running in the park and he had never been able to get it back from her.

Truthfully, Tea was the main motivation he needed to avoid all of the female attention and invitations when they were tossed his way. He hated when a woman didn't know when to take no for an answer and tried to force her way into his life.

How could he even think about another woman when he had already found the love of his life? Tea was here now and he wasn't going to miss out on the second chance to rekindle the romance between the two of them.

"Okay, I'm ready to listen now," Cooper said removing his hand off Tea's leg. He loved touching her body, but he couldn't force them back into things too quickly. When it came to them he noticed that Tea was a little nervous of him and before the day was over he would find a way to find out why or at least move the conversation in the right direction.

"Tell me why my mother wanted us to get married?" A part of him was still having a hard time believing that his mother wanted him to marry Tea.

Moving away from him on the couch, Tea turned sideways so she could face him. "The day after you moved to Colorado your mother came to see me at work. To say, I was surprised would be an understatement. Because I never had a clue she knew what hair salon I even worked for. The few times I had met her when I was with you she never paid much attention to me."

Cooper laughed at Tea's assessment of his mother. He learned at a very young age that when he thought his mother wasn't paying attention to anything she knew everything going on around her.

He had found out way too late that she had control issues when it came to her family. Those problems could have motivated his father to leave one day and

never come back. “She probably found out where you worked an hour after we walked away from her. She lived for constantly being in my business. That’s the only down thing to being an only child. Your parent doesn’t have anyone else to focus their attention on but you and your business. She hated me in one second and couldn’t stay out of my business minutes later.”

“You didn’t know your mother at all,” Tea cut in shocking him.” Did you really not know how much she cared about you? She wasn’t trying to ruin your life. She loved you so much and only wanted to best for you. I got to know her so much better while she was sick.”

“She saw how much you were hurting when I didn’t marry you and she tracked me down. She let me know what a stupid woman I was for not seeing what was right in front of my eyes.”

Cooper couldn’t believe it. Tea had become friends with his mother while he had been finding ways to push both of them out of his life?

“So, you and my mother became buddies over my misery? Is that what you’re telling me?” Cooper asked as he jumped up from the couch.

“No, you’re misunderstanding what I’m trying to tell you. Like always, you jump to conclusions first without getting all of the facts straight,” Tea tossed back as she stood up a second later.

“Will you calm down and listen to me for once? Just like when I told you no

about getting married and gave your ring back. You didn't even stick around to see why."

The harder she tried to deny the truth the more it persisted. She didn't come here because Cooper's mother made her the executor of her will. No, she made the trip all the way to Colorado because she wanted to take care of some personal business.

Tea had reached the point in her life where she would stop lying to herself. She was still in love with Cooper Bradley and their time apart hadn't diminished her feelings, but only made them stronger.

"Are you ready to listen to me without jumping in?" Tea asked, staring at him.

"Do you really want me to answer that question?" Cooper said in a cold and exact voice noticeably missing the warmth from earlier.

If she had expected a simple yes or no answer from Cooper, she had underestimated him and his obstinate streak.

Chapter Seven

Without a doubt, Cooper knew he was being too hard on Tea, but he had to show her anger. Instead of begging her to stay here with him in Colorado as his wife because he could still taste her on his lips. He was truly moments away from finding a way to make love to her.

He was amazed at how good his ex-girlfriend still looked and how right she still felt in his arms. When he first spotted Tea of course her physical attributes did turn his head making him stop and instantly take notice, but her beauty wasn't the reason he stayed in the relationship with her.

Tea's upbeat and positive way of thinking counted more to him than any perfect features could have on her entire body. Everything from the top of Tea's head down to the bottom of her feet was made for him and no one else in this world.

"I'm tired of talking about my mother and her will. Whatever is in there can wait for now. I want to talk about us," Cooper admitted as he stared into Tea's beautiful eyes. "I've been hiding up here away from the rest of the world working myself too death because of you."

“Why does the way you’ve been living your life have anything to do with me?” Tea frowned.

Slipping his hand behind Tea’s neck, Cooper ran his thumb across her full bottom lip. “You’ve ruined me for all other women. I thought I could leave you and not give you another thought but I was wrong. I haven’t met a woman here that I can communicate with as easily as I did with you. God, I miss your intellect and the sense of self you carried around with you.”

Tea touched his wrist moving it away from her mouth. “I thought you were attracted to me because of my hips, then butt and my breasts came in dead last. Isn’t that what you used to tell me while we were dating? I can’t recall you ever saying my brains were a turn on for you.”

Cooper couldn’t argue with any part of what Tea was asking him. Yes, he was drawn to her outer appearance first, but her ability to hold up her end of the conversation and not taking herself too seriously kept him interested in her.

“I know I didn’t tell you that a lot and I apologize, but I thought you knew I dated you because I found you fascinating. You always could carry on a conversation about current events, so you were more than a pretty face to me. If I had only wanted you for your looks I wouldn’t have stayed around as long as I did. Remember you were the one who turned me away. It wasn’t the other way around.”

“Cooper, I’m not getting into this again with you,” Tea sighed, stepping back from him. “I need to hit the road. It’s a long drive back to town and I’m hoping to get something to eat after I take a shower in my room.”

“I’ll come back tomorrow after you’ve had time to read over everything I gave you. It’s a lot to take in. I know it was for me.”

Tea turned away from Cooper, but he grabbed her by the arm. “No, don’t go. Stay here with me. There’s plenty of room in this huge house and the roads are probably slicker now than before.”

She couldn’t believe what she was hearing? Was Cooper serious? He wanted her to spend the night under the same roof as him? That wasn’t going to be possible...not at all. She was already shoving down the need to kiss him again. Staying with Cooper would only make her desire even greater.

“Cooper, I really don’t think that would be a good idea. What if someone comes by to see you and I’m here? What would you tell them? I don’t want to be a third wheel. I’m fine to drive back to town. I know it won’t take me that long to check into a hotel and order some room service for lunch.”

Cooper had to have a girlfriend despite the fact he was trying to pretend he was single. He was so gorgeous. What woman in her right mind wouldn’t want to call Cooper Bradley her boyfriend?

“Are you inquiring if I have a girlfriend?” Cooper asked, tugging her back

against his warm, hard body. “Would you be jealous if I was seeing someone?”

“I don’t care if you are with someone or not,” Tea denied pulling at her arm. “We haven’t been together for a while.”

Cooper laughed sending shivers of awareness down her spine. Why did her body constantly betray her when he was within touching distance of her?

What was going on with her? She should be over her attraction to Cooper by now. He hadn’t been in her life for years, but it was still there hot and heavy as ever. Cooper somehow put her under his spell a long time ago and she hadn’t found a way to shake it.

Could this be the chance she had been waiting and hoping for or would she fall more in love with Cooper than she already was?

Finding out the truth was a risk she as willing to take because she knew Cooper wasn’t going to agree to the stipulations of his mother’s will. He no longer harbored the same feelings for her that he used to in the past.

So, what if they shared a heated kiss? Cooper was a born flirt and the kiss they shared proved it.

“Fine, I’ll stay the night. Thank you so much for the offer. I really didn’t want to make the long drive back into town. The plane ride here almost did me in,” Tea confessed.

Cooper ran his hand down the side of her face cupping her cheek in his

palm. “Let me show you to your room and you can get settled in. After that why didn’t you take a nap while I fix us a late lunch? I want you to have a lot of energy for when we discuss your marriage proposal.”

Damn it! She had thought Cooper had forgotten all about that, but now he just proved he hadn’t.

“Cooper about that. I—” She was cut off by Cooper placing his index finger over her mouth.

“Enough talking,” he said. “Let’s get you upstairs to your room. Like I said, I’m going to fix us something to eat while you are unpacking. Whatever you want to talk about can be done when you come back downstairs.”

She was too startled by Cooper’s suggestion to say anything at first. Her ex-boyfriend was lying to her. He was really going to cook a meal for her? She couldn’t count on one hand how many meals he fixed for her when they had been together. Cooper had changed from the man she used to know.

“When did you learn how to boil water?” Tea teased stepping back from Cooper.

“Very funny,” Cooper said. “I’ve taught myself a lot of things in the three years since I moved to Colorado. You would be very surprised at the talents I possess now. If you’re a very good girl, I might show you some of them later after lunch.” His gaze slid slowly and seductively over her body making her heart skip a

beat.

The familiar tingling in the pit of her stomach started up when Cooper's eyes lingered on her breasts. Why was he doing this to her? Cooper knew how he could turn her on with just one look. God, she was by no means blind to his magnetism.

"How did you know I want or need you to show me anything anymore?" Tea taunted dying to get a reaction from the man in front of her.

Moving back into her personal space, Cooper trailed his finger down the side of her face. He radiated such a tempting vitality that it drew her like a magnet.

"Whenever your mouth tells me no all I've to do is look at your body to get the truth because it never lies." Sliding his finger down her body, Cooper moved her suit jacket out of the way and then brushed it across her hard nipple poking through her shirt. Almost making her powerless to resist what might happen next.

Grabbing Cooper by the wrist, Tea eased his hand away from her body. She couldn't deny the initial spark of excitement at the prospect of being with Cooper again, but it couldn't happen as too much time had passed between them.

His mother was wrong about her and Cooper. They weren't meant to be together for the rest of their lives. Their time had happened and it was over.

"Cooper, please stop. You shouldn't be touching me like that since we are no

longer involved with each other.” As much as the truth hurt Tea, she knew she had to put an end to Cooper’s advances now or she wouldn’t be able to later.

“Is that what you think? Well, I’ve got to do something to change your way of thinking.” Brushing past her, Cooper headed for the stairs. “Let me show you to your room then I’ll come back down here and go outside to get your bags.”

Walking behind Cooper, Tea stared at how his jeans were hugging his perfectly toned ass. The image brought back memories of how she would touch it when they made love. Anytime they had a disagreement, it never filtered its way into their bedroom.

Making love to Cooper always had her wanting more after it was over, her ex-boyfriend knew his way around a bedroom and a laundry room for that matter. They always made love in the best places inside Cooper’s apartment. Anytime the urge hit, they would go for it and always have a good time exploring each other.

Now, she had to do everything in her power to make sure she didn’t end up in his bed on her short visit here. All she was here to accomplish was to get Cooper’s signature on some paperwork and then she was out of here. Because the longer she stayed with Cooper in Colorado the harder it would be for her not to consider this place as home.

Chapter Eight

Tea moved around the bedroom Cooper placed her in taking in the beauty of the entire space. The room was a perfect blend of masculine and feminine taste because of the amazing creative and contrasting use of different textures and colors throughout the area.

A deep dark brown hue covered the four walls bringing out the rich whiteness of the bedspread and pillows that were against the headboard. Several matching brown pillows were mingled in with a couple of pattern ones.

A long beautiful paisley throw was at the foot of the bed giving the already breathtaking vision a touch of masculine charm to the pristine bed.

At the left side of the bed was a sisal rug showing off Cooper's desire for the practical. Gorgeous almost sheer curtains with a rosette valance were hung at the window. Even the chocolate end tables at either side of the bed enriched the resting area.

"How do you like the room?" Cooper's voice asked from behind her as he came into the room carrying her bags. "If you aren't fond of it, I can move you to another room on a different floor."

Not like it? Was Cooper crazy? The bedroom was not only unbelievable but

very relaxing. She didn't think he had another bedroom in this house to compete with it.

"No, I love it," Tea said as Cooper laid her suitcases on the bed.

"I'm glad you like it." Spinning around, Cooper walked towards her until he was inches from her body. "Why don't you get out of these clothes and put something more comfortable on?" he suggested touching the arm of her suit jacket. "I hope you packed more sensible shoes than those heels you're wearing."

Tea tried not to concentrate on how hot Cooper's touch felt through her layers of clothing. How was it even possible for one man to be so freaking sexy without even trying? Maybe she should think of an excuse and leave right now before things got out of hand.

Wait! She wasn't a coward. She was woman enough to be around Cooper and not rip his clothes off his hot body.

Sure you are. Keep telling yourself those lies, her mind taunted.

"I knew where I was coming, so I packed enough sensible clothing for the short period of time I'd be here."

"Glad to hear it," Cooper said before planting a soft kiss on her mouth that ended as suddenly as it had started. "After you have everything put away meet me downstairs in the kitchen."

The warmth from Cooper's kiss still lingered on her mouth as he stepped

away from her. He gave her one last lingering look before he turned on his heel and went out the door closing it behind him.

Bringing her fingertips to her mouth, Tea held them against her lips still feeling Cooper's mouth there. God! What was she doing playing with fire like this? Was she taking a step in the right direction by being here or would it turn out to be the biggest mistake of her life?

Why did Cooper's mother have to come to her and beg her to be the executor of her will? She was trying to live her life by going back and forth to work everyday. Was she happy? No? But what could she do about it?

Did she accept Cooper's mother's crazy offer because deep down a part of her wanted to see if he was as miserable without her as she was without him?

Probably.

Did knowing Cooper was still drawn to her the reason she wasn't making a beeline for the door? Yes, it was.

Unquestionably Cooper knew what his touch was doing to her and he recognized it was only a matter of time before he got what he wanted from her.

Damn! Why did her willpower still have to be so weak when it came to him? One thing was for sure before she left Colorado her life was going to be changed in one way or another.

Chapter Nine

Downstairs Cooper started pulling items from the cabinets and pantry for the lunch he promised Tea. God he couldn't believe Tea was back. Last night when he passed out on the couch, he never imagined in a million years that his ex-girlfriend would be upstairs in one of his guestrooms.

What had his mother been thinking placing something like a marriage proposal in her will? However, that wasn't the craziest part of it in his mind at all. Tea showing up and asking him to marry her was hands down.

Tea showed up without even knowing if he could have been involved with another woman. Seeing her at first had made him very irate and pissed off remembering how things ended between them. However, the second his lips touched Tea's all of the memories he worked hard to keep buried flooded back to him.

Like how much he loved getting into a good debate with her and no matter the topic or subject Tea voiced her opinion. She never once had him thinking she was dull or boring. Everything about Tea had kept him on his toes while they were dating.

In addition, he loved how Tea wasn't a woman looking to be pampered by him or any man for that matter, but he did want to take care of her. His need to show her how much he cared about her hadn't changed despite the years they had been away from each other.

The need Cooper felt to show Tea that she wasn't on her own pushed at him. For some reason, the protective side came out of him when it came to Tea. When was she going to understand she could allow someone else to stand next to her? They were the halves of each other to make the perfect whole.

Somehow Tea came back here even after he practically tossed her out the door. So, if he was lucky enough for her to come back inside after his outburst. He was damn sure going to do everything in his power to make sure Tea stayed here in Colorado with him.

First, he had to get his plan together in his head before he acted on it. Tea wasn't the type of woman who would change her mind without some coaching, but this time he wasn't going to allow her to push him away. He had never been a big believer in second chances. However, now that he had one he wasn't going to let it slip through his fingers.

Tea didn't know what she was in for with him. He wasn't the same man who moved away from New York with his bruised ego and his tail between his legs. Now, he was a totally different and more determined man.

It was past time Tea got introduced to him.

Chapter Ten

The delicious aroma of food cooking hit Tea's senses as soon as she stepped off the bottom step and headed in the direction of the kitchen. She had wasted enough time upstairs as it was. Cooper wasn't going anywhere since it was his home, plus if she stayed up there much longer he would probably come looking for her.

Taking a deep calming breath, Tea pulled her shirt down over her jeans and continued toward the kitchen. It was now or never.

Standing in the doorway, Tea took this golden opportunity to watch Cooper without his knowledge loving how good he looked cooking a meal for her. His shirt sleeves were rolled up and pushed past his elbows. The fabric stretched across his powerful shoulders making him look more than tempting to her. The kitchen space was huge but the sex appeal pouring from Cooper's presence made it much smaller and definitely more intimate.

How could she have allowed this man to walk out of her life without fighting for him? Did she really need a career of her own that badly? Back then, she had been so worried about Cooper not hearing her wants and needs that she

hadn't explained herself well enough to him.

She wasn't turning down his proposal. She wasn't ready to get married right at that moment, but Cooper hadn't stuck around long enough for her to finish telling him why she had said no.

Had she been out of her mind that day when she pushed Cooper away? Why wasn't she able to see the perfect man was right in front of her? All she had to do was reach out and grab him with both hands, but instead she acted like an idiot.

Two weeks after Cooper had moved away his mother had come to see her. Mrs. Bradley told her how Cooper was in love with her and only wanted to make things better for her. Could she have really mistaken love for control?

For years, she only had one vision in mind and that was being the owner of her own hair salon. But soon after she started dating Cooper, it seemed like her attention was less on her dreams and more on her relationship with Cooper. So, when he popped the question out of the blue it scared the hell out of her and she panicked.

"How long are you going to stand there staring at my back?" Cooper asked, making her practically jump out of her skin.

Damn...Did Cooper have eyes in the back of his head or what?

"I wasn't staring at you," Tea denied as she came further into the room. "I was just thinking about something."

Cooper peeked over his shoulder at her. “Darlin’, I could feel your beautiful eyes burning a hole in the middle of my back, but don’t worry, I’m not upset at all. I love that you still find me attractive,” he admitted then winked at her before turning back to their lunch.

Tea opened her mouth to deny what Cooper accused her of doing, but she slowly closed it. Cooper was right. She was staring at him. Why try to deny it again when Cooper already knew the truth?

“What smells so good?” she asked, walking over to Cooper at the kitchen counter. She never had a problem with food. She loved a home cooked meal especially when it was prepared by a sexy man.

“It’s homemade chicken noodle soup,” Cooper answered facing her. “I learned how to make it the first week I moved here. It was in a recipe book I found in the back of one of the kitchen drawers.”

“I still can’t believe you’re really making homemade soup for me,” Tea said, glancing into the pot on the stove. “I’m really impressed at how much you have changed. The Cooper I used to know would have ordered our lunch and waited for it to come.”

Turning the soup down, Cooper leaned his back against the counter and watched her for a few more minutes before he said anything, but when he did his question surprised her.

“Tell me the real reason you turned down my marriage proposal three years ago?”

Chapter Eleven

“You didn’t wait around long enough to get an answer from me, so why are you asking me this question again? Aren’t you happy out here all by yourself living out your dream without me?”

Moving away from the counter, Cooper turned off the soup before wrapping his hand around her wrist tugging her to his wide chest. “Stop asking my question with a question. You were the one who came all the way to Colorado with a marriage proposal in hand. I’m only asking why you want to marry me now, but not when I asked you. I think I’ve the right to be curious about this any man would.”

Tea secretly wondered if Cooper was trying to bait her. His questions hammered at her making her wonder what exactly she should tell him and what she should keep to herself.

“Can’t a woman change her mind?” she teased, trying to lighten up the situation. She didn’t want things with Cooper to be so serious and tense. Yes, it was her choice to come to see him, but she didn’t want her trip to end up in an argument.

“I would say yes if it was any other woman but you. However, Tea Morning doesn’t jump back and forth with her emotions. From the second I saw you, I knew you were a woman who had her own mind. So, are you going to give me the answer I want? Or will I have to find a way to get it out of you? You do remember I’ve a way of getting stuff out of you.”

Images of her and Cooper making love in different places throughout his apartment in New York filled her head. Yeah, she recalled how Cooper’s touch could make her body sing. Just having him this close already had her body at a low burn for him.

“Don’t you want to eat?” Tea asked, hoping to focus Cooper’s attention on something else beside the attraction building them at this very moment. “The soup is going to get cold.”

“Honestly right now, I’m hungry for something much more appealing than food.” Picking her up, Cooper carried her over to the island sitting her down on the top. Spreading her legs, he stepped between them and placed his hands over her hips.

“What are you doing?” Tea gasped, placing her hands in the middle of his chest.

“I’m trying to get your pretty little mind on something else besides the food I cooked on the stove. Wouldn’t you rather be doing something a lot more fun?”

Lowering his head, Cooper nibbled at the side of her neck.

She was powerless to resist how her body ached for his touch.

Slowly, Cooper's mouth moved up the side of her neck until his mouth sucked her earlobe into his warm, waiting mouth. Tea felt a lurch of excitement in her when Cooper's hands slid behind her and cupping her ass giving it a tight squeeze.

"I want you so much. God, I don't ever think I stopped wanting you," he confessed against her neck.

Raising his head, he gazed into her eyes holding her hostage with the intensity of his stare. "Tea let me make love to you. Let me remind you why we were so good together in and out of the bedroom."

Tea tingled every time Cooper said her name in that soft, coaxing voice he only brought out when he wanted something. She couldn't believe how it still had a way of getting such a strong reaction out of her.

There still was a tangible bond between them and it would be crazy for her to pretend that there wasn't one.

Tea couldn't tear her eyes away from Cooper as he waited for her answer. Her heart fluttered wildly in her breasts as she ran her tongue along her bottom lip. Cooper's eyes followed the little movement while his hands tightened even more on her ass making her inch closer to his body.

The large and noticeable bulge straining against the denim proved his was more than ready to give her something to remember for the rest of the night and probably well into the morning.

Was she going to give in to temptation or would she fight it off?

Tea didn't have to think too hard because she had her mind made up from the moment Cooper touched her body the second she came into the kitchen.

"Yes, I want you to make love to me. You don't know how much I've missed you."

"That's what I'm talking about," Cooper hollered as he picked her up from the counter carrying her into the living room.

Instead of taking her upstairs like she thought Cooper would, he stopped in front of the couch and slid her already aroused body down the front of his. He planted her directly in front of him.

"God, I still can't get over the fact you're here with me," he whispered pushing the long, brown wool cardigan off her shoulders onto the floor. "Are you glad to be here with me baby?"

Too caught up in what Cooper was doing with her Tea could only nod her head.

"Darlin' I can't hear you." Long, tanned fingers played with the ends of her white ribbed t-shirt. Easing his hands underneath, Cooper brushed his thumbs

over the skin above her navel.

“Can you give me an answer, baby?”

Tea swallowed a couple of times to get rid of her dry throat. Cooper didn’t know what his touch was doing to her already weaken body.

His eyes were directly on her mouth; his lone look was sensual and very sexy. How did Cooper ever expect her to be able to answer him when he was staring at her like that?

“Yes,” she whispered, softly.

An irresistibly devastating grin tugged at the corner’s of Cooper’s full mouth. “Did I ever tell you how much I love a woman after my own heart?” Cooper admitted before he pulled her shirt over her head and then he gently pushed her down on the couch.

Kneeling between her thighs, he grabbed the heel of her favorite black slouchy boots tugging them off. “I remember when I bought these boots for your birthday. The sales girl told me that I had a very lucky girlfriend because her boyfriend wouldn’t ever think about buying her anything,” Cooper told her adding her boots to the rest of her discarded clothing.

Tea knew Cooper was the best man for her back then, so she couldn’t disagree. She had been a total idiot to let a guy as great as him go out of misplaced fear on her part. Now, all she had to do was make him understand how much she

wanted him back in her life.

“I can’t disagree with her. I did have a wonderful boyfriend, however; I was stupid and allowed him to walk out of my life. Do you think I might get lucky and he would take me back?”

Chapter Twelve

Standing up, Cooper hands slowly unsnapped his shirt revealing tanned perfect skin little by little making her hands itch to touch him. Removing the fabric from his body, he dropped it on the floor and then Cooper continued to get undressed until he was standing beautifully naked in front of her eyes.

Damn Cooper's body was good back when they were dating, but it was perfect now. His body didn't have an ounce of fat anywhere on it. He looked like he spent hours in the gym working on it, but she knew that wasn't how Cooper became so scrumptious.

Old-fashioned hard work turned her ex-boyfriend's body into what it was now and she didn't have a complaint at all. Who would be upset by having such a fine specimen within touching distance of her fingertips?

Cooper moved closer until her hands wrapped around his thick beautiful cock. The heat from him almost felt like it was going to burn her hands and fingers. Hissing in a deep breath, Cooper tried to knock her hand away when she brushed her thumb on the tip. All the time they were dating, Tea had been amazed by the size of Cooper's erections.

She watched in awe as it grew at least another inch right in front of her eyes.

Yes, she was happy to see how much Cooper still loved her touch.

“Baby, if you keep that up I won’t be able to last much longer,” Cooper said as he reluctantly removed her hand off him and then pulled her up from the couch.

Tea greedily eyed Cooper’s cock as he sat down. Shit! She was dying to have him buried deep inside of her again. She didn’t care if she wasn’t acting like herself at all. She wanted Cooper and she wanted him now.

“Take off those jeans and come here,” Cooper instructed softly. “I’m tired of waiting to be with you.”

“Are you sure you’re ready for me?” she teased as she unsnapped her jeans and pushed them along with her soaked panties down her legs kicking them away. She gasped when Cooper reached out and grabbed her by the waist pulling her to him.

“I’ve always loved your breasts,” he moaned as his fingers brushed over her hard nipples that were begging for the attention only Cooper could give them. She hadn’t been with a man since Cooper moved to Colorado and the waiting was *killing* her. When had Cooper become a man who loved foreplay? No...he was teasing her on purpose to punish her.

He was staring at her breasts practically drooling like he couldn’t wait for a taste of them. So, what in the hell was he waiting for an engraved invitation?

“Darlin’ I hope you are ready because I can’t hold back much longer.”

Grabbing her by the waist, Cooper lifted her up positioning her directly over his cock and just as he was able to enter her, Tea’s hand shot out stopping him. She couldn’t do this without protection. What was going on with her? Was she out of her mind?

“Wait...we need a condom. I don’t know who you have been with since we broke up.” She wanted to be with Cooper so badly that her body ached from it but not without some latex.

Cooper shook his head. “No, we don’t. I haven’t been with anyone else since moving here.”

“How can I be sure?” Tea questioned with a hint of worry in her voice.

“Have I ever lied to you? Do you think I would put you in any kind of danger?” Cooper asked, watching her reaction closely.

Tea didn’t have to think for long about Cooper’s question. *No*. He would never do anything to harm her. All while they were dating he constantly told her the truth about everything. A day never went by that he didn’t put her needs above his own.

“I believe you,” she answered seconds later.

“Thank God.” Cooper lowered her down over his erection stretching her to accommodate the thickness of his cock.

“OMIGOD,” Tea moaned as she got used to being filled with Cooper’s impressive length again. She slowly closed her eyes and gave all of her attention to the sensations currently stimulating her body.

“Ummm...you feel so *good*,” she whimpered. “So thick...So hard...So perfect.”

“No, you’re the one who’s making me feel good,” Cooper corrected. “Shit! I can’t believe you’re tighter than I thought you were.”

Cooper’s cock was so amazing. Tea swore it felt like he was touching every nerve ending in her body.

“You’re better than I remembered too.” She shuddered from desire.

Lifting her up, Cooper brought her back down over his erection shooting an instant orgasm through her body.

“Yes,” Tea screamed as her orgasm broke free. She tossed her head back and the ends of her hair brushed her back.

Just as she was coming back down from her peak, Cooper’s hand squeezed her waist while he lifted her up and down on his cock to meet his rapid thrusts.

“Tea, you feel so fucking good... and hot! I can’t get enough of you. This isn’t good enough for me. I need *more* from you.”

Chapter Thirteen

“Tea, can you handle more of me baby?” Cooper was dying to do more to Tea because this position wasn’t deep enough for him. He had to go as deep as he could go.

“Yes,” she moaned deeply, placing her hands on his arms.

Flipping them quickly so their bodies stayed connected, Cooper placed Tea’s back against the couch and he spread her smooth thighs as wide as their position would allow. He thrust into giving Tea as much as she could take of him.

Dropping his head, he sucked one of her already swollen nipples into his mouth. It seemed like with each one of his thrusts the couch moved another inch under their sweat covered bodies, but he didn’t give a damn...not in the least.

All he cared about was branding Tea’s as his for now and forever. The sheer pleasure of being here with her like this was almost his undoing, but he wasn’t going to get his pleasure until Tea came apart in his arms.

Removing Tea’s hands from his back, Cooper grabbed both of her wrists holding them down on either side of her head. He couldn’t continue to allow her to touch him or he might lose control of what little willpower he had left.

“Let me go,” Tea struggled against his light hold. “I want to touch you.”

“Sorry...I can’t.” Lowering his head, Cooper ran the tip of his tongue along the edge of Tea’s ear. “I want to have complete and ultimate control over you.”

Rich mahogany eyes flashed at him as Tea continued her feeble attempts to get free. He wasn’t going to released her until he was good and ready.

“What if I don’t want to give up control?” Tea sassed.

Oh, Cooper was positive he could make her give up control and so much more. Easing his erection out, he slowly slipped it back in causing soft mewling sounds for the spunky woman beneath him.

“Ready to give it up?” he taunted, softly already knowing the answer before Tea spoke one word.

“No,” she threw back.

Cooper grabbed one of Tea’s legs wrapping it around his waist and sped up his thrusts until their glistening bodies started sliding over each other.

“Stop fighting me.” Sweat shined on Tea’s blemish free skin and Cooper licked a drop from right above her left nipple. “Have I told you how good you taste tonight?”

“I can’t...”

“Can’t what Darlin’?”

Cooper knew Tea was about to break. She was *so* close to another orgasm.

He felt how her walls were tightening around his cock. He had to get an answer before her orgasm broke free. He continued to rock into her welcoming heat until he couldn't figure out where either one of them started or ended.

“I'll give up. I'll do anything you want me to do,” Tea finally screamed at him right before her orgasm hit her.

After hearing the words he had been waiting for, Cooper captured Tea's mouth with his slipping his tongue inside. As he continued to give her grinding thrusts, sending them completely over the edge until their cries filled the room.

Chapter Fourteen

“You do know that you didn’t have to carry me all the way upstairs to bed?” Tea asked, snuggling closer to him. “It might have been fun to wake up naked on the couch with a sexy man.”

Chuckling, Cooper pulled Tea against him as his fingers brushed over her breasts. “Sweetheart, I don’t want to wake up on the couch twice in one day. Once was truly enough for me. Besides, I like having you in my bed it just feels right almost like you should have never left in the first place,” he said.

Turning around, Tea faced him placing her hand in the middle of his chest. “If I’m not mistaken you were the one who left me. I went to your apartment and you had packed up and moved without so much as a goodbye to me.”

Cooper knew he shouldn’t have left in such a rush, but his pride was torn to shreds. In addition, he hadn’t felt any need to stick around for another lecture from his controlling mother. So, he just broke ties with the both of them and moved hoping he would be able to make a life without Tea at his side.

For a while, it worked for him but a little into the first year thoughts of her eased back into his head until he was thinking about her everyday, but his pride

kept him from reaching out to her.

Now, here she was wrapped up in his arms after all of this time because of his mother. Cooper wasn't sure if he should be happy or pissed as hell. In some ways, even in death his mother was still controlling his life.

"What are you thinking that has you so upset?" Tea questioned.

Glancing down, Cooper looked into Tea's pretty face and was shocked by the real concern he saw in her eyes. "How do you know I'm upset?"

"Anytime something is on your mind that you don't want to talk about you get this little line in the middle of your forehead." Moving her hand off his chest, Tea ran her index finger down the middle of his forehead.

Cooper grabbed her hand and brought it back down to his lips placing a kiss on the tip. "You remember that about me," he asked shocked and secretly pleased.

Sure, he kept certain things about Tea tucked away in the back of his mind and called on them when he wanted a good memory of her, but he never thought Tea would keep anything about him in her head.

"Cooper just because someone leaves you doesn't mean you totally forget about them. Do you have something about me you pull out at certain times?"

He sensed that his answer would mean a lot to Tea and whatever he told her would determine if they could rebuild a future together. A future he wanted more

than anything in this world.

“I loved how being around you always made me feel like I was a part of a union. You made me feel love and worth something. Anytime you were around everything else around me faded into the background. You were the most important person in my life. What I think about the most when it comes to you is how good you made me feel.”

Leaning on her elbow, Tea looked down at him. “I never had a clue that I made you feel that away. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I honestly don’t know,” Cooper answered. “I thought I was doing a good job at showing you how much you meant to me by doing things for you. I didn’t know you needed to hear the words.”

Until Tea came into his life, he liked being alone with his own thoughts or interests because he wasn’t used to asking for help. He tended to be very self-reliant and kept his problems to himself.

“Cooper when we first got together you seemed so determined to get the hell out of New York as fast as you could. You hated your job, but kept going to work for the money. I thought you were going to lose your mind being a broker.

“You always came across so much happier when it was just the two of us curled up on the couch together. You were such a private person. You loved for things to be so simple without demands or a lot of questions” Tea covered her

mouth when a yawn escaped.

“God, I didn’t realize I was so tired.”

“Did you know that making love can do that to you especially after being with me? I know how to wear out your sexy little body.”

“Oh, you do,” Tea teased, grinning at him.

“Darlin’ you better believe it.”

Resting his back against the headboard, Cooper pulled Tea against his chest. He tugged the sheet further up their bodies and got comfortable. He couldn’t deny a word Tea told him. She was right about everything.

“Sweetheart, you don’t know how much I cherished those times with you. I loved anytime we could just be together. It gave me a peace you didn’t know. So, if I wasn’t verbal enough for you, I apologize.”

“How I felt about you was very clear in my head and heart. I just had a hard time telling you, but I’m more than ready now since I’m getting a second chance to be with you. Are you ready to hear everything?”

Cooper waited for an answer, but all he got was silence. Glancing down, he noticed that Tea had fallen asleep against his chest. Smiling softly, he brushed a piece of her hair away from her cheek. He couldn’t stop the warm feelings from spreading throughout his body.

He hadn’t felt this alive in years and Tea was the cause of it. She had brought

the spark back into his life. With her here now, he was no longer only thinking about just going through the motions of everyday life like before.

For the moment, all his mind could think about was how he was going to feel waking up with Tea there next to him. At work sometimes, he would hear his male employees brag about what woman they had slept with the night before. Most of them only thought of sex as something they wanted to get more of; however, he thought of it as a meeting of the souls and an uncontrollable passion that is hard to resist when you are with the right woman.

Tea was that *woman* for him.

Moving her to the side a little, Cooper slid further down in the bed snuggling them closer together and breathed in the scent of her shampoo. As sleep worked its way into his body, Cooper suddenly realized this was the first night in a very long time he wasn't going to be worried about tomorrow.

Chapter Fifteen

Tea practically kicked herself for not going with her first instinct when another gust of cold weather ripped through her body. Despite the fact, she had lived in New York all of her life, she still hated cold weather with a passion, but she came outside anyway to be with Cooper.

She had woken up earlier expecting to find Cooper in bed next to her. However, she found a note he left for her on his empty pillow. It told her to meet him at the stable after she ate the breakfast he left for her in the microwave.

Pulling the wool jacket tighter around her freezing body, Tea walked further into the stables when she spotted Cooper standing at one of the stalls taking care of a beautiful looking horse.

“I was disappointed to find you gone this morning,” Tea complained, stopping next to Cooper.

“Sorry baby,” Cooper apologized, glancing away from the horse down at her. “I come down here every morning around six o’clock to check on the horses especially this guy here.” Cooper gave his attention back to the animal patting him on the side of his neck.

“He’s beautiful,” Tea complimented. “What’s his name?”

“Thank you. Steele is an American Paint horse.”

“Why is he a paint horse?” Tea asked as she ran her hand down the front of the horse. She noticed how Steele’s ear flickered a little bit but he didn’t move away from her.

“I think he likes me.”

“Steele is like his owner. He loves to be stroked by a beautiful woman.”

“Okay enough with the flirting,” Tea scolded, lightly. “Tell me why Steele is called a paint horse. I’ve never heard of one before.”

Cooper removed his hand off Steele and turned around resting his back against the stall. “Paint horses should have a minimum amount of white hair over unpigmented skin.”

Tea had noticed the huge white areas on Steele’s side, underneath his belly, down the sides of his face; however, the back of his legs were mostly brown. She wasn’t lying to Cooper earlier with her compliment about his horse. Steele was a stunning looking animal.

“Steele seems like he’s larger than most horses I have seen,” Tea removed her hand off Steele shoving them into the pockets of her coat.

“No, he’s around 16 hands,” Cooper informed her. “However, he might seem bigger to you because he has a stock type of confirmation which means Steele

possess a broad chest along with well-muscled hindquarters. He's a very strong-boned animal but the refinement in his head and neck make him an in demand breeding horse for me."

"Wow, that's very impressive," Tea praised looking at the amazing animal next to her through new eyes. Steele sensed her eyes on him and he turned his head looking right back at her like he could read her mind.

"How long have you owned Steele?"

"A little over two years," Cooper answered as he moved away from the stall stepping closer to her. "I just registered him with the APHA."

"What's the APHA?" The question left Tea's mouth as Cooper was gently pulling her towards his body. She loved how the warmth from his larger frame eased into her body making her automatically melt against him.

"The American Paint Horse Association," Cooper said before he ran his mouth down the side of her jaw. "You smell so good. All I could think about while you were standing next to me was getting you back into my arms."

"Looks like you got what you wanted," she laughed, wrapping her arms around Cooper's shoulders. God, she loved being here with him like this. It really was going to be hard leaving to go back home.

"Not really," he confessed by her ear. "I would rather be inside making love to you or better yet we can make love right out here. I've a clean stall near the

back.”

“Have you lost your mind? I’m not having sex outside in the cold.”

Cooper must have added something strong to his coffee this morning than cream and sugar to even suggest something like that to her.

Chapter Sixteen

Cooper knew his suggestion was crazy, but Tea's presence was driving him *wild*. His body or mind hadn't been the same since he made love to her last night. When he woke up this morning, it took everything he had in him to leave her tempting warm body alone in bed. But he knew Steele was out there waiting to be fed and taking care of by him.

Tea's reappearance in his life reopened his eyes and made him see how lonely he truly was living out here all alone. He knew she wanted to leave but he hadn't even answered her question, yet. Besides he still needed to know what else was in his mother's will.

Everything in his entire body was pushing him to demand that Tea come to her senses and stay here with him. She had walked out on him once and the instant pain he felt was heart wrenching and something he wouldn't allow to happen again. He would use any means necessary to keep his woman at his side. The love they shared had been so special and something like that just didn't die away.

"Are you sure I can't talk you into my idea," he asked, softly rubbing his

hands up and down Tea's back. "I promise the hay is clean and fresh. I'll make it an experience that you'll never forget,"

Grabbing Tea by her hips he held her against his growing erection. His body's instant response to her nearness shocked and pleased him immensely. He couldn't keep his thoughts focused on the upcoming meeting he had schedule for the end of the week.

None of it matter to him, the most important issue in his life was Tea.

"Cooper, I'm not going to change my mind," Tea said as her eyes glanced around the stables.

Shit! He wanted to be with Tea and he knew that his need was too bad to wait for them to get back to the house. Cooper was about to go crazy just standing there with her against him fully clothed when more than anything in the world he wanted her naked.

What in the hell was he going to do?

Suddenly a light went off in Cooper's head. If having sex in the cold was Tea's only problem then he had a solution that would please them both. Why hadn't he thought of it sooner?

"Come on. I've the perfect place to show you." Taking Tea by the hand, Cooper turned towards the back of the stable gently tugging her behind him.

"Cooper, where are you taking me?"

“Darlin’, it’s a surprise.” Cooper kept moving towards his destination as his anticipation of getting there grew.

Hurrying around the corner, Cooper stopped in front of a closed office door with his woman a few inches behind him. This was the *perfect* spot for him to bank his desire for Tea just thinking about it was making his cock twitch to be buried deep inside of her.

Grabbing the door handle, Cooper pushed the door open with a flick of his wrist and then he touched the light switch making the tiny room fill with light. There was only a table, chair and couch on the interior but it was just enough stuff to make it a place for him to be with Tea.

“What is this place?” Tea asked easing past him.

Before answering her, Cooper closed and locked the door, he wasn’t expecting anyone but if someone did show up unexpectedly, he didn’t want anyone seeing his woman naked.

“A place for us to be alone,” he answered. Taking off his coat, Cooper dropped it to the ground and then started on his shirt. Minutes later it was off his body too, he didn’t want anything standing in his way of being with the bundle of sexiness gawking at him.

“Cooper, have you lost your mind or is your memory just short. I told you I wasn’t making love out in the cold, so please put your clothes back on.”

“Tea you didn’t want to make love in the cold on the hay and I found us a little less cold. This tiny office isn’t the warmest place in the world, but it has four walls, a floor and a door. It will provide us with just enough warmth until our natural body heat can take over. Now, get out of all of those clothes. I want to see what is mine.”

Tea’s fingers toyed with the top button on her coat as she looked at him. “Are you sure that I’m yours? Are you really sure about that? I think my body belongs to me and no one else.”

Quickly, Cooper closed the distance between them and started working on the first layer of clothing keeping Tea’s luscious body from him.

“Sweetheart, you belong to me as much as I belong to you. It’s an equal partnership.” Cooper made fast work on the heavy wool coat getting rid of it, so he could get the sweater off Tea. He hated how much of her body was covered.

Layers by layers of clothing got removed from Tea’s body and then from Cooper’s body until they both were naked.

“I’ll never get over how gorgeous you are,” Cooper said as his eyes looked at Tea. “You are so perfect in so many ways and I’m so glad you’re mine.”

He grabbed two condoms out of his jeans and then picked up Tea carrying her over to the sofa. Laying her down, he didn’t waste a second covering her body with his own.

“Are you sure that you’re going to be able to use both of those?” Tea asked, glancing down at the condoms he laid on the floor.

“Sweetheart, I honestly think I should have grabbed five more out of the drawer by my bed. Two aren’t going to be enough for what I want to do with you.”

Chapter Seventeen

Cooper wanted more than anything to spread Tea's legs and thrust deep inside of her, but he didn't want their time to end before they had even begun loving each other.

"Baby, you're so breathtaking," he whispered, running his hands over Tea's smooth body. "I don't care how many times I'm with you like this. I won't ever get enough of you. I don't know how I lasted this long without you."

"I lost count of how many times you told me those exact words when we were together," Tea said, touching his lower back. "I loved hearing those words coming from your mouth. They always made me feel so special."

He didn't want Tea to only feel special when they made love. He wanted Tea to feel unique and loved every second they were in each other's company, but right this second he wanted to show her how much she meant to him.

Lowering his head, Cooper slowly kissed his way down Tea's body stopping to suck one of her swollen nipples into his mouth. He rolled the hard peak with his tongue lavishing it with attention.

"Oh God....that feels so good," Tea whispered.

“I’m glad, Darlin’,” he murmured, glancing back up at her passion-filled face. “How about I see if I can kick it up another level?”

After Cooper finished giving Tea’s beautiful left breast the attention, he switched over to the right one going back and forth between them because he couldn’t get enough of her.

Her taste was addictive and he didn’t want to give it up for anything in this world. He couldn’t get enough and that didn’t upset him at all. Tea’s flavor was something he could get used to more and more every time he got a sample.

A mouth-watering blend of rich chocolate and vanilla, his mouth continued its way down her skin until he drew her nipple into his mouth while he continued to pump into her.

“Cooper....please.... God....It’s,” Tea whimpered as her nails scratched at his back.

“Do you like this Darlin’?” Cooper asked against her breast. “Am I making you feel good?”

“Yes,” she panted, moving her hips to meet his rapid thrust.

“Are you ready to come for me?” Lifting his head, Cooper stared down into Tea’s face at the same time she opened her eyes and looked at him.

“Yes,” she whispered without breaking eye contact.

Raising Tea’s lower body off the couch a little more, Cooper pumped into

her with furious rapid thrusts trying to make the final minutes of their love making last longer. With each movement, he was closer to reaching the edge and going completely over.

“Cooper,” Tea screamed. “Yes!”

Her screams of pleasure finally gave him the permission that he had been waiting for. Tossing his head back, Cooper allowed the power of his orgasm to completely take over his body pushing him to a place he had never experienced before and probably never will with another woman, but Tea.

Chapter Eighteen

“Kim, I’m doing just fine. You don’t have to be worried about me,” Tea told her assistant as she stood at the kitchen doorway watching Cooper in the living room. He was finally read his mother’s entire will.

She was still in utter disbelief at how well she and Cooper fell back into each other’s arms over the past three days. It was almost like they hadn’t spent anytime apart from each other at all.

“Tea, you can’t be away from ‘A Touch of Tea’ longer than thirty minutes without calling to check in on things. You’ve been gone close to four days. What’s going out there in Colorado? Have you hooked up with a sexy cowboy or something?”

Tea wasn’t able to call Cooper a something. He was much more than that to her. He was the other half of her.

“Kim, I can’t get into this right now. How is everything going at work? I know that I left my business in good hands.” She loved owning her own salon now. It took her a while to get it set up, but all of the hard work paid off in the end.

“The customers are happy as usual because they are clients of the best hair

salon in Atlanta, Ga. I don't know why you worry so much. Since you moved your business here from New York, the place is always packed."

"Truly, things here are great. There hadn't been one problem since you left for your trip, so enjoy your vacation and I promise not to call you again unless it's a real emergency," Kim swore.

Her assistant could be a little over bossy at times, but Tea knew that she couldn't leave her business in better hands. Kim was the shit when it came to doing hair, but she didn't want her taking on too much while she was gone.

"No, if you need to call me. Do it. I don't want anything to build up while I'm gone."

Going back home to a lot of chaos wasn't something she wanted to deal with. She already had enough going on here with Cooper. She wasn't ready to toss anything else on her plate.

"Okay, boss lady," Kim laughed. "I'll call if we run out of something or if I just feel the need to pick on you. Bye."

"Bye, Kim," Tea chuckled as her assistant hung up the phone.

Closing her cell phone, Tea laid it on the counter. She didn't go into the living room but stayed inside the kitchen. So, Cooper could have the privacy he needed at the moment. This was his time and she didn't want to interrupt him yet.

Over the last few days, Tea allowed herself to open her heart again to

Cooper and realize she had been living a lie since he left her. Cooper was the man for her in every way, shape and form it was necessary for a man to be in a woman's life.

He awakened all of her dreams; she had purposely kept hidden from everyone else. Cooper always found a way to do a unique twist to everything he wanted to do in life. Only he could have gone from being a high paid broker to owning a horse breeding ranch in Colorado.

Cooper's thirst for independence is what made her desire to venture towards her own dream more passionate.

What would Cooper do when he finally found out the truth? Her need to have her own success and not support his was the real reason they hadn't gotten married?

How did she give up to the only man she had ever really loved and tell him she had made the biggest mistake of her life?

Chapter Nineteen

Cooper tossed his mother's will down on the table wondering how he could have been so wrong about her. She wasn't the controlling, overbearing and self-absorbed woman he thought she was for so many years.

He never knew that she donated money to so many worthwhile charities or volunteered at so many homeless organizations.

Why hadn't he taken the time to get to know his mother better? After his father left he spent so much time being angry and blaming her that he hadn't paid attention that she was in pain just like him.

He should have known something was going on with her, but he was too caught up in getting away from her to see his mother was only trying to survive as much as him.

Cooper hated to admit that once he made up his mind about something, nothing veered him off course, but it was time to change that aspect of his life.

It was past time that he grew up and this time he was going to see what was right in front of his face.

Tea was the kind of woman every man hunted for in his life time. She

allowed him to say or do anything around her and still be respected for who he truly was.

For years, he told himself that he wanted a woman who had her own individuality and was a free thinker, but when he finally got her. He was too stupid to hold on to her with both hands.

Cooper totally understood now why his mother wanted him to marry Tea. She was the connection he searched for his whole life. He wanted to share every moment of his vision with her.

Chances are Tea had her own hopes and interests that were important to her, but he was a first class jerk because he never bothered even asking Tea what her ultimate desire was out of life. How could he have been so selfish?

Why couldn't Tea thrive on discovering her own new territories to explore just as he had?

"Cooper, can I talk to you for a minute?" Tea asked, cutting into his thoughts.

Turning his head, Cooper found Tea standing right next to his chair. He hadn't even heard her come up. The last time he saw her, she was inside the kitchen on the phone talking to one of her co-workers.

"Sure, you can," he said. "I want to talk to you too." Cooper knew he had a lot of apologize for. He only hoped Tea didn't leave him before he had the chance

to right his wrongs.

Chapter Twenty

“I think it past time we dealt with the demons from our past, so we will be able to move on with our future with a clear conscience,” Tea said, sitting down on the couch next to him.

“You have been wondering why I didn’t accept your proposal. I want you to know that it had nothing to do with you. I thought I wasn’t ready to get married, but that was the lie I was telling myself until I believed it.”

“I’m not sure I’m following.” Leaning forward, Cooper laid his hand on Tea’s leg. He wanted to understand what she was telling him.

“I know you don’t and I’m trying to find the words to tell you. I guess it comes from my childhood. Both of my parents gave up their dreams and careers to support the other person so in the end my mother and father both got stuck with jobs they hated.

“I listened to their complaints about each other so much growing up as a little girl that I only made one promise to myself growing up.”

“What was that promise?” Cooper asked, totally engrossed in Tea letting him know something about her past. She hadn’t told him much about any of her

family during those years they were dating each other.

His curiosity was peaked a lot to learn more about her past. Hopefully, this will be the final hurdle he would have to get over to have Tea back in his life forever.

“Tea, tell me what the promise was you made.” Cooper encouraged softly easing closer to the love of his life. He didn’t want anything standing in the way for them anymore.

“I made a promise not to give everything I hoped for to please a man. I can’t see myself standing back and watching my life pass me by. I know it sounds selfish, but I can’t help it. When you asked me to marry you all I could think about was my dream of having my own business shoved to the side because of yours.”

Suddenly, a lot of things were starting to seem so much clearer to Cooper now and some of Tea’s fears was his fault. She was telling him the truth. All while he lived in New York all he talked about was getting out of there and accomplishing his ultimate desire. He seldom asked Tea what she wanted to do with her life.

Yes, he knew about her working at the hair salon, but he *never* knew she wanted to open her own.

How did Tea put up with him for as long as she did? So, no wonder she had gotten cold feet when he tried to put a ring on her finger. He had been a world

class jerk to her in every sense of the word.

What gave him the right to complain about his mother when he was the carbon copy of her? He wanted to control Tea's life without giving it a second thought. Of course, she might want to accomplish her dreams instead of dropping everything and running away with him.

"Tea, I need to apologize to you for the way I acted. I should've never pushed you out of my life the way I did. I realized you had your own individualism but I punished you for it too."

Frowning, Tea stared at him. "I don't understand what you're telling me. Why did you punish me?"

"I always thought I was so different from my mother, but we were alike in so many ways that I put a blind eye to it."

Getting up from his seat, Cooper pulled Tea up from the couch. "I fell in love with you because you were different and creative with anything you got your beautiful little hands on. Baby, I swear to you this time that if you want to share your visions with me. I will be at your side. I will listen to you."

Tea was so taken back by Cooper's words that she really didn't know what to say or do. Did this mean he wanted to marry her now?

"Cooper, everything you're telling me is wonderful, but I don't know if you can change. You are just so used to being who you are."

He tried to interrupt Tea, but she held up her hand stopping him. “Please let me finish. This is something that needs to be said and now is the best time to do it.”

“Cooper, I love you. I think my love never stopped for you. I’m not trying to complain about you, but you are just you. It’s not like you can help it.”

Oh, Tea didn’t know how wrong she was about him. Cooper had learned his lesson about wanting it all, but actually ending up with nothing in the end. He was no longer interested in everything being about his wants or needs. Hearing what Tea had to tell him had an awakening effect on his mind and body.

Now, he saw that Tea was supposed to be more than a passenger in the car he was driving in life. She was the woman he was driving home to be with every night. A part of him sensed something was up with Tea, but he never asked her and that was his fault.

“Tea, I love you. I’ve always loved you and I always will. I totally fault myself for not seeing passed my own selfish visions to even think you might have your own.”

Still holding her hand, Cooper pulled Tea to him. “Darlin’, I want to help you make all of your dreams come true. I want to be the man at your side when each and every one of your dreams are reached. I can’t let you leave me not after I was lucky enough to get you back.”

“Cooper, what you are telling me is wonderful, but I know you aren’t willingly to give pack up everything and come back home with me,” Tea said, staring up into his eyes. “This place is your love and we both know it. Why lie about it? I love you enough to let you go.”

Tea tried to move away from him, but he help on tight. The hell he was allowing her to get away from him she must be out of her mind.

Years ago, he might have been stupid enough to allow it to happen, but he wasn’t crazy enough for a repeat performance.

“I would sell everything I have and pack up all of my belongings to be with you. I’m tired of being alone with my misery. Baby, I love you and nothing is going to change that. So, my answer is yes.”

Tea’s eyes grew wide as she looked at him like she couldn’t believe the words coming out of his mouth before a smile tugged at the corner of her pretty little mouth.

“What if I don’t want to get a yes from you? What if I rather go back home and drown myself in my work?” she teased him. “I could decide to take a page out of your well worn book.”

“Well, you better get ready to see me camped outside on your doorstep everyday until you come to your senses. I’m not kidding. I want you and I love you. The last step is this reunion of ours is you walking down the aisle. So, are you

ready to become Mrs. Cooper Bradley?”

He knew Tea had proposed to him, but none of that matter to him. All he was worried about was her answer. He wouldn't be able to go on living if Tea turned him down a second time.

“You better believe I am,” Tea answered, throwing her arms around his neck. “Did you really think I came all the way to Colorado for the scenery?” she teased.

Cooper felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Tea was finally his and he wasn't about to lose her *ever* again.

“I don't care what ultimately pushed you to come here. I'm just thrilled you did,” Cooper flirted back as happiness filled his heart.

“So, am I,” Tea answered right before he kissed her.

When their lips met Cooper finally realized that everything he had been searching so hard for was right in front of him all along.

The End

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Author Bio:

The Queen of Tease: If you want to read interracial romance stories that leaves you panting for more and turning the pages faster than you can read them. Marie is for you.

After reading her first “dirty” book as a teenager, Marie knew she had to become a writer. She started writing a few years ago because she wanted to reach for her dream. She writes her characters so her fans will believe in the Happily Ever After. She loves collecting bear figurines and reading a HOT book when she gets the chance.

You can find out more information about her and her work at the following places:

Official Site: <http://www.freewebs.com/irwriter/>

Official Blog: <http://shopdiva28.blogspot.com/>

Official Yahoo Loop: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marie_rochelle/

Official Yahoo Discussion Loop:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MarieRochelle2/>

Awards

Best Selling Author

[All Romance eBooks Best of 2008 Awards](#)

Marie Rochelle is a bestselling author and award winning author of interracial romances featuring black women and white men. Marie first started writing IR books about three years ago and it has been nonstop for her ever since. Her first best selling IR romance was entitled **Taken by Storm**. This bestseller will be released by Phaze later on in the year. Her hero in the book Storm Hyde won the 2006 Choice hero from REC.

In addition Ms. Rochelle has several bestselling books published through Red Rose Publishing that include: With All my Heart, Dangerous Bet; Troy's Revenge, Cover Model and Pamper Me.

Marie loves hearing from her fans. Please drop her an email at marierochelle2@yahoo.com or visit her website @ www.freewebs.com/irwriter/. She also has a discussion group fans can join and talk about her current releases. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MarieRochelle2/>. Or you can visit her website and join her regular yahoo group.

Red Rose Publishing:

Beneath the Surface- Available in ebook and print

Pamper Me- Available in ebook and print

Be With you – Available in ebook and print

Cover Model – Available in ebook and print

With all my Heart – Available in ebook and print

Love Play

Tycoon Club Series

Dangerous Bet: Troy's Revenge: Available in ebook and print

Boss Man: Now Available-coming soon to print

Cole's Surrender

Business or Pleasure

Something Pumping

Special Delivery: Book 2: Heat Me Up-coming soon to print

Accept My Love: Sasha: The Williams Sister Series-Book 2-coming soon