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Ménage Amour

Wild Montana Nights

Marla Monroe



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Darla Moore needs a job, not a boyfriend, and especially not two. But that is exactly what she ends up with when she agrees to become a cook and housekeeper on a Montana ranch. How can she remain immune to their charm and the way they make her feel? How will she react when she learn she is really auditioning for a starring role in a three-way marriage?

Randall and Marcus thought they would never find the woman of their dreams until Darla walked through their door. When she relaxes her defenses and lets them in, she falls in love with them, and they with her. Randall and Marcus are dead set on keeping her with them and make a decision that could cost them her love in the end. Will that love be enough to forgive them before it's too late?

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WILD MONTANA NIGHTS

MARLA MONROE

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Chapter One

Darla clutched the worn section of the want ads tight to her breast and blew out a breath. The cold air fogged. Dear Lord, don't let her have made a mistake in packing up and leaving everything behind in Mississippi. She had driven straight through to Rhodes, Montana in hopes of landing the job she found on the Internet. After stopping only for food and to spend the night in cheap hotels, she was in desperate need of a job now with no means of support and a dwindling savings. She pushed the hair out of her eyes and climbed back in the car. The directions the man had given her over the phone sounded easy enough to follow. She should be there for the interview in less than an hour.

Six months earlier, she had been living in a comfortable apartment, dating a wonderful man who promised her the world when they were married, and working at a job that gave her a sense of accomplishment. In the blink of an eye, it was all gone. Never would she trust in anyone but herself again. Darla fastened her seatbelt and started the car. She pulled out of the little grocery store parking lot and turned in the direction of The Wandering S Ranch.

The ad said they were looking for a live-in housekeeper and cook. She could take care of a house without a problem. She was a good cook as long as they didn't want anything fancy. Surely a working

ranch wouldn't have any need of extravagant food. She knew nothing about ranching, but she was more than willing to learn. The fact that they were still looking gave her hope that she might have a chance at the job. If it didn't work out, then she would have to look around town for something. If not there, then she would move on to the next town.

The road she found herself on wound around the mountain. The beautiful scenery wasn't lost on her, but driving the treacherous road took all her concentration. She wasn't use to the mountainous driving. At home in Mississippi, the land she grew up on was flat with only a few rolling hills to ponder. This was entirely different terrain. By the time she arrived at the entrance to The Wandering S, Darla's knuckles were white and her fingers stiff from gripping the wheel.

Her mind registered the dwindling light and the knowledge that she would have to drive down that road in the dark burned her stomach. *Please let this work out for me.* Darla eased down the long drive toward what she hoped would be her new home. The large wooden house gradually revealed itself in the gloom of the encroaching night. Maybe she should have asked to meet with them in the morning. She closed her eyes and sighed. Nothing to do but get it over with. She could worry about the drive back when it came time. For right now, she needed to be on her toes and not worried about finding her way back down the mountain.

From what she could see of the massive structure, it was a large log cabin of perhaps four thousand square feet. She wondered how large the family would be for something of that size. She parked the car and climbed out to look around her. She could make out several other structures beside and behind the house. Probably a barn and other out buildings, she decided. There would need to be a bunkhouse for other workers as well. She swallowed and turned her attention back toward the main house. That was where the interview would take place.

Darla closed the car door and walked up the drive to the house. There were lights on inside. She couldn't make out any movement, but she knew that someone had to be home since she had talked to one of them earlier. She glanced at her watch and grimaced. It had taken her over an hour to find the place. She hoped they weren't upset with how late it was. At nearly five thirty, it was getting dark quickly now. The garage was unlit, so she veered toward what she assumed to be the front door where a light had been left on hopefully in anticipation of her arrival. Adjusting the strap of her purse over her shoulder, Darla knocked on the massive wooden door and stepped back to wait, gripping her threadbare coat closed against the wind.

After what seemed like long minutes, the locks on the door made clicking noises and the door swung open from the inside. Light shone out from within the room, momentarily blinding her until a figure stepped up into view, blocking the bright light from her eyes. As her eyes adjusted to the change in light, she assessed the man standing in front of her. He stood well over six feet, probably a good four inches or more. Brown wavy hair that reached his shoulders accented honey colored eyes that seemed to stare straight through her. His chiseled features kept him from being handsome, but rather made him distinguished, something that had to be difficult to do at such a young age. He couldn't be more than twenty-six or twenty-eight.

"Ms. Darla Moore?" His voice sent chill bumps down her spine, and deep, rich tones massaged her ears. He turned the sound of her name into music.

"That's right. Mr. Sanders?" She squinted into the light.

"Come on in." He held the door open, and Darla walked inside.

The entrance hall held a row of hooks and a long pew-like bench where you could sit down and remove boots and shoes. Darla wasn't sure if she should take hers off or not. As if hearing her thoughts, he drew her by the elbow deeper into the house.

"Call me Marcus. Let me take your coat." He held out his hands.

Darla unbuttoned her coat and slipped it off. He took it and hung it on one of the coat hooks in the hall and ushered her into what appeared to be the main living area. A massive fireplace took up nearly one entire wall with a glassed-in entertainment center to one side. The stone façade lent warmth to the room and helped neutralize the rich burgundy leather couch and chairs. The warm wood floor looked in need of a good cleaning but wasn't nasty by any means. The fire in the fireplace looked inviting, and she had to stiffen her knees to keep from heading directly toward it.

"Have a seat. Would you like something to drink?" Marcus asked.

"No thanks. I'm fine." She took a seat on the butter soft leather of the couch.

Marcus remained standing. "Excuse me for a minute, and let me get my brother." He smiled at her and disappeared through a doorway to the right.

The minute he was gone, Darla blew out a breath and tried to will her fluttering heart to calm down. Marcus was larger than life. Broad shoulders with a massive chest and narrow waist gave him the look of a warrior in her mind. She didn't realize there was a brother and wondered if he lived there as well. Only a few seconds passed, and footsteps returned. Two sets by the sounds of it.

Marcus returned, followed closely by a second man equally as impressive. This man's hair wasn't as wavy but a bit longer. His hazel eyes sparkled in the firelight with what she could only term as a wicked look. The same broad shoulders and narrow waist attracted her gaze until she realized she was staring and looked away.

"This is my brother, Randall." Marcus introduced them. "Randall, this is Darla.

Randall smiled and held out a hand. "Pleased to meet you."

Darla let him take her hand and found hers engulfed in a large warm grip that wasn't too tight. He held it a little too long, but she found that she didn't mind. When he let her hand go, it tingled, and she refrained from rubbing her hand on her pant leg.

“You said you’re from Mississippi originally. What made you decide to move to Montana?” Marcus asked as he took a seat opposite her.

Randall sat on the other end of the couch and turned toward her. “That seems like such an odd decision to make.”

“I wanted a change. I’m tired of the heat and humidity and worked with a lady who was originally from Montana. She always talked about it, and it sounded so nice I thought I would enjoy living here.” Darla nibbled at her lower lip.

“So tell us about your past experience,” Randall said.

“I was the housekeeping manager for a hundred bed hotel.” She described her job and responsibilities to the two men.

“Why would you want to go from such a position of responsibility to working at a ranch?” Marcus asked.

“I want a change. There’s a lot of stress associated with a job like that, and although I can appreciate there will be some level of stress with this one, I have to believe it will be far less.”

“Would you have any trouble with us contacting your last place of employment for a reference?”

“Not at all,” Darla said.

“When would you be able to start?” Marcus asked.

“I’m available at any time.”

“How about tonight?” Randall stood up.

“Excuse me?”

“Would you be able to start tonight?”

“Well, um, yes. I can start tonight.” She turned and looked toward Marcus. “But don’t you want to talk with my previous employer?”

“Do we need to?” he asked.

“Well, no. I’ve told you the truth.”

“Then we don’t need to talk with them. Let’s talk about salary and compensation.” Marcus also stood up.

Darla’s neck began to cramp, so she stood up as well.

“Do you have everything you need for tonight with you? We can go back to town tomorrow and gather the rest of your things.” Randall walked toward the front door.

“Um, I have everything I need with me in the car.” She started to follow him, but Marcus took hold of her arm and pulled her toward another doorway.

“I have all the paperwork drawn up in the office. We can go over the salary and fringes, and then you can settle in for the night.”

Darla’s mouth opened then closed. She wasn’t sure what to say. Everything was going too fast. She wanted the job but had expected to have to interview and then maybe get called back. She hadn’t expected to be able to start immediately. Thinking about the drive back down the mountain in the dark had her glad she didn’t have to. She wasn’t going to worry about how it all happened. She was just going to be thankful it had.

* * * *

Randall couldn’t wait to unload her car and get her settled into her room. She was perfect. He was glad they had held out as long as they had. He had to admit that Marcus’s idea to hire a housekeeper-cook had been a good one. The moment he saw her, Randall knew she was the one for them. Long auburn hair the color of turning leaves curled down the middle of her back. She stood maybe five feet two or three inches. She looked so delicate compared to them, but they would take good care of her. Lively green eyes spoke of passion-filled nights and sparks of anger when the wrong thing was done or said. She was nice and curvy, just like he liked his women. Neither he nor Marcus liked thin women.

He opened the back of the SUV to find three suitcases and three boxes nestled together among a pile of two pillows and a stack of blankets. His brows drew together in a frown. Had she been sleeping in her car? The idea angered him for no reason other than she

shouldn't have put herself in danger like that. He huffed out a breath and reminded himself that until she had gotten there, she wasn't their responsibility. Where in the hell was her family that they had let her drive off into nowhere like she had?

He grabbed two suitcases and began unloading her SUV. He counted on Marcus keeping her busy with paperwork in the office until he could get her things settled into the master suite. They set her up in there with the intentions that they would be joining her there eventually, hopefully sooner rather than later. He could hardly wait to claim her.

He and his brother had always known they would share a woman as their wife. They had grown up in a house with two fathers and one mother. The love they shared bled through in everything they did and said. Both he and Marcus wanted that sort of love in their life. Now that they had found her, they had to convince her to give them a chance. Marcus was sure that getting her to like where she lived as well as getting her to fall in love with them would assure she became theirs. Their mother wasn't so sure about the idea, and their fathers' warned them it could backfire on them.

Randall left the last box on the floor in the massive room. There were two large walk-in closets. One that he and Marcus would share and the other would be for their wife. There was a massive chest of drawers and a dresser that took up most of one wall, plenty of room for the three of them to keep their folded clothes. The massive room also held a sitting area where a couple of club chairs sat with table lamps beside them. The bed was larger than a king-size bed. It had been special ordered and made just for them. Right now, the comforter on it matched the green of Darla's eyes, he decided.

Just as he walked back into the living room, Darla and Marcus came out of the office. Darla didn't appear very enthused. He risked a questioning look toward his brother. Marcus smiled and nodded once. As good as it was going to get, he interpreted. She wasn't balking at the initial setup. How much had Marcus revealed to her though?

Surely he hadn't told her what they really wanted from her was to be their wife?

"Let me show you to your new home," Randall offered, extending a hand toward her.

She hesitated for a split second and then pasted on a nervous smile and let him take her hand. He was careful on the stairs to let her set the pace. Then he led her down a long hall that held three other rooms. He opened the door to the left at the end of the hall and stepped back for her to enter. He watched the expression on her face as she looked around her. He wasn't disappointed. First was delight, then disbelief followed quickly by uncertainty.

"This is much too nice for a housekeeper. Surely there is another room I can use." She licked her lips.

Randall found himself watching her tongue dart around her mouth. He ached to taste her but wasn't sure where they stood at the moment. He needed to talk with Marcus.

"I've brought everything inside for you. Why don't you unpack and make yourself comfortable? I'll come back and get you in a little while. I thought we could have sandwiches tonight since you only just arrived." Randall backed out of the bedroom and closed the door behind him.

Without looking back, he headed toward the office and Marcus. He found his brother pouring two glasses of whiskey. He handed one to Randall when he walked into the room and held his up. They clinked glasses in a silent toast. His went down smooth, warming him from the inside out. Marcus sipped his before turning it up.

"What do you think?" Marcus finally asked.

"She's perfect. I'm half in love with her already. Mom was right when she said we would know her when we saw her."

"I agree with you. How did she react to the bedroom?" Marcus sat his glass aside and leaned back against his desk.

“She wasn’t pleased. Well, it was obvious that she liked the room immensely, however, she isn’t buying that the room is for a housekeeper. What did you tell her?”

“Nothing, really. Just that we’ve needed a housekeeper for quite some time now. Between the cattle and your programming business, neither of us has the time to deal with the day to day stuff that needs to be taken care of. And, by virtue of where we live, daytime help isn’t feasible for six or so months out of the year.” Marcus curled his hands around the edge of the desk.

Randall walked over to where his desk sat and plopped down in the chair. He scowled into one of the many computer monitors sitting on the desk. He had hoped she would be so overwhelmed by them that she would instantly fall in love. Well, that was really going to happen.

“Do you think we are expecting too much from her?” Randall asked.

“I don’t know. I guess I thought she would instantly feel an attraction to us if we did for her.” Marcus pushed away from the desk and paced. “That still may happen. She wasn’t looking for anyone when she came, but we were looking for her. So there’s still hope.”

“I vote we play it cool and see if she shows any interest in one or both of us and then take it from there.” Randall crossed his arms behind his head and watched his brother pace.

“Okay, I can live with that. No pushing her. If it happens, then fine, but we won’t force her into thinking about it.”

“Sounds good to me. I’m going to go fix a few sandwiches. Why don’t you go get her in a few minutes and bring her to the kitchen?” Randall stood up and walked around the desk toward the door. “I’ll hold off on hers until you get there with her. I already know what we like. I can make them first.” He grinned and left the room.

* * * *

Marcus stood in the middle of the office without anything to occupy his hands. He couldn't stand to waste time doing nothing. Instead, he shoved his hands in his pockets and continued his walk back and forth across the office. He couldn't exactly pace with his hands in his pockets. It looked like a sick imitation of a runway model walk.

Darla smiled shyly at him when he knocked on her door some fifteen minutes later.

"Do you have everything you need? If not, we might have it somewhere here. Just let us know."

"Thanks, but I don't need anything. Really, this room is way too nice for me to use," she began.

"Nonsense. You need space to live. We have the entire house to live in." He held out his hand to her. "Let's go to the kitchen and eat."

Her mouth thinned into a straight line while she considered her options. Then she sighed and took his hand.

"I hope you like ham. That is all we have right now for sandwiches. I'm hoping you can come up with a grocery list tomorrow that we can fill on Saturday."

"I'll take care of it."

He guided her with a hand at the small of her back. They entered the kitchen to find Randall with an assembly line type process going on.

"Darla, what do you like on your sandwich?"

"Mayo and that's all." She drifted over to the pantry to look inside.

Randall glanced at Marcus with raised eyebrows. "Anything?"

"Not really. I can tell that I make her nervous, but then she doesn't know me from Adam's house cat." Marcus sighed and watched as Darla reemerged from the pantry.

"Come have a seat at the bar, Darla." Marcus pulled a barstool out for her to climb up on. He barely managed to keep his hand off her ass when she climbed up to sit down.

Randall sat her plate in front of her and offered her something to drink. She chose iced tea and began to eat. Marcus climbed up on the stool to her right, and Randall took the one to her left. She was surrounded by them now. Elbow to elbow, they lined the bar and only the sounds of eating and drinking could be heard for several minutes.

“What time do ya’ll like your meals?” she asked.

“Breakfast is at six thirty. Lunch is at noon and dinner would be thirty minutes after sunset. We have to utilize as much of the sun as we can,” Randall explained.

“Do you have family close-by?” she asked.

“Our parents live about thirty minutes to the west of us.” Randall took a bite of his second sandwich.

“Do you have any other siblings?”

“We have another brother, James. He’s the oldest. He lives in Billings,” Marcus answered.

“So it is just your mom and dad then.”

“Well, actually, we have two dads and our mom. She’s married to both of them.” Randall waited holding his breath.

“Oh, well. More power to her. Managing one man can be confusing enough without adding a second man to the equation.” She shrugged it off and kept nibbling at her sandwich.

Randall wanted to hug her. She wasn’t appalled at the notion. To him, half the battle was won. He wondered if Marcus had anything else under his sleeve to whip out tonight, or if that was going to be all of the show. He sure hoped so. He hadn’t been prepared for the day when he woke up that morning.

Darla slid off the barstool and picked up her plate. She wiped off the crumbs with a napkin in to the trash then rinsed the plate and sat it in the sink. She tidied up the kitchen after putting the mayo, mustard, and ham back inside the fridge. Marcus frowned at her as she finished her task.

“Randall, why don’t you show her the rest of the house? I’m going to finish up some things in the office.” Marcus rinsed his plate off as well, setting it on top of Darla’s.

“Good idea.” Randall stood up and cleaned off his plate. “You saw the pantry. I’ll show you the cellar next. We keep our canned goods there.”

“Do you raise a garden?” Darla asked.

“We haven’t. Mom does at home, but that would be strictly up to you and what you want to deal with.”

“Fresh vegetables would be nice occasionally. I’ll see if I’ve gotten the hang of things by the time spring gets here.” She smiled and followed him down the cellar stairs.

“Spring won’t be here till at least May. We have a short growing season.” Randall switched on the light once they made it to the bottom of the stairs.

The cellar was roughly half the size of the house with one side devoted to shelving for canned goods and the other side devoted to gathering dust and cobwebs. There were six or seven bottles of wine on a shelf in the corner, but other than that, nothing. Randall watched as Darla examined several of the canned goods and dusted off a few labels on the wine.

“Everything down here needs cleaning. This will take several days alone.”

Randall walked up behind her while she was looking at the bottles of wine. When she suddenly turned around, he was looking down into her upturned face. They were close enough he could have kissed her. She looked into his eyes, and her mouth opened then closed. He wanted to run his tongue around her lips and see if she tasted as good as she smelled this close. Something moved in a corner, startling her, and the moment was gone.

Darla blinked and took a step back. She smiled but didn’t act as though she was uncomfortable. Well, he sure as hell was. His cock would have the imprint of his zipper on it for the rest of his life as

hard and turned on as he was right then. He sighed and led her back up the stairs and showed her the rest of the house.

“I’ll show you the outside tomorrow during daylight,” Randall promised her.

Darla smiled and told him thanks for the tour. She really needed to get to sleep if she was going to have breakfast on the table by six thirty. Good thing she was used to working early, she joked. He smiled and pointed her in the right direction to her bedroom. He watched her walk down the hall before he turned to find Marcus in the office. They needed to have a heart to heart on how they were going to approach her. She wasn’t appalled about a ménage relationship. That was a start anyway.

Chapter Two

Darla turned a complete circle in the bedroom they called hers. It was much too large for just her, and she suspected it was actually the master bedroom. Why would they have given it to her? Surely one of them should have taken it. And that was another thing. Why weren't they married? They were good-looking, virile men with a thriving ranch and some sort of programming business. It didn't make sense.

Oh, and two fathers? That was beyond weird. Their parents lived in a *ménage* relationship. She had never met anyone who lived like that, but then she was from the Bible Belt of Mississippi.

She wondered how it worked. Sighing, she shook her head. It didn't matter. It was none of her business. She would be keeping house and cooking for the two men. She wasn't part of the family.

The idea of being part of a family settled over her for a few minutes. She knew that was in her past. She would probably never find anyone living in such a remote area now. Not that she wanted to. Men couldn't be trusted to tell the truth or keep their promises. She knew that firsthand.

She opened up the first suitcase and began unpacking. Everything she owned fit in the dresser. The few things she had to hang up looked lonely and out of place in the huge walk in closet. She had three pairs of jeans, two worn dresses, and an equally worn coat. She would have to invest in more clothes, especially a good coat. Winters, she knew, would be bitter here. It wouldn't hurt to buy a pair of boots as well. If she was careful, she would have enough money to cover a few things until she got her first pay check. The salary was generous—more than she had expected with room and board included. She would be able to

put a little away in savings for the future. The future, she wondered, what it would hold for her?

Darla settled the suitcases in the closet and unpacked her toiletries from one of the boxes. She couldn't believe the bathroom. A large whirlpool tub sat in one corner big enough for two or three and a shower took up another wall. The multiple shower heads looked as inviting as a long soak in the massive tub. When she finished unpacking, she would settle for a shower. She needed to get into bed and get some sleep. She had a long day tomorrow, the first day of her new life.

Early the next morning, Darla was already in the kitchen cooking breakfast when Randall walked in. He looked every bit as scrumptious as she remembered from the day before. Of course it didn't help that she had dreamed about him and his brother. All that talk concerning his parents being in a ménage relationship had fueled her imagination. Now she dropped her eyes back to the bacon she was cooking. She was sure her cheeks were rosy. Maybe he would think it was the heat from the stove.

"Morning, Darla. How did you sleep last night?" He crossed to the coffee pot and poured a mug.

"Fine thanks. The bed is massive. I think I got lost in it." She blushed harder and concentrated on cooking.

"Do you have everything you need? Like I said, we may have something if you don't. Otherwise, we'll be going into town Saturday." Randall leaned back against the counter and sipped his coffee.

"Would it be okay if I went along this time? I need to get a couple of things."

"Sure. Marcus and I are both going, so we can get something to eat in town. It's what we usually do when we go."

"I don't want to be any bother..." she began.

"It's no bother at all," Randall said.

Marcus walked into the kitchen and right up behind Darla. He bent over her back and sniffed at the bacon.

"Smells great," he said. "How did you sleep last night?"

Darla stiffened and swallowed hard. It felt so intimate for him to be that close. Heat from his body seeped into her. His shirt rubbed against her back, and she nearly yelped when he settled a hand on her shoulder.

"Randall, I'm already in love. No more burned bacon."

Randall laughed. "I never was a good cook. Mom was sure both of us would starve when we moved out here."

Marcus moved from behind her. She peeked around to see him pouring a mug of coffee.

"Um, breakfast is nearly ready. I think I started a little late this morning. I'll have it right tomorrow."

"Don't worry about it," Marcus said. "You've never worked on a ranch before, so it will take a little getting used to."

She nodded and pulled the biscuits out of the oven. "How do you want your eggs?"

"Just scramble them all," Randall answered.

Ten minutes later she had everything on the table, and the men took their seats across from each other. Darla started cleaning up the dishes she'd used to cook with.

"Hey, come over here and sit down and eat. Dishes can wait till you eat breakfast." Marcus stood up and pulled out a chair. "Grab a plate."

"Oh, I can eat later. I shouldn't eat with you."

"Why the hell not? You gotta eat. You might as well eat with us and save time," Randall added.

"I...if you're sure."

She opened the cabinet and pulled out a plate. She gathered silverware and sat at the head of the table. It was the only place left to sit. She felt odd sitting there with them. Randall got up and poured a

cup of coffee for her. He sat it in front of her and smiled. It was contagious. She smiled back.

Randall and Marcus discussed the ranch and things she had no knowledge of. While they continued their discussion, Darla planned her day.

“So is there anything you need before we head out?” Marcus’s deep voice startled her. She nearly dropped her fork.

“Oh, no. I’m fine. I have plenty to do.”

“Randall made a list of some of the things we are used to eating so you could make out a grocery list. We aren’t picky, though. Believe me. We’ll eat just about anything you feed us. Been living off our own cooking for several years now.”

She laughed. “It can’t be that bad. You’re both healthy-looking men.” She blushed realizing what she’d admitted to.

“Well, thanks,” Marcus said.

Randall reached over and touched her hand. “You’re mighty pretty yourself.”

Uncomfortable with the direction the conversation was taking, Darla stood up and carried her plate to the sink. She hadn’t quite finished, but her appetite had fled along with her common sense evidently.

“I’m working in the office today. I have a program I’m working on, so I’ll be close by if you need anything.” Randall rinsed off his plate and sat it on top of hers.

“I’ll be back around noon. Sandwiches are fine.” Marcus stood up and looked as if he was going to touch her, but he turned and walked toward the kitchen door leading outside.

Randall donned his hat and followed his brother.

* * * *

“Damn, I’m having a hard time keeping my hands off her.” Marcus growled.

“Yeah, I’m with you on that. It’s hard to believe we only met her last night. I feel like she belongs here with us.” Randall watched his brother saddle his horse.

“I wish it were me staying home with her today.”

“You’ll get your time,” Randall said.

“See if you can make any headway with her. Don’t scare her off though.”

“I think I can handle it just fine, little brother.” He grinned when Marcus scowled at him.

“She looked good in the kitchen, didn’t she?” Marcus led his brother’s horse outside into the crisp morning air.

Randall nodded thinking about how it would feel to greet her in the mornings with a kiss and a hug. Hell, waking her up with a kiss sounded even better.

“I’d better go. The boys will be wondering where I am. I’ll see you at lunch.” Marcus mounted the horse and headed off toward the west pasture.

Alone with Darla. It sounded good, but he wasn’t sure how to proceed. The idea was to make her comfortable around them. He entered the kitchen to find her wiping down the stove. The dishes were finished and the table clean. She looked so tiny compared to him. He was almost afraid to touch her. As if sensing he was watching her, she turned from the stove and stared.

“Did you want something? I can make more coffee if you would like.” She shifted from one foot to the other.

“No, thanks. Maybe later. I’ll be in the office if you need anything. Don’t worry about interrupting me.”

He walked out of the kitchen and down the hall to the office he and his brother shared. They each had a desk to conduct their individual business interests from. Marcus took care of the ranch for the most part, while he ran a programming business. He helped with the books during calving season. Marcus would be tied up from sunup to sundown for several weeks.

Noise from the hall had him looking up toward the door hoping she was going to come in and ask him something. Instead, a soft humming reached his ears as she passed by the door. He smiled at the slightly off-key music. It was the prettiest sound he'd ever heard. He listened for a few more seconds then buried himself in his computers.

A tentative knock on the door startled him. Marcus never knocked. He just barged in cussing about one thing or another. Instead of Marcus, Darla peeked around the door with a shy smile lighting her face.

"Hi, Darla. Do you need something?"

"No, I just wanted to let you know lunch is ready when you are. Marcus isn't here yet, but it's noon." She rubbed her hands up and down her thighs in an obviously nervous gesture.

"I'll be right there. Thanks for telling me. I would have let it pass right by me if you hadn't."

She smiled and disappeared behind the door. He watched the door for a few minutes just thinking about her smile. It warmed his heart to see her mouth curved up and the light dancing in her eyes. One day he wanted to see that and know it was for them. One day soon.

He quickly closed out of the programs he was in and stood up to stretch. He'd been sitting there without getting up all morning. He did that sometimes when he was working on something particularly engrossing. He'd missed cooking meals on more than one occasion when it was his turn, much to Marcus's disgust. Now he needed to pay better attention with Darla in the house. He needed to pay attention to her, which wouldn't be a hardship at all.

He strolled down the hall to the kitchen but stopped to stare at the entrance hall. The wood floor gleamed as it never had before. Even the walls looked as if they had been freshly painted. Randall walked into the living room to the same magnificent transformation. Everything gleamed shiny and new looking. The furniture had been dusted and the floors polished to a perfect shine. The stone fireplace looked as if she had washed down the stones with soap and water. It

glistened in the light coming through the freshly washed windows. How had she managed all of this in such a short time?

He found her in the kitchen stirring something on the stove and couldn't resist coming up behind her to sniff over her shoulder as Marcus had done at breakfast. Around the wonderful aroma of stew her scent wafted to his nose—a delicate mix of cinnamon and sunshine. He breathed in, deeply holding her scent within himself as long as possible.

"You smell wonderful," he breathed out.

Darla jumped. "Excuse me?"

He took a step back and corrected his statement. "I meant that what you're cooking smells great."

"Oh, thanks. It's beef stew. I thought we would have it and cornbread tonight. I hope that will be okay." She bit her lower lip as if in worry.

"Sounds great to me. I'm sure Marcus will think so, too."

She hurried over to the table and opened the bread. "If you'll tell me what you want on your sandwiches, I'll fix them."

"I can fix my own. Don't worry about it. We aren't helpless, Darla. Don't fuss so much," Randall teased.

She dropped her hands and stepped back. "Sorry. I didn't mean to."

Randall realized he'd hurt her feelings. Shit, this was going to be harder than he'd thought. Neither he nor Marcus had been around women much in the last couple of years. They would have to be careful.

"It's fine." He held out his hand, and she took it after hesitating for a few seconds. He squeezed it then let it drop. She turned away to once again stir the stew on the stove.

"Do you think Marcus is okay, or is he often late getting in for lunch?"

Randall grinned. She was worried about him. That was a start.

"I'm sure he's fine. He'll be in before long." He started making his sandwiches.

Just as he was ready to sit down, he heard Marcus on the back porch stomping his feet.

"See, there he is now."

He carefully watched Darla's face when Marcus strode in grinning like an idiot. Her eyes brightened, and she smiled. Yeah, she already liked them. Maybe she had felt that spark as they had the first time she had seen them.

"Damn dumbass cows." He took off his hat and hung on a hook by the door.

"What did they do this time?" Randall asked.

"Chased two of them stupid things halfway across the damn ranch. Then when I finally got them turned around, they didn't want to move again." He strode over to the stove and leaned in to give the stew a good sniff. "Man that smells good."

Darla stepped back but didn't turn away. She did smile though, and that seemed to make Marcus even happier.

"It's for supper tonight. I'll cook cornbread to go with it."

"I sure as hell won't be late for supper then." He turned away to wash his hands at the sink then sat down to make sandwiches.

"Aren't you eating with us?" Marcus asked.

"Oh. I already ate." She licked her lips and turned back to the stove. "I've made a grocery list up. It's on the counter. You might want to look over it to see if there is something you want to add to it."

Marcus shrugged his shoulders when Randall looked at him. She was going to stir the stew out of the stew if she kept up. Randall took a bite out of his sandwich and got up to check the list. He skimmed down it and smiled. She'd pretty much covered everything. Except maybe...

"You might want to add shaving cream and soap for me. What about you, Marcus?"

"I'm fine. Just got all my stuff last week." He winked at Randall. "Darla honey, you might want to stock up on any woman stuff you need just in case we get a storm early this year."

Randall groaned inwardly. He really hadn't expected his brother to go that far. He risked a glance at Darla and noticed she was stiff as a board and no longer stirring. Hell, had they gone too far already? He stuffed the last of his sandwich in his mouth and grabbed the mayonnaise and mustard to return them to the fridge. Best to act like it wasn't anything important.

"I noticed you like to read." He began as he closed the refrigerator door. "We'll stop by the furniture store and see about a bookshelf for your room."

"Oh." She turned around from the stove. "There's no need for that. Really."

"Can't have your books stacked on the floor like that. It will ruin them. There's plenty of room in there for a bookshelf or two."

Marcus looked up from his sandwich. "Hell, I'd give you my half of the office shelves except brother here already took them."

"If you would rather have those in the office, I can clear some shelves off for you," Randall offered.

"Goodness, no. You are both so generous already. I don't want to take your shelves, Randall. My books are fine like they are unless you rather there wasn't anything on the floor in the bedroom." She rubbed her hands together in a wringing motion.

He walked over to her and took her hands in his, stilling them. "We'll get a bookshelf in town. You will need more books when winter gets here and you can't go anywhere for a few months."

She looked up at him and fell silent, then looked down at their joined hands. He squeezed them gently and reluctantly let go. She didn't move, but her eyes followed him back to the table. There was something in her gaze for a few seconds. Was it longing? Whatever it was, it was gone just as quickly.

“Marcus, I’m going to work on the breeder registry this afternoon. Is everything in the folder, or do you have some of it in your desk?”

“It’s all in the folder. I updated it yesterday.” He finished his last sandwich and stood up. The chair scraped across the floor.

“Darla, I promise I’ll be on time for supper tonight.” He snuck a kiss on her cheek before she knew what he was about. “See you later.” Then he grabbed his hat and walked out.

Randall had to bite his cheek to keep from laughing at the look on her face. Then her hand came up and touched her cheek where he’d kissed her. He smiled and slipped out of the kitchen. Things were looking up, he decided. Marcus with his winsome ways and constant tomfoolery would win her for sure. Now he needed to work on his part of seducing her.

* * * *

She stood there for several seconds with her hand to her cheek where Marcus had kissed her. What had that been all about? Was he flirting with her? Surely not. She was their housekeeper. She pushed it all aside and set about cleaning up the kitchen again. She’d worked hard all morning cleaning the living room and hall. It fairly shone in the living room, and she was proud of it. Next were the men’s rooms. They needed a good cleaning and airing. She would do that next week when she would be home all day to do it. Home. She’d already come to think of the ranch as home after only one day.

She decided to start on the basement, as it would take several days to sort out. She checked the stew and turned it off to sit until time for supper. Then she climbed down the stairs to the basement armed with a bucket of hot water and a plethora of cleaning supplies.

Dust covered everything. She looked around for a few seconds and decided the best thing would be to start on the shelves with the canned goods. She located a ladder against one wall and moved it to the shelving area and climbed up. She moved the few jars off the top

shelf to the next shelf and then, using a wet cloth, began cleaning the shelf off. She then cleaned each jar and set it back on the shelf. Then she moved down a shelf until she had them all cleaned off and the jars clear enough to see the contents once again.

She stood with her hands on her hips and viewed the shelves. She checked her watch and found she had maybe another thirty minutes before she would need to get supper ready. That gave her plenty of time to rearrange the jars so that they made sense to her. She climbed back up to the top of the ladder and began moving jars back down. A sudden noise startled her. She turned too quickly on the ladder and lost her balance. She cried out but found instead of hitting the floor as she expected to do, she landed in warm arms.

“Damn it! You could have killed yourself standing on a ladder that high up.” Randall held her against his chest.

“You startled me. I was fine until you snuck up behind me.” She glared up into his frowning face.

“I ought to paddle your ass for getting on a ladder in the first place. Next time you need something that high you ask me or Marcus for help.” He still didn’t put her down.

“You can let me go now.” She looked up into his eyes. There was something about the way he was looking at her now that caused her heart to speed up.

He let her slowly slide down from his arms. Her body touched his all the way down, and she felt the bulge of his stiffened cock against her belly. Oh God. He bent down and cradled her face between both hands.

“I’m going to kiss you. If you don’t want this, say something now.”

She couldn’t make a sound.

His mouth descended on hers. It was a feather of a kiss that slowly evolved into a full mouth orgy. He nipped at her lips until she opened her mouth and welcomed him inside. His tongue coaxed hers to play as he teased her mouth and nibbled on her lips. She pulled away

gasping for breath. He let her, but didn't let her out of his embrace. At some point his hands made their way to her ass and held her tight against him.

She licked her lips and gazed up at Randall. Her face flamed at the realization she'd returned his kiss. She pushed against him, and he let her go. She didn't stop until she'd climbed the stairs from the basement and made it all the way to her room. How was she supposed to face him again?

There was a knock at the bedroom door.

"Darla?" Randall called.

Her hands went to her lips. She could still feel him there. They felt swollen and hot.

"I'm sorry, Darla. I shouldn't have done that. I couldn't help it. You could have been hurt. I—" he stopped.

She hesitated for an instant then opened the door and peered out. He stood leaning against the door jam, a worried look on his face.

"It's okay. Let's just forget it happened." She drew in a deep breath and walked past him toward the kitchen. She still had supper to tend to.

He didn't follow her, for which she was exceedingly grateful. She assumed he returned to the office to finish what he was working on. Thirty minutes later, the sun set and Darla had cornbread in the oven. She'd just pulled it out when Marcus strode in. He hung his hat on the hook and washed his hands in the sink.

"Hi, Darla. I'll go grab Randall, and we'll be right in to eat. It smells great." He disappeared through the door.

Several minutes later the two men returned and took their seats at the table. Marcus looked around and then stood back up and went to the cabinet and got out another bowl, then silverware and placed it on the table at the head. He frowned at her and sat back down.

"You eat with us," Randall said without looking at her.

Darla sat down and joined them in passing the stew and then the cornbread. She managed to eat some of it, but found it difficult to

swallow around the lump in her throat. The tension at the table could have been cut with a knife. Finally, Marcus took his bowl to the sink and rinsed it out. Then he took her totally by surprise and bent down and kissed her full on the lips.

“That was delicious. Thanks for cooking it.” He stood back up and strode out of the room.

What in the world was going on? Why were they acting like she was more than just a housekeeper?

“Is something wrong? You’re frowning awful hard.” Randall took his bowl to the sink and sat it with the others.

“Um, no. I’ll just clean up then go to bed if you don’t need anything.”

“No, we’re fine.” He started to turn around then stopped. “We’ll leave at dawn in the morning. Don’t bother with breakfast. We’ll get something in town.”

Darla stood with trembling legs and cleared the table, putting the stew in the refrigerator. There wasn’t any cornbread left. She would need to make more next time to be sure they had gotten enough. Next time...was she really thinking about staying after everything that had happened? Where else could she go? She felt at home here almost from the beginning. She touched her lips once again. She felt the beginnings of heat low in her belly. Surely she wasn’t sexually attracted to either of them? Her face heated. Or both of them.

She started the dishwasher and headed to her room. She would take that nice long soak in the tub before she went to bed. She needed it. She would be sore tomorrow and still have a long ride to make it through. Hopefully, she wouldn’t dream of them again tonight.

The water felt divine as she lay back in the huge tub. The jets pounded a soothing massage on her sore muscles. She sank beneath the water until just the tips of her nipples poked out from the frothy water. The cool air pricked at them, and they beaded. Her imagination had Randall playing with them. Then Marcus licked at them until she

nearly cried out. She started in the water and sat up. What in the world was she doing?

Darla let the water out of the tub and stepped out. She dried off quickly since it was a little chilly after the hot water in the bath. She slipped into her sleep shirt and underwear and huddled beneath the covers. Exhaustion soon lured her into sleep, and the dream started almost immediately.

Chapter Three

Warm hands smoothed over cool skin. Hot breath tickled her breast. Two mouths latched on to her nipples and suckled until she writhed between them. Two sets of hands explored her body. Fingers pinched at her nipples until she cried out with desire. One of the men began kissing his way up her neck and nipped his way around her jaw to just behind her ear. He whispered naughty words in her ear.

“I can’t wait to get my cock inside you. I bet you’ll burn me alive.”

She could only whimper.

Lips kissed down her body, dipping into her belly button only to continue to her thighs. He shouldered between her legs and blew cool air across her pussy. She moaned and lifted toward him. He chuckled and spread her wide with his fingers. A warm, wet tongue licked her from top to bottom and back up again. She couldn’t be still, but another set of hands held her down as his partner in sin lapped at her, running his flattened tongue across her clit, back and forth until she was pumping her hips to meet the thrust of his tongue in her pussy. She was mindless with need.

He pushed a finger inside of her, then two, and she knew she was going to come. He stopped licking her pussy long enough to kneel over her and plunge his hard cock into her dripping center. God, he was big. It took him three tries to reach the end of her.

Warm hands and a warm mouth soon enveloped her breasts. Between the soft suckling at her nipple and the thumb and forefinger pinching the other one, she once again found herself sitting on the

edge ready to plunge. The hard cock inside her pummeled her passage, and the first hints of her release hit her low in her belly.

She jerked awake in the heat of passion to find one hand on her breast and the other between her legs. Mortified she jerked them away. She'd never masturbated in her sleep before. It didn't help her already heavy breathing to realize she had been dreaming about both of the Sanders men. God, she was a slut thinking about two men, let alone dreaming such an intimate dream about them.

She looked over at the clock and realized it was nearly time to get up. She opted for a quick shower then dressed in her best pair of jeans and a flannel shirt she'd bought in anticipation of the cold Montana winter ahead. She would buy the rest of the stuff she needed, too. Good Lord, woman stuff. Was he talking about tampons? She sure hoped they didn't shop with her.

Darla started coffee as soon as she made it to the kitchen. She needed it strong and black to make it through the day with both men. She didn't know how she would be able to look them in the eye after the dream. She groaned. Her womb tightened at just the thought.

"Morning, Darla. You're up early." Marcus entered the kitchen in just a pair of jeans, and they weren't even buttoned.

She snapped her eyes back up and away from him.

"I was ready to get out of bed. I guess I'm antsy about getting the grocery shopping done and getting back h...to the ranch." She had nearly said home. Not good.

He smiled at her, and she found herself mesmerized by the twinkle in his eyes. He broke the spell and poured a mug of coffee before leaning against the counter and looking at her. His massive chest had a sprinkling of black hair across it trailing down to disappear inside the open waistband of his pants. Yikes, she was looking again.

"You two drinking all the coffee?" Randall sauntered in. He was in the same state of dress, or undress, as Marcus.

What was it with them that they walked around half nude in front of her? She licked her lips and forced her gaze above the waist, but that wasn't much better. His chest was just as spectacular with the same sprinkling of chest hair across and down to his belt line. He smirked at her when she looked at him again. Her face burned with embarrassment.

"Now, why are you embarrassed?" Randall asked.

Darla's mouth flew open then closed again. She let out a breath and turned to go back to her room. They could call her when they were dressed. She didn't need anything else to fuel her naughty imagination.

Thirty minutes later someone knocked on her door.

"Darla? Ready to go?" Marcus asked.

"I'll be right there." She grabbed her purse and the grocery list, took a deep breath, and opened the door and collided with both men.

"Whoa." Randall grabbed her when she stumbled. "Don't go falling on us."

Marcus took her hand and pulled her along behind him. "Let's get on the road."

She started to climb in the back of the truck, but Marcus stopped her.

"Might as well ride up front with us. You won't be able to ride in the back on the way back anyway. We've got a lot to get this trip." He grabbed her around the waist and set her in the truck.

Darla didn't have time to protest as both men slid in next to her and slammed their doors. She was caught between a rock and a hard place—literally. They crowded her. Marcus draped his left arm over her shoulders along the back of the seat. She resisted the urge to relax into him. The drive was going to be a long one in more ways than one. By the time they had made it to town, his arm was resting across her shoulders and his fingers rubbed the top of her arm.

The little town sported two diners, a grocery store, a feed store, a department store, a barber shop, and various other buildings along the main street. Randall parked in front of the feed store.

“Marcus and I will get what we need here. Why don’t you go on down to the department store and find what you need there and we’ll drive down to pick you up in say”—he looked at his watch—“an hour. Will that give you enough time?”

“That’s plenty of time.”

She walked down past the barber shop, an accounting office, and a diner to get to the store. She walked inside, and everyone stopped to see who had walked in. She got quite a few stares, but they soon continued with what they were doing. She made her way to where the jeans were and picked out two pair of jeans in her size and added three long sleeve flannel shirts. Then she looked at the coats and chose a blue one that had a sheepskin lining. The boots were a different matter, though. She wasn’t sure what kind she needed.

“Can I help you?” a woman of about forty asked.

“Um, I’m not from here, but need a pair of boots that would be good for this kind of weather.”

“Work boots or pleasure boots?”

“Work boots,” she said.

“Okay, these are the styles you want. If you’re going to be working outside, you want one of these two. If you’re just going to use them for getting around in, these are fine. She indicated three boots. They all looked about the same to her, but she pulled out a pair and looked them over.

“What size do you need, hon?” the woman asked.

“Size seven and a half.” Darla squirmed when the lady frowned.

“You sure don’t look like your feet are that big.”

“Believe me, they are.” She smiled.

The lady walked to the back room and returned a few minutes later with a box.

“Go ahead and try them on. They run big, so I want to be sure you can’t get in a size seven. I don’t want you to end up with blisters ‘cause they are too big.”

Darla tried them on, and they fit perfect.

“See. Told you a size seven would fit. Boots run big.” She smiled and placed the boots back in the box.

“You’re going to need some warm socks, too. I noticed you were gathering gear for winter around these parts. Believe me when I say you’ll want warm socks.” The woman led her to where the socks were and picked out five pair of thick socks.

“That about got you, or do you need anything else?” she asked.

“No, I think that has me. Thanks for helping me with the boots.” Darla smiled at her. She liked this woman.

“Name’s Sandra Fuller. My husband and I run the store.”

“I’m Darla Moore.” She shook the other woman’s hand. She had a strong grip.

“You’re new here.” It was a statement, but there was a question behind it.

“Yeah, I’m keeping house for the Sanders.”

“Oh, really? They’ve been looking for someone for a few months now. Glad they found you. You need anything, you can ask me.” There was a calculating look in the woman’s eyes.

“Thanks, I appreciate it.”

Darla took her purchases and walked outside. The truck was still down the street, so she struggled with her bags and sat them down by the back door. She wasn’t sure where to put them. The back of the truck was full of sacks of something. She figured it would be feed of some kind.

“What in the hell do you think you’re doing?” Randall stood on the sidewalk next to the truck.

“Did I get too much to take back?” Darla hadn’t really thought about that and winced.

“No, I told you we’d come get you. You shouldn’t have carried all that stuff by yourself.” He shook his head and started loading her things in the back seat. “Next time when I tell you we’ll come get you, wait on us.”

“Okay,” she answered in a quiet voice. She felt about ten inches tall.

“Randall, what are you fussing at her about?” Marcus walked out of the feed store.

“She carried all her bags down here instead of waiting on us to help her.”

“Damn, Darla. Don’t wear yourself out. That’s what we’re for, to carry your stuff.” He took her hand and squeezed it. It took some of the sting out of their fussing.

“Okay. I just didn’t see why you had to drive down there just to pick me up. The grocery store is in the opposite direction.”

“Cause you shouldn’t walk or carry bags,” Randall repeated. “Come on, let’s get going.”

He picked her up and scooted her into the cab of the truck. He and Marcus joined her, sandwiching her between them once again.

“Time for lunch now, anyway. How about the diner?” Randall asked.

“Which one?” Marcus said.

“Kelly’s.”

“Sounds good to me.”

Darla kept quiet while they debated what to eat. She looked over the menu, well aware they were getting speculative glances from those eating and working in the diner.

“What will it be, honey?” A tall, skinny waitress that could have been anywhere from thirty to fifty stood next to the booth with pen and pad in hand.

“I’ll have the hamburger with fries,” she said.

The men both ordered the dinner plate. When it came out it was meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans. They scarfed it down in

no time. She still had half her hamburger to eat. Marcus reached over and snagged a fry off her plate. She scowled at him, but it ended up in a smile at his innocent look. How could she resist their playful antics?

Once they finished lunch, Randall paid the bill, and they climbed back in the truck and drove down to the grocery store. All three of them got out this time. She had hoped to do the grocery shopping on her own. How was she supposed to do her intimate shopping with them along?

She decided to try something. Once they got inside, she split the list three ways and handed each of them a section.

“Get your baskets and we’ll meet up front when we get everything.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Marcus said with a salute.

She shook her head and looked at Randall.

“That okay with you?” she asked.

“Sounds like a good plan to me.” He strode off with Marcus to grab grocery carts and brought her one as well.

Darla tackled her list quickly so she could hurry up and get to the aisle with personal items. She had just picked out her tampons when Marcus and Randall both came around the aisle from opposite ends.

“I found her,” Randall said.

“No, I found her first.” Marcus grinned. “Thought I’d find you over here.”

“What are you doing here? I thought we were going to meet up front,” she all but whispered.

“You seemed to have the biggest part of the list, and we were worried you would need more buggy space,” Randall explained.

Marcus picked up her tampons and looked at them. Then he walked over to where they were on the shelves and picked up two more boxes.

“That isn’t enough. We never know when or how big a snow will be. We might not get back down the mountain for a long time.”

“What else is on your list from here?” Randall asked.

“I don’t believe you two!” she exclaimed. “Can’t you give me some privacy?”

“We’re living under each other’s noses. Don’t see any reason to be all secretive about it.” Marcus spread his hands.

“Fine.” She walked over and picked up two more items with her chin in the air and dropped them into the basket. “Now I’m ready.” She led the way to the checkout stand.

They had another argument over who paid for what. It embarrassed the hell out of her, so she gave in just to get out of the grocery store without burning up in shame. The men pushed the buggies, insisting that she wait inside until they had the groceries loaded in the truck. Marcus came back inside to claim her.

“Ready to head back to the ranch?”

She was more than ready. The checkout girl had been giving her a serious stare the entire time she had been standing there. No, it was more than staring. She’d been shooting daggers at her. Maybe she didn’t like outsiders in town. She noticed the way she watched Marcus, though, and decided it was jealousy. The girl had designs on Marcus. She smiled knowingly at the girl and turned around to walk with him out the door.

The trip back was made much like the trip out had been. Marcus draped his arm along her shoulders this time without starting out on the back of the seat. She tried to relax, but still found it disconcerting. What were they doing to her? She couldn’t help getting aroused when they touched her. It must have something to do about the dream and then how they were dressed that morning. She had to get hold of her hormones before she did something that would mess up the wonderful job she had. It really was the answer to her prayers. She just couldn’t lose the job.

Once they were back at the ranch, the men unloaded the groceries and her things. She put them away while they backed the truck up to the barn to unload the feed. She hoped they got some of the hands to help them. She went upstairs and put away her things next.

After she had everything put away, she warmed up the stew and made more cornbread. She left it in the oven to stay warm until the men came inside. It was getting dark by the time they walked in the kitchen and hung their hats on the pegs by the back door.

“Go get cleaned up. The stew and cornbread are ready.”

“I can smell it,” Marcus said.

The two men left to clean up but returned minutes later. Darla dished up three bowls of soup. Then she cut the cornbread and put it out on the table along with the butter.

“You didn’t give yourself near enough stew,” Randall said.

“I’m not that hungry. The hamburger earlier filled me up.”

“You’re going to find out you need all the fuel you can get in you to stay warm. Plus, you work hard. The living room and hall are spotless. Don’t think it has ever been that way before.” Marcus dipped his cornbread in the stew and bit into it with relish.

“I’ll keep up my strength. I promise you. You two treat me like I’m a weakling. I’ll have you know I can hold my own.”

“It’s different here. The winters get rough, and you’re going to need more meat on your bones.” Marcus wagged his spoon at her.

“Okay. I give up. I’ll eat more, just not tonight. I’m really still full.”

“Good enough,” Randall said.

They finished the meal in silence, and when she got up and rinsed out her bowl, Randall and Marcus did the same.

“Hurry and finish the dishes and sit in the living room with us for awhile,” Marcus said.

“Oh, I think I’ll call it a night. I’m a little tired.”

“You can rest for a little while in the living room with us. Randall’s going to start a fire. You’ll like that.”

Randall laughed for some reason. She furrowed her brow at him.

“Okay. I’ll be in there in a few minutes.” Darla gave up and agreed.

Thirty minutes later she sat on the couch with her feet under her and a blanket around her courtesy of Randall. She really wasn't cold, but it felt good. Marcus fooled with the fire some then, seemingly satisfied, sat next to her on the couch. Randall took the chair across from the couch. When Marcus eased closer and draped his arm along the back of the sofa much as he had in the truck earlier, Darla began to get nervous.

Marcus and Randall talked about horses and cows between them. Darla kept quiet listening to them in a sort of daze. It felt odd sitting there listening to them. If it weren't for Marcus's hand rubbing along her shoulder, she would be comfortable as if she were at home.

Marcus squeezed her. "What are you thinking about so serious?"

"Oh, just thinking about how nice this is." She realized they might think more considering Marcus had his arm around her. "I mean the fire and all. I love fireplaces."

"Glad you like it, baby," Marcus said.

Darla turned to ask him why he called her baby and found herself being kissed. It wasn't a gentle kiss either. He devoured her mouth. He kissed differently than Randall, she thought. He sucked in her bottom lip, and when she cried out, he plunged his tongue inside her mouth and teased along hers. His teeth nipped at her lower lip then soothed it with his tongue. He kissed her as if he wanted to drink her down. She fought to breathe around the kiss. When he finally leaned away from her, she was panting.

Oh God. What was going on? She risked a glance in Randall's direction and found him smiling, a look of lust on his face. Eyes, heavy lidded, met hers.

"Kiss him back, Darla," Randall said.

"How can you say that? You kissed me yesterday." Darla was totally confused at what was going on.

"I like watching you with him. I'm so hard now I could pound nails."

Darla stared with her mouth open as he rubbed at the obvious bulge in his jeans with one hand.

Marcus turned her face to him with one finger. "Look at me. Kiss me."

"I don't understand. What do you want from me?" she cried.

"You. We want you, Darla." Marcus guided her toward his mouth.

He kissed her, and she lost the battle to stay neutral. She met his kiss with her own. She sucked in his lower lip and teased it with her tongue. Then she probed his mouth when he opened to her. She sucked on his tongue, and this time he moaned. It spurred her on. His mouth tasted so good. She pulled away from his kiss and found his ear. She sucked the lobe into her mouth and bit it. Then found the pulse at the bend of his neck and kissed it, running her tongue over it.

"Feel what you do to me." Marcus took her hand and placed it on the bulge in his jeans. His cock filled her hand through his jeans. She raked her nails over the material, and he groaned.

"You're killing me," he said. "I've got to have you."

Darla came to herself with this. What was she doing?

"What's going on? I don't understand."

Randall suddenly appeared behind her, rubbing her shoulders and neck. He moved her hair to one side and kissed the back of her neck. She scrunched up her shoulders. She was ticklish there.

"We want you, Darla. Not just for tonight, but for every night." Marcus pushed into her hand where it still sat squeezing his cock.

"Both of you?"

"Yes, both of us. We want to share you," Randall murmured next to her ear.

* * * *

Marcus watched the play of emotions across her face, fear, worry, arousal, curiosity. Finally, she seemed to settle on nervous curiosity. He hid a smile of triumph. They would have her. She hadn't screamed

outrage and jumped to her feet to leave. Hope blossomed inside of him. He looked over at Randall and saw the same thing in his brother's eyes. She was perfect for them. Now they just had to prove it to her.

"Share me? Like a toy? I'm not a toy. I'm a human being." Her voice cracked on the last.

"One who turns us on like a hundred watt light bulb," Marcus responded.

"A sexy, desirable woman we want to make love to." Randall ran a hand down her arm to clasp her fingers.

"It's wrong. I mean, we don't even know each other. You don't know anything about me." Darla pulled away from them and stood up.

Marcus stood, too. "We have all the time in the world to get to know each other."

"Winters are hard here, but they're long and empty without anyone to share them with." Randall stood up. "Share them with us."

"You're asking me to have sex with both of you. Do you know how crazy that sounds?" she asked.

"Not any crazier than our family is. Randall and I've known we would share a woman since we were in high school. We've always been attracted to the same woman. It made dating pure hell back then. Now, we're ready for someone to settle down with." Marcus ran a hand through his shaggy hair.

"We think that someone is you," Randall added.

"I...I'm going to bed. Alone." She eased from between them and left them standing in the middle of the living room floor.

* * * *

"She's not immune to us," Randall said.

"I hope we didn't scare her off and she's packing her bags even as we speak." Marcus flopped down on the couch again.

“I don’t think so. She’s confused and scared, but she’s curious, too. She just needs some time.”

Marcus hoped his brother was right. He wanted her with a vengeance and not just for sex. He wanted her to be part of them. He wanted to wake up each morning with her sandwiched between him and his brother. The idea of watching her eyes open to a new day warmed his heart. They needed to back off some and let her get used to them.

“She needs to feel comfortable around us. It’s only been a couple of days. Let’s give her a little room for now.” Marcus watched Randall pace in front of the fireplace.

“I guess you’re right. Part of me wants to hold her and comfort her, while part of me wants to bend her over and bury my cock inside her.”

Marcus hid a grin. Randall wasn’t saying anything he wasn’t feeling himself. His big brother was more to the point than he was. He would have to temper his bluntness around Darla. First they had to get her to relax around them, though.

“Patience. I think it’s going to take lots of patience,” Marcus said.

“Yeah, I get that. I’m just a little short of patience where she’s concerned.”

“Well you’re going to have to find some. If you don’t cool it some, we’ll lose her.”

Randall growled. “She’s not going anywhere without us, that’s for damn sure.”

Chapter Four

Darla rose the next morning long before time to get up. She hadn't been able to sleep, plagued by erotic dreams of two men and one woman. She'd tossed and turned until she finally rolled out of the bed and took a shower to wash away the cobwebs. The new boots were a bit tight and stiff with the thick socks on, but the sales lady had assured her they would stretch and loosen up over time. She pulled her hair back in a ponytail to keep it out of her eyes and crept down the stairs to the kitchen.

Coffee would be wonderful about now. She filled the pot with water and measured in the coffee and sat down to wait for it to make. Ten minutes later she held a steaming mug in front of her and willed it to do its thing. She needed some measure of control right now and as shaky as her hands were, that wasn't happening on her own.

Sometime later she poured another mug and set about making breakfast. She decided on pancakes and ham. It would mean she wouldn't have to sit down at the table with them. By the time she had all of it made, they would be getting ready to leave. It was a good plan she decided with a smile.

"Love seeing that smile on your face first thing in the morning, baby." Marcus ambled into the kitchen and poured himself some coffee.

"Good morning." Darla finally managed to get out.

"How did you sleep last night?" he asked. His eyes never left hers over his coffee.

"Fine. I slept fine."

“Morning, you two.” Randall walked over to the coffee pot and helped himself to a mug.

“I’m cooking pancakes and ham. Have a seat, and you can start eating while it’s hot.”

Forty minutes later Marcus put on his hat and left for the barn and Randall holed up in the office to work, leaving Darla alone to eat in peace. She managed to stuff two pancakes down her throat before giving up and starting on cleaning the kitchen.

She still had the rest of the basement to finish. She gathered her cleaning supplies once again and headed downstairs. She took down the remaining jars and arranged them in date order on the shelves at eye level. Then she concentrated on the wine bottles. There were roughly a dozen of them to clean. By the time she had the second set of shelves clean, her water was dirty and she longed for another cup of coffee. It was chilly in the basement even for the long sleeved flannel shirt she wore.

Darla poured out the dirty water in the utility sink in the back room and left the bucket in the sink for later. She made enough coffee for two, figuring Randall might like a second cup as well. She hesitated outside the office door, wondering if this was such a good idea after all. Swallowing, she knocked then pushed the door open wider when Randall answered.

He sat behind his desk clicking on the computer keys without turning to look at her.

“Um, I brought you some coffee. I made half a pot and thought you might like another cup.”

He looked up without seeing her for a few seconds then smiled. “Sounds good to me.” He took the proffered mug and took a sip. “Thanks.”

She turned to leave, but he stopped her.

“Wait. Keep me company for a few minutes while I enjoy the coffee. I’ll go back to work and let it get cold if you leave.”

Blackmail. She nearly smiled at the thought. She should leave and get back to cleaning the basement. Instead, she found herself taking a seat across the desk from Randall.

“So tell me more about Mississippi.”

“Not much to tell. It is mostly flat with some hills. Nothing like the mountains here. They raise cotton, soybeans, catfish, and the usual farming stuff.” She shrugged.

“So, you just up and decided you were tired of the weather and decided to move to the opposite extreme of icy cold Montana winters. Hmmm,” he said.

“What does that mean?” Darla wrinkled her brow with a frown.

“Just that I can’t imagine that being the only reason. Must have had something to do with a man.” Randall leaned back in his chair.

“Why is that it always has to be about a man? Can’t a woman make a decision without there being a man behind it?”

Randall laughed. “In my experience, it’s always about a man.”

Darla huffed out a breath and stood up. “I’ve got work to do.” She turned and walked toward the door, but Randall grabbed her arm and turned her around. He backed her up to the door until her weight closed it behind her.

“W-what are you doing?”

“What I’ve wanted to do every time I see you.” He leaned down and captured her lips with his mouth.

He teased and cajoled her mouth until she opened to him. His tongue darted inside to duel with hers. She couldn’t resist him and the urge to mate her tongue with his. He tasted warm and good. Different from Marcus. His tongue tickled the roof of her mouth and soon had her giving him what he wanted. She plastered herself against him as he took her mouth in the hottest kiss she could remember. Her hands moved of their own accord to tangle in his hair. His hands cupped her ass cheeks, kneading them even as he stroked his tongue in her mouth.

Slowly, he pulled away and looked down into her eyes. His were heavy lidded and full of desire. Desire she understood. Men had desired her in the past. But sharing her was alien to her. Most men didn't want to share a woman. Hell, most men would kill another man who touched their woman.

"You're thinking too hard," Randall said.

"I just don't get how you can even think about sharing a woman with your brother. Eventually, you would get jealous."

"No. We grew up with two fathers, and it seems natural to us to share. I fell hard for a girl in high school like you do at that age, but Marcus did, too. We fought over her, and when it was all over, she was dating someone else and we knew we would always want the same women. Sharing is the natural thing to do."

"It may seem natural to you, but it's unnatural to me," she said.

He moved against her, and she could feel the hard outline of his cock against the softness of her belly. It felt massive. She drew in a deep breath at the longing deep inside of her for that rigid shaft to tunnel inside of her. A shiver flowed over her.

"Cold?" Randall ran his hands up and down her arms, adding friction to the wrong part of her body.

"A little. I need to get back to work. That will keep me warm enough." She tried to ease between him and the door.

He placed a hand on her face and dropped his forehead to hers until their noses touched.

"Don't run. I won't bite, I promise." His eyes twinkled mischievously.

Darla compressed her lips together. "Yeah, right. Let go. I need to get back to work."

He sighed loudly, then backed away from her. She licked her lips and eased past him. He didn't do anything to stop her, but he didn't move any further away either.

The rest of the morning passed quickly. She managed to clean nearly all of the basement on one side before lunch. Marcus walked in

and tossed his hat on a hook. A scowl marred his face as he walked into the back room to wash up. She wondered what had him frowning. Shrugging, she went to call Randall to the table. When she got back, Marcus was making sandwiches. She had already eaten hers but sat down at the table since they would insist anyway.

“What have I said about eating?” Marcus growled.

“I already ate. I was hungry right after I finished working some in the basement, so I ate before you got here.”

“You were down in the basement again? You better not have been on the ladder,” Randall warned.

“You hired me to keep house. I can’t do that if you’re fussing at me every time I do anything.” Darla stood up so fast the chair scooted out behind her. She jammed her hands on her hips and walked out of the kitchen.

She left them to their meal and gathered up dirty clothes instead. She climbed the stairs and started in their rooms. She was surprised. They weren’t total wrecks as she would have imagined being men, and bachelors at that. The dirty clothes were piled in one corner of the bedrooms, but the clean clothes were obviously put away instead of sitting around on the dresser or somewhere. She piled all of it outside at the top of the stairs and went in search of a couple of laundry baskets to carry it all down in.

When she walked through the kitchen to the back room where the washer and dryer was, the men stopped what they were talking about and watched her walk by. Neither one of them said a thing while she was in the laundry room, or when she walked back by them with a pair of empty baskets in her hands. She had no idea if they continued their talk once she was gone.

She separated the clothes into stacks by color and type then piled them into the baskets. She would only be able to take one down at a time though. Resolved to another trip up and down the stairs, Darla hefted one in her arms and started down the stairs being careful of

where she placed her feet. About the time she made it to the landing, Marcus walked by the stairs and grabbed the basket out of her arms.

“I’ll get that.”

He strode through the living room and called out to Randall as he did. “Get the other basket of clothes on the stairs, will you?”

“I can carry dirty clothes, Marcus.”

“No need when we’re around. Besides, this is two weeks’ worth of washing.” Marcus set the basket down in front of the washing machine.

Seconds later, Randall dropped his next to it. He grinned at her and flicked her nose with a finger. She scowled at him and began loading the washing machine, ignoring them as best she could.

“I’ll see you at dinner tonight.” Marcus walked out, leaving Randall and Darla alone in the small room.

“Anything else I need to get for you?” Randall asked.

“No, thanks. I can handle it from here.”

He started to walk out but turned back around. “Oh, don’t worry about who’s clothes are whose. We wear the same things, so it doesn’t matter. Just so long as we each have enough in the drawers and closets to wear.” With that, he left her to the washing.

She let out a breath she hadn’t known she’d been holding. She felt like she was a rubber ball wound tight as a spring. One good bounce and she would be off into the sky.

The rest of the day she spent washing and drying clothes while cooking dinner. By the time Marcus made it inside and cleaned up, she had the roast, potatoes, and peas on the table. The rolls were still in the oven, but by the time Randall showed up, they would be brown.

“I’ll go get him.” Marcus walked outside the kitchen door and yelled down the hall. “Dinner’s on the table, bro!”

“Sheesh,” Darla said. “I could have done that. Maybe I should get a triangle like they always show on the western shows.”

Marcus grinned and took his seat. Randall soon followed, sniffing the air.

“Something smells good. Better even than what’s on the table.” Randall craned his neck to see around her.

“It’s dessert. If you behave yourself, I’ll give you some after you eat.” She smothered a laugh when both men frowned at her.

Dinner was a rowdy affair with Marcus fussing about ornery cows and the predicted storm coming up. Randall filled him in on the breeding records, and then they both waited patiently while Darla finished eating before they asked for dessert. She thought it was kind of them to wait on her. That or they really thought she wouldn’t let them have any if they were demanding.

“How bad of a storm will it be? I mean it hasn’t really been that cold yet.” Darla couldn’t imagine a serious storm when it made it past freezing during the day.

“Predicting four to six inches of snow. Not a lot, but it’s the first snow of the year, so you never know. Plus, the temperatures are supposed to drop below zero for a couple of days. That along with the wind is dangerous to men and cattle.” Marcus hummed his appreciation of her peach cobbler.

Randall scarfed his down and passed his bowl for another helping. She laughed and gave him a couple of spoonfuls. Marcus did the same. She realized she was going to be hard pressed to keep sweets around the place if they ate like this every day.

“Should hit sometime tomorrow afternoon,” Randall said around a mouthful of cobbler.

“I don’t want you outside anytime after noon tomorrow. The temperatures are going to start falling fast, and a storm can blow up before you know it,” Marcus added.

“Goodness. I’m not going to get caught in a storm just walking outside for something.”

“I mean it, Darla. You aren’t used to winters here, and I don’t want to take the chance something could happen to you.” Marcus leveled his gaze to hers.

“Fine. I’ll stay inside tomorrow,” she capitulated.

Randall nodded and got up. "I'm going to go tie up a few things."

Marcus continued sitting at the table and groaned. "I think I ate too much."

"Neither one of you should be able to waddle away from the table. You ate two helpings of cobbler each."

She gathered the dishes up and stacked them by the sink. Then she began putting away the food. She would cook extra tomorrow to assure they had plenty in case they lost power. She needed to get her laundry done as well.

When she began rinsing off the dishes to put them in the dishwasher, a hard body pressed into hers from behind. Large work weathered hands caged her in leaning against the sink.

"You smell good. Like cinnamon and honey," Marcus whispered into her ear.

"Marcus?"

"Shhh, baby. I'm not doing anything. Just smelling how good you are and touching you. Nothing more. I promise."

His mouth closed over her neck just below her ear only to slide down beneath her collar to where her neck met her shoulder. He lightly bit her there then licked it to soothe the sting. He nuzzled her with his mouth against her neck then moved to the other side and continued his exploration.

Darla's womb clinched at the bombardment of feelings his touch evoked. She found herself gasping for breath, and he hadn't even touched her with his hands. God, when he did, she'd go up in flames. Not if, when, because she knew it was only a matter of time before they would lose patience with her and take her. She held no illusions now. Did she want them? Yes. Did it matter that there were two of them? She wasn't sure. It should, though.

"I want to strip that shirt off you and explore those luscious breasts hiding behind it. I bet they taste good. Are they pretty and pink or dusky like a plum ready to eat?"

“I...I...” She couldn’t answer him. His erotic words had her breath coming in gasps and her chest tight with the imagery.

“I’m going to go take a shower. Then I’m going to see just what color those nipples are.”

Suddenly, he was gone from her back, and she could breathe again. Oh God, what was she going to do? She wasn’t going to be able to hold on for long. Then when they tired of her, she’d be out of a job and a place to live. How long would it take? Maybe long enough she could save enough money to live on while she looked for another job. The idea of moving so soon after she’d found a place she felt comfortable hurt. But move she would.

* * * *

Randall and Marcus were both relaxing in the living room watching TV. Marcus kept checking the door for Darla. He didn’t want her sneaking by and holing up in her room. He was tired of waiting no matter what he had said the night before to Randall. If he didn’t get inside her soon, he was going to go crazy.

“What’s got you so antsy?” Randall used the remote to turn the volume down on the TV.

“Darla.”

“Hell, you’re not going to wait and give her a chance are you?”

“And you can?” Marcus huffed.

“No. I was planning on easing you into it.” His brother grinned.

Marcus turned to find the object of their discussion crossing the hall toward the stairs. He jumped up and hurried out the door to waylay her.

“Going somewhere?”

“Um, to my room to get my dirty clothes. I need to get them washed before it starts snowing.”

“You can do that tomorrow morning. Come in here and watch TV with us.” He grabbed her hand and pulled her into the living room.

She didn't try to pull away from him, but he felt her reluctance in the way she walked. He led her to the couch. She sat down in the middle, and he followed suit, scooting closer to her so that she moved a little closer to Randall. His brother draped his arm around her. Marcus let his hand rest on her thigh. Randall used the remote to turn the volume back up, and they sat with her in the middle for nearly thirty minutes before Darla began to relax into them.

As soon as she relaxed, Marcus began to draw circles on her jean-clad leg. She stiffened again for a few moments, but soon relaxed into that as well. He grinned to himself and looked over her head to Randall. His brother nodded his head in silent agreement. They would at least get her undressed tonight. One little step toward having her in between them in bed.

Randall turned her face toward him and kissed her. Marcus watched as Randall took her mouth. His cock grew harder at the sight of her flushed face. When she pulled away and turned toward Marcus, he stared at her well kissed, swollen lips. His hands went to the buttons of her flannel shirt. He flicked them open one by one. Her face grew pink when he pulled out the tucked shirt and finished unbuttoning it. Randall pulled it slowly off her shoulders but not off her arms. Instead, he pulled the shirt tight and tied her arms behind her back. It thrust her breasts out in the front.

Dusky nipples could be seen through the white bra she wore. He flicked the clasp on the front and peeled back the cups of her bra until it slid down her arms to add to her bindings. He'd been right. Dusky plums hard and peaked waiting for their touch. He flicked a finger over each of them. She shivered. Randall reached around her and palmed her breasts, offering them up as if for sacrifice. Marcus leaned in and licked around her nipple without touching it. She moaned. He changed sides and did the same to the other one.

They peaked and pebbled for him. He blew a soft breath across them. Once again she shivered. Marcus slipped off the couch and pushed her back against Randall's lap. He bent over her and drew in

one nipple and nibbled on it followed by the soothing touch of his tongue. Randle repeated the act on the opposite breast. They fingered them then licked and pinched them until she squirmed against Randall's lap.

Marcus scooted down, licking his way from her breasts to her belly button. He dipped into it then continued down to the waistband of her jeans. He nipped at her exposed stomach then unbuttoned them and unzipped them in a quick movement. He pushed his hand down into her jeans to find her hot and wet.

"Son of a bitch. She's wet," he told Randall.

"Get her out of those jeans," his brother rasped.

Marcus laughed and began pulling her boots off. He got them off with a grunt then proceeded to working the jeans down her body and off her legs. He teased her and him by playing around the edge of the white utilitarian panties until he could stand it no more and jerked them down her legs. He could smell her arousal.

She moaned when he spread her legs and settled himself between them. He blew across her pussy before kissing her there. Then he separated her lips and rasped his tongue up her slit.

"Oh man, she tastes like honey." He grabbed one of her hands from where they had her bound with her shirt and bra and ran one of her fingers through her slick opening. Then he raised it up to Randall.

"Taste."

Randall drew her finger into his mouth and sucked it, making a humming sound.

Marcus let Randall hold her hand to his mouth while he returned to the delicious bounty before him. He licked and ran his tongue up and down her slit without touching her clit. He wanted her wild before he let her come. Over and over he teased it. Then he stuck one finger inside of her and searched out her G-spot. She came up off the couch jerking her hand from Randall's grip.

"Oh, God!" she cried out. "What are you doing to me?"

“Making you feel good, sweetness. Just relax and let us pleasure you,” Randall crooned.

He sucked on one nipple into his mouth while pinching the other one and was rewarded with her free hand grasping his arm in a death grip. He chuckled and continued his assault on her breasts

Marcus slid in two fingers and pumped them in and out of her as he licked and nibbled at her sweet pussy. She shuddered and moved her hips, trying to get his tongue on her sweet spot. He laughed against her, and she groaned. He began fucking her with his fingers in earnest and licked all around her clit. When she was wild with need, he sucked in her clit and tongued it with the flat of his tongue.

Randall pinched both of her nipples at the same time.

She came unglued around them.

Chapter Five

Darla struggled with ridding her other hand of her makeshift restraints and grabbed at Marcus's head as she climaxed harder than she thought possible. No one had ever done this to her. Good Lord. It went on and on until she begged for mercy. Marcus slowly brought her down. She panted trying to catch her breath. It came in near painful gasps.

They had played her like a fine instrument until she'd sung for them. She was embarrassed how easy it had been for them to bring her off like that. Hell, she was easy. What must they think of her? Where they already regretting their decision to have her?

"Get on your knees in front of me," Randall suddenly demanded.

Startled, she complied without thinking.

"Take out my cock out and suck it."

She searched his eyes and found nothing dangerous about him. She quickly unbuttoned him with shaky fingers. Once she had reached the end of the buttons, his torrid erection burst from his jeans. She eyed its girth greedily and licked her lips at the drop of pre-cum oozing from the slit at the top. She ran her tongue over the head and delved into the slit. She was rewarded with the salty tang on her tongue. She licked all around the flared head then tentatively took him in her mouth. She carefully sucked him down then back up. He was so large she was worried she would hurt him with her teeth. Her ex-fiancé chastised her when she grazed him with her teeth.

"Suck me all the way down, hard and fast."

Darla tried to comply, but when he shoved his cock deeper, she gagged. He grabbed her head and held her still.

“Easy, sweetness. Breathe through your nose and relax your throat. You can take me.”

She found that he was right, and she could breathe through her nose. She relaxed her throat and he pushed farther down until she swallowed reflexively. He shuddered around her. She swallowed again.

“Fuck! Yes.” He began pumping into her mouth in earnest now. “Get ready, I’m going to come. Swallow it, every drop.”

He pushed into her mouth over and over and then held his cock deep in her throat. When she swallowed, he shot stream after stream of cum down her throat. She swallowed every bit, then sucked on him all the way back up. When she released him with an audible pop he groaned.

“God, you suck dick like a pro,” Randall said in a breathless rasp.

“Come here.” Marcus indicated a spot in front of him. “Stand up.”

Darla stood and waited for whatever he was going to tell her to do. She still felt Randall’s cock deep in her throat and reveled in it.

“Bend over and put your hands on the couch. Spread your legs for me, baby.”

The couch cushions sank beneath her weight as she bent over and spread her legs. She heard the crinkling of foil and knew he was putting on a condom. This was it. He was going to fuck her. She wanted this, right? They’d gotten her hot then sent her into a sensual climax the likes of which she’d never known before.

The gentle probing of Marcus’s fingers drew a groan from her. Then the head of his cock replaced his fingers and he plunged into her. She screamed. He was so big, and he wasn’t all the way in yet. She felt him still inside her.

“Easy, baby. Relax. I’ll fit just fine.” He pulled part of the way out and plunged again.

This time he made it all the way, bumping against the top of her womb. The pleasure-pain of it soon took over as he pulled out and pushed back in over and over. He slowly built up speed until he was

shafting in her so fast and hard she lost her breath and felt her climax building once again. She'd never had two in one night before. Surely she couldn't.

"Ah, hell. You're so fucking tight."

He fucked her until suddenly she exploded around him, milking him of his own climax with a shout. He stilled inside her as he came. His fingers bit into her hips and then he collapsed over her. He moved from off her back when her legs began to tremble and buckled. Randall was there to catch her and ease her down onto his lap. Marcus sat on the other end of the couch with his pants around his knees. He hadn't even taken off his pants, but neither had Randall. She wasn't sure how she felt about that.

"You're thinking too hard, baby," Marcus said.

"What are you thinking about?" Randall smoothed her hair back from her face and stroked her head repeatedly.

"Nothing."

"Don't lie to us. Never lie to us," Randall said, looking at her.

"Just that I'm totally naked and you both still have your clothes on."

Marcus laughed. "We couldn't wait long enough to get our clothes off to have you."

"You go to our heads." Randall cupped her chin and pulled her head back until she could look into his eyes. They were soft and fierce.

"Let's get you cleaned up and in bed," Marcus said. He stood up and pulled his pants back up.

Randall stood with her still in his arms. She gasped. "Put me down. I'm too heavy for you to carry me."

"Nonsense, you're entirely too thin. You weigh less than a bird."

"Don't argue with him. He wants to carry you." Marcus flicked her nose and walked ahead of them.

Once in her bedroom, Marcus ran a bath and turned on the jets. He spooned in a little of her bath salts. Randall let her slide down his

body until her feet were firmly planted on the floor before he let go of her. He swatted her bare bottom before he turned around and headed out the door. Marcus followed him.

Darla eased into the hot water and sighed once she was completely submerged. The water felt wonderful to her now sore muscles. Some of them she hadn't used like that in a long time. She quickly bathed then relaxed for a few more minutes until the water began to cool. She let the water out and turned off the jets. By the time she was ready to step out of the tub, Marcus was in the bathroom again holding a towel out for her. She took the towel, but he didn't relinquish it. Instead, he toweled her dry himself. Once her skin was rosy and dry, he led her back into the bedroom.

The sheets were pulled back and Randall lay on top of the bed gloriously naked. Hell, they weren't finished. She would surely be sore tomorrow. She turned and looked over her shoulder to find Marcus removing his boots.

Randall held out his hand. "Come to bed, sweetness."

Darla hesitated then climbed into the bed. He pulled the sheets and blanket over her. Then the bed dipped behind her, and Marcus grasped her by the waist and pulled her up against him.

He pulled aside her hair and whispered in her ear. "Go to sleep, baby. Tomorrow might be a long day."

Darla laid awake long after the two men fell asleep, Randall's back to her with her arm pulled over his side and his hand holding hers. Marcus's front was plastered to her back. He had a possessive hand over her pelvis. She'd never really slept with anyone other than her ex. He'd usually slept on one side of the bed and her on the other. They didn't cuddle after sex. This was new to her, nice but new.

Finally, she relaxed into their embrace and slipped into sleep.

* * * *

When Darla awoke the next morning, the men were already up. She rolled over to look at the clock and found it was after eight. She shot up out of bed. She'd slept way past time to get breakfast. They would be furious with her for not doing her job. Oh no.

It took her less than five minutes to dress and get downstairs. A dirty pan sat next to the sink and a cold coffee pot with a note propped up in front of it.

We let you sleep. Figured you needed it after last night. See you at lunch. Randall is out with me. Marcus

She let out a long breath. Maybe they weren't mad after all. She'd better get busy. She had a lot to accomplish in so little time. First thing, she needed coffee. After coffee, she scrubbed the pan and the stove. Then she put a load of her laundry into the washing machine and started a big batch of chili for dinner tonight. She pulled out a roast and stuck it in the crock pot. If they ended up without power, she would have plenty of food for a few days. When lunchtime rolled around, she fixed sandwiches and wrapped them in cellophane to keep them fresh. She wasn't sure how long it would be before they made it in.

She decided to check the weather and walked outside on the back porch. She peered up at the sky and noticed the clouds were rolling in. A chill spread over her as a gust of wind blew in from the north. She stepped back inside and rubbed her arms up and down to warm back up. Five minutes later, Marcus and Randall came stomping inside pulling off coats and gloves. They hanged them up and then went to the back room to wash up.

When they came back, Marcus planted a kiss on her lips and Randall squeezed her.

"How are you feeling?" Marcus asked.

"I'm fine. You shouldn't have let me sleep in like that. You didn't get a good breakfast to go out in the cold like that."

"Already acting like a mother hen." Randall laughed.

They sat down at the table and unwrapped their sandwiches. When they dug in, Darla sat down with them and ate the one she made for herself. She'd already eaten one that morning to replace her breakfast.

"Depending on the weather, we might be out later tonight than usual, so don't get worried if we aren't right in," Marcus said around a mouthful of sandwich.

"I'll start a fire before I go back out," Randall said. "Can you put a log on it every once in awhile?"

"Sure, as long as they aren't too heavy. We had a fireplace when I was a teenager, and I helped Dad with it."

"I'll make sure to put small logs in the box for you." Randall finished his second sandwich and got up from the table. He donned his coat, hat, and gloves and headed out to the wood.

"Remember, no going outside for any reason. Not even on the porch."

"Okay, I won't."

She heard Randall come in the front door then go back out again.

"I'm going to man the door so he doesn't have trouble getting in with his arms full." Darla started toward the living room then turned back around. "Be careful out there, Marcus."

"Don't worry, baby." He walked over to the hooks and began dressing to go back outside.

Darla helped Randall with the wood by opening the door for him until he had enough to last the day. He laid the fire and started it. Then waited around to be sure it would start up fine.

"Remember, keep it going. You don't have to keep a roaring fire, though."

"I will. You be careful out there."

He smiled and pulled her into a hug, then kissed her long and hard.

"I'll be just fine, sweetness." He let her go and left.

There was plenty to do to keep her busy the rest of the afternoon. It started snowing around two and was blowing in by three-thirty. She couldn't help worrying about them and wondered if they were cold. She kept the fire going knowing they would definitely be cold when they got back. Five turned into six, and still they weren't back. By quarter of seven she was nearly frantic with worry.

Finally a little after seven, she heard them stomping off their boots outside the back door. She ran to the kitchen and opened the door to let them in. They began unbundling and cursing the cold. Frigid air wafted off their coats as they hung them on the hooks.

"I'm so glad you're back. I was worried something had happened."

"Aw, baby. I told you not to worry," Marcus said and wrapped her in his cold arms.

"Ooh, you're cold. Go stand by the fire before you touch me."

Randall laughed. "Okay, okay." He followed Marcus into the living room and stood before the fire.

Darla called into the living room after them. "I'm going to get the cornbread going so you'll have a hot meal to help warm you up. We're having chili. Hope that is okay."

"Sounds wonderful. Chili is perfect for this weather," Marcus called back.

"Give me twenty minutes and it will be ready," she called back.

"We're going to jump in the shower." Randall walked back into the kitchen and kissed the back her neck.

"Okay, but don't take too long."

Once they'd finished eating and the dishes were taken care of, Darla found herself ensconced between the two men once again on the couch. This time they watched the weather on The Weather Channel. It looked like they were in for a good amount of snow.

"What about the animals?" she asked.

"We moved all of them we could close to the barns and put out plenty of hay. We'll have to go out and break the water a few times a

day and put out more hay as they need it. The hands will do most of the work, but we'll have to help." Markus hugged her close to him.

Randall searched out her hand and twined their fingers together. It felt so good—so right being there between them. How long would it last, though? She kept reminding herself not to let her heart get involved. She'd only have it broken again.

After the ten o'clock news and weather, they moved to the bedroom where as soon as they hit the door, they began stripping off clothes. It was almost comical the way they threw back the covers and climbed in.

"You'd better hurry up and get underneath the covers or you're going to freeze," Randall said.

"I'm wearing socks to bed. My feet nearly froze last night."

"Socks won't get in the way, so that's fine." Marcus waggled his eyebrows.

She rolled her eyes and changed socks before undressing and jumping into bed, barely missing Marcus. He grabbed her and rolled on top of her. His erection pressed into the V of her legs.

"Know what we are going to do to you?" he asked.

"What?" She bit her bottom lip.

"Fuck you until you scream."

Her womb contracted at the coarse language. For some reason it didn't bother her coming from them. He rolled to the side and bent over to take a nipple into his mouth. Randall took the other side. They suckled then crammed all of her breast that they could into their mouths before backing off and sucking at her again. She felt the burn inside her as her arousal built.

One of them pressed a finger to her clit and applied pressure then let up. He applied pressure again, and she wiggled her hips to keep it there.

"Grab her leg, Marcus." Randall did the same, and they spread her out between them, anchoring her legs with theirs.

They both trailed their hands down her abdomen to her pelvis and then lower. Each of them teased at her opening then before she could catch her breath, they plunged inside of her. Two fingers, one rough with calluses and one with only a hint of them. The rasping drew her breath in as she felt that peculiar quickening in her chest. Marcus manipulated her clit until she was squirming beneath them.

“Please,” she begged.

“Please what?” Randall asked.

“Let me come. Please, I need to come.” She couldn’t believe she was begging them. They had reduced her to that.

Randall threw back the covers and positioned himself over her as Marcus continued to manipulate her clit. Randall fisted his cock and guided it to her opening. With one thrust, he seated himself inside of her. She screamed at the suddenness of it. Her orgasm roared through her as he tunneled in and out of her. She squeezed at him, trying to keep him inside each time he withdrew. He pistoned in and out of her until she felt the telltale signs of another orgasm building inside her.

She chanted over and over again, “Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.”

“I can’t hold off any longer. Now, Marcus,” Randall rasped out.

Marcus pinched her clit between his fingers even as Randall called out his release. Darla had no choice. She screamed out as she came long and hard. Breathing seemed nearly impossible as Randall slowly pulled out of her and rolled to the side. Much to her surprise, Marcus replaced him and turned her over on all fours. He placed a hand between her shoulder blades and pushed her down until her face was against the bed.

He forced his way past swollen tissues until he was fully seated. Then he set a slow pace that soon began to speed up. She felt his balls slapping against her clit with each punch of his cock. He squeezed her ass cheeks then parted them only to squeeze them together again. Randall began stimulating her nipples then sucking on them while his other hand found her sensitive clit once again. He didn’t rub over it.

Instead, he pressed it rhythmically with each thrust of Marcus's cock within her.

Soon she felt the burning again and couldn't believe she was going to come again. It was too much. Her pelvic muscles were sore and tired. But, sure enough, she began to climb as Marcus pushed in and out of her. She began to come, and she felt Randall squeeze her nipple and twist while he applied direct pressure to her clit. She hollered out, already hoarse from the previous two orgasms. As she hollered, Marcus pushed against her anus with his thumb and it popped inside of her before it even registered what he was doing. The pain threw her over harder than before, and she collapsed to the bed with only Marcus's hands, dick, and thumb holding her ass in the air.

He slowly withdrew and fell to the bed gasping for breath. Darla wasn't sure she would ever be able to breathe again. Her raspy breathing could be heard over Marcus's own noisy breaths. Then she felt the wetness between her legs and stilled. Oh, God. One of the condoms had broken. She jumped from the bed and ran to the bathroom. She turned on the shower and stepped in even before it warmed up. She scrubbed, knowing it wouldn't help.

Randall and Marcus followed her into the bathroom.

"What's wrong?" Randall demanded.

"The condom broke! I'm not on birth control."

"Well, shit," Marcus said. "I'm sorry, baby."

Randall groaned. "I don't know whose it was. We've both already gotten rid of them. Come on out before you freeze to death. It will be okay, sweetness." Randall bundled her up in a towel and rubbed.

The two men ushered her back to bed and climbed in beside her. They cuddled her until she finally fell asleep, praying she wouldn't get pregnant.

* * * *

The next morning, both men rose earlier than usual. Randall figured they needed to talk before Darla woke up. He made coffee and they sat at the kitchen table discussing the events of the night before.

"I didn't notice if mine broke. I was fucking drained. I just pulled it off and tossed it," Randall said.

"Me, too. I just threw it away and never thought to check. She was already so wet for us that I never dreamed it was because one of the condoms had broken."

"What happens if she gets pregnant?" Marcus asked.

"She stays with us forever," Randall growled.

"You think she might leave us?" Marcus asked.

"Yeah, it scares me that she will unless we can convince her we love her and want her to stay. We've *got* to convince her to stay. Damn, I don't think I can handle it if she leaves." Randall ran a hand through his hair. He hadn't even bothered to comb it yet this morning.

"So we are in agreement that if she is pregnant, we're fine with it. It just gives us one more reason to love her. I hadn't planned on kids this soon, but if it happens, it happens," Marcus said.

Marcus wiped his hand over his face and finished up his coffee. "I'm going out to check on the horses and be sure the hands break the ice for the cattle. I'll be back in for breakfast later."

Randall watched as his brother bundled up and left through the kitchen door. Bitter cold air rushed in when Marcus opened the door. He shivered and decided to wake Darla up himself. He grinned at the idea as he climbed the stairs up to their room. He smiled to himself. That was what it was now, their room. It would only be a matter of time before they moved their stuff into the room with her. He couldn't wait.

She'd turned on her back with one hand by her face and the other covering her pelvis. He smiled and took out a condom. They wouldn't forget to check again. Randall laid it out on the bedside table and climbed in bed with her after shucking his clothes. When he began fingering her pussy, her eyes flew open.

“Whoa! Your hands are like ice!”

“I’ll warm you right up, sweetness.”

He scooted down in bed and began kissing her and licking her between her legs. She moaned and rose to meet his tongue each time he pulled away. It thrilled him to be able to make her lose control. He crawled up her body, kissing and licking his way up until he reached her nipple. He nipped at it then laved it with his tongue. Then he blew cool air over it and watched it peak even tighter.

“You’re killing me. Fuck me.” Darla moved restlessly in the bed.

Randall made a big show of unwrapping the condom and rolling it on. Then he lifted her legs over his arms and plunged inside her wet pussy in one swift thrust. She cried out and began meeting him thrust for thrust. He felt her pubic bone each time he drove into her. He inserted a finger between them and began fingering her clit. He wanted her to come with him, and he was fast approaching his limit. Something about her took away his control.

She began to moan and thrash around on the bed. He knew she was close. He pumped into her once, twice, three times and pinched her clit.

“Come, Darla.”

She screamed and exploded for him. He felt her milk his cock with her vaginal muscles. He waited as long as he could before pulling free of her. He dealt with the condom, checking to be sure it was still intact, and then he kissed her and teased her out of bed.

“I’m hungry, woman. Get me some breakfast.”

“Okay, okay,” she grouched, then rolled out of bed.

He slowly dressed thinking about having a baby in the house. He smiled and realized he would like it just fine.

Chapter Six

Darla made biscuits and scrambled eggs along with sausage for their breakfast. Marcus sauntered in and stopped to draw in a deep breath.

“Man that smells good.”

The back door opened and a rush of cold air poured into the room followed by Randall stomping and fussing before he shoved the door closed against the wind.

“Everything okay out there?” Marcus asked.

“Yeah, the hands had already broken the ice and were working on the hay.” He sniffed the air, and then smiled. “Something smells wonderful.”

“Get cleaned up. We’re having biscuits, eggs, and sausage. I have the biscuits warming in the oven. They’ll get hard if you don’t hurry,” Darla said.

“I’ll get the jelly out,” Marcus offered.

Breakfast was a light affair with everyone seemingly relaxed. She wasn’t as easy as they were, but she tried. She could still almost feel their cocks inside her. She found as she had made breakfast that she was pleasantly sore in the obvious places. What would it be like to be on the receiving end of that sort of loving every day? Could she handle it? She wondered how long it would last. They would tire of her eventually. The novelty would wear off no matter what they said.

Her experience couldn’t be ignored. She’d once had a fiancé and looked forward to their life together only to find out he had been lying to her. He already had a wife in a different city. His business required him to travel, so it had been easy to keep from her. Then she called

his cell number one day needing to ask him something, and a woman picked up. Darla asked who she was, and she claimed to be Mrs. Andrews. Darla wasted no time telling her what Ben had been up to. Finding out her fiancé had not only lied to her but to his wife, broke her heart. She'd been so in love with him. Funny how the pain evaporated in the face of the budding relationship between her and the Sanders brothers. What did that mean?

The sound of Randall returning to the kitchen popped her out of her musings. He wrapped his arms around her waist from behind and nuzzled her neck.

"Coming in to breakfast that isn't burned is great. Coming in to you is even better," he said.

Darla didn't know what to say, so she remained quiet. Marcus appeared in front of her and tilted her chin up before placing a noisy kiss on her lips.

"I'm starved. I know Randall is. Let's eat."

Randall left her after breakfast to listen to the weather in the living room. Marcus returned to his office to peck away at the computers. The distant mumbling of the TV chased away her thoughts of Ben and his betrayal as her mind struggled to hear the weather.

Once she had the kitchen back in order, she joined Randall in the living room. She hesitated about sitting on the couch next to him. Would he want her to join him, or should she sit in the chair? In the end, she took a seat on the couch a decent space between them. Randall frowned at her and pulled her across the couch until she was nearly plastered to his side.

"This one isn't as bad as the one behind it," he said. "We only got six inches, even though with the cold and wind it seems like more. The wind piles it up in places."

"There's another one coming?" Darla asked.

"It all depends on how far down the low tracks as to how much snow we will get. It will be here by the weekend. We have several days to prepare for it."

“How will you get ready?”

“We’ll go out and search for any stragglers we missed earlier and herd them closer to the barn,” he said.

“You’re going out in all of this?” She shivered.

Randall hugged her closer and rubbed his hand up and down her arm.

“We do it all the time. This time we didn’t have enough to keep us stranded. The next storm might be much bigger. Got to get those cows in closer. We’ll be just fine.” He leaned over and kissed her.

The kiss proved to be sensual but ended quickly. He stood up and walked over to the wood box and threw another log on the fire.

“Reminds me that we need to move the firewood to the porch so it will be closer to the house. Might as well do that now.”

Darla watched as he disappeared down the hall, presumably to round up Marcus to help him. He returned a few minutes later and strode across the room to the kitchen. Marcus soon followed. He stopped to give her a smothering kiss. Then he, too, headed to the kitchen. A few minutes later she heard the door open and close. They were gone for the time being. She had the house to herself to think.

What was she going to do? She admitted to herself that she was not only comfortable with the ménage, but she was beginning to fall for them. If she did that, it would be much harder to leave them.

You have to admit they’ve been open about what they wanted. They haven’t lied to you, either.

She wished she had someone to talk to about it all, but she had no family and what few friends she had back in Mississippi would never understand the situation she’d gotten into. Surely there would be someone that she could call. For the life of her, she couldn’t think of anyone.

The phone rang for the first time when one of the men wasn’t around to answer it. She hesitated, not knowing if she should or not, but decided to in the end. She picked up the receiver on the fourth ring and hoped they hadn’t hung up.

“Hello?”

“Um, hi,” a feminine voice said. “Is one of the boys around?”

“No, they are outside. Can I take a message?” Darla felt her heart sink.

Here was another woman asking for the brothers just like what had happened back in Mississippi. She should have known. A tremor started in her belly and soon progressed to her hands. She had to hold on to the phone with both hands to keep from dropping it.

“That would be great. Tell them their mother called to check on them with this weather like it is.”

Relief welled up inside her. She heaved out a breath before answering.

“Sure. I will. They are bringing up firewood to the porch. I’ll tell them you called. I’m sure one of them will call you back.” Now she was rambling. The woman would think she was daft.

“I didn’t realize they had finally found a housekeeper. I’m so glad you are there. I’ve been worried about them. They can’t cook for anything, and living on sandwiches isn’t good for them.”

“I’ve only been here a few days now. I’ve a lot to learn about ranch life.”

“Don’t worry about it. You’ll learn soon enough. If you have any questions, any at all, you call me.” She emphasized the “any at all.” Darla wondered what she meant by that. Surely she didn’t suspect that more was going on than her keeping house and cooking. Her face heated in mortification at the thought.

“Um, thanks. I’m sure I’ll be fine,” she stuttered.

“Well, tell them to call me when they get in. They never come see us anymore, and we only live a few miles from them. If I want to see them, I have to drive over myself.”

“I’ll tell them and make sure they call.”

Darla hung up and wrung her hands. The fact that their mother might suspect what they were doing embarrassed her. She paced in front of the fireplace until the men returned stomping their feet to rid

their boots of the snow. She hesitated in the doorway unable to say anything at first.

“Hey, baby. What’s up?” Randall asked when he looked up and saw her.

“Your mother called. She said to call her. She never hears from you.”

“Damn. I didn’t think to call her with the snow and all. She gets worried,” Marcus said.

“Let’s call her from the office. I want a shot of whiskey to warm my insides,” Randall said.

They started toward the hall. Randall stopped and turned back toward her.

“Come on. You can sit in my lap while I talk to Mom.”

“I can’t do that!” she exclaimed. Her face felt warm again.

“Of course you can. What’s wrong?” Marcus asked with a scowl on his face.

“It’s your mother, for Pete’s sake. It just isn’t right.”

Randall laughed, and grabbing her hand, pulled her along behind him as he walked down the hall. Marcus followed behind, so she couldn’t escape even if she managed to extract her hand from Randall’s. The idea of sitting in his lap while he was on the phone with his mom terrified her.

They walked into the office, and Randall promptly sat down in his chair pulling her into his lap. Off balance, Darla all but fell in his lap. She squirmed trying to get down, and he tightened his hold on her. Immediately, she felt his erection beneath her, and she stilled, unsure of what to do. The more she struggled, the more aroused he became. He groaned in her ear as he lifted his groin against her.

“Much more of that and I’m going to take you right here and now while Marcus is on the phone.”

Darla held herself very still. Marcus laughed and picked up the phone to call their mother.

“Hey, Mom. You picked up like you were waiting by the phone,” Marcus said.

He listened as she said something.

“Yeah. We got lucky when Darla applied for the job. She’s doing a great job.” Marcus looked over at her and smiled.

Marcus talked with her for a few minutes then handed the phone over to Randall. Darla glared at Marcus for laughing at her discomfort. He only grinned wider. In the meantime, Randall answered questions that were obviously about her. She closed her eyes and willed herself to be absolutely still.

Suddenly, she felt a hand at her breast. She yelped in reaction then popped her hand over her mouth, knowing their mother had to have heard that. Marcus was the culprit. He continued trying to touch her breast. Darla crossed her arms over her chest and ground her teeth in determination to thwart his obvious fun of tormenting her.

A few minutes later, Randall hung up and wrapped both arms around her. Now she couldn’t get down if she tried.

“Mom said hi and that she enjoyed talking to you earlier,” Randall said. “What did you two talk about?”

“Nothing. She introduced herself, and I told her I would make sure you called her.” Darla tried swinging her legs to create enough momentum she could slip out of his arms.

“You’ve moved around so much in my lap that I’m about to explode needing you like I do.”

He released her and allowed her to slip out of his lap. When she did, she dragged her bottom over his engorged cock. She wondered what he going to do. He sounded like he was going to punish her. The idea both frightened her and excited her. How sad was it to anticipate whatever they had in store for her without knowing what it was?

“Come on, Darla. Up to bed. You’ve had a busy day,” Marcus said.

As soon as they crossed the threshold to the bedroom, Marcus closed the door and grinned, obviously looking forward to whatever they had in store for her.

Randall turned her around and began unbuttoning her flannel shirt. Marcus stood back and watched as he deftly removed all her clothes. There didn't seem much point in protesting or struggling. He handed her over to his brother who'd been undressing while he watched his brother strip her. He swept her up in his arms and carried her over to the bed. Instead of dropping her on the mattress, he sat down with her in his lap.

His enormous cock pulsed against her thigh. She couldn't help herself. She reached down and rubbed the velvety soft head earning her a growl and a slap to the side of her ass.

"Behave yourself," Marcus warned her.

"You've both tormented me. I'm just returning the favor," she said.

Randall walked over having finished undressing. He took her from his brother and carried her over to his desk. He let her stand, making sure she could stand upright before letting go over her. Unsure what was going on, she began to turn around to face him. He grabbed hold of her upper arms to prevent her from turning around to face him.

"No you don't. Bend over the desk and hold on," he told her.

Darla complied without thinking. She couldn't help but be aroused. They were both naked, and she wanted to take in their beauty. Instead, she was bent over his desk unsure what was going on.

She didn't have long to wonder. The sound of crinkling let her know that Randall was opening a condom. She sighed. Could she actually have sex with them immediately after they had talked to their mother? The idea embarrassed her. At least she didn't think she had to worry about their family coming to visit anytime soon with the weather so bad. She shivered at the thought of facing them.

The head of Randall's penis rubbed up and down her pussy lips. He stopped at her opening and pushed himself past her protesting muscles. Once he was fully seated, he stilled to let her adjust to his girth. Then he began to move, slowly at first, but soon he was pounding into her, moving her higher up on the desk with each thrust. She could feel his balls slap against her upper thighs.

Marcus, not to be left out, began to slip his hand beneath her to find her clit. He circled it several times then, as if knowing his brother was about to come, pinched it, driving her over the edge of pleasure. Randall stiffened behind her and shouted out his release even as he pulled her hips hard against him.

"Fuck, that was hot," Marcus exclaimed behind her. Randall disappeared as Marcus helped her stand up. He kept his hands on her shoulders until she felt able to stand on her own. When she started toward the bathroom, Randall strode out of it. He grinned at her and stole a kiss as he walked by. Darla drew in a deep breath then entered the bathroom and closed the door behind her. Leaning against the door, she fought the urge to pack up her stuff and run. It was a dream job to her despite their advances. But once again she wondered how long it would last. She already felt something for them. She wasn't sure what it was, but it scared her. Lessons hard won reminded her she couldn't trust a man, much less two.

* * * *

Marcus smiled at Randall. They both looked like idiots, he was sure, but having her with them felt like the right thing. If only they could convince her of their seriousness soon. He already loved her, and he suspected Marcus was totally in love with her.

He watched the bathroom door open, and Darla walked out. She looked everywhere but at them. Her discomfort at being nude in the room with two men probably had her going through the gauntlet trying to figure out what to do. Marcus seemed to have an idea of

what he wanted to do. He promptly took her hand in his, encircling her wrist with his hand. He pulled her toward the bed, and they both climbed up on the bed.

Randall followed them onto the bed and followed Marcus's lead. His brother rolled onto his back, bringing Darla with him. She straddled Marcus with her hands on his chest.

"Ride me, baby," Marcus demanded.

Darla licked her lips staring down at Marcus. Then she looked over toward Randall as if for help. He smiled encouragement at her. With that, she rose up on her knees and positioned Marcus's cock at her entrance and slowly lowered herself on the stiff appendage. When she rose back up again, Randall could see her pussy juices coating his brother's dick.

He watched her face as she slowly rose and fell, rose and fell, her face a mask of concentration. As she became more aroused, she sped up, propping herself on his brother's chest. Marcus held her hips as she rode him. Soon he was doing most of the work as she grew frantic in her pace. She was close, Randall could tell. He positioned himself behind her and reached around to find her clit with his fingers. When he found the swollen nub, he lightly touched it before bringing around some of her pussy juice to her back hole. He repeated this until he had her wet and slick.

He slowly pushed against the little rosette until the tip of one finger breached her hole. He slowly worked it in and out before adding a second finger. She moaned and pushed back after initially stiffening over his brother. She moaned and began to relax. He realized his brother had taken over manipulating her clit. Randall smiled and worked his two fingers in and out, scissoring them as he went. Suddenly, she began to buck against Marcus and Randall knew she was coming. He added a third finger, and she screamed as she came.

Once she stopped moving, he gently removed his fingers and kissed her ass cheek before heading for the bathroom to wash up. A few seconds later, his brother joined him taking care of the condom.

“How many fingers did you manage to use?” Marcus asked.

“Three at the end when she was climaxing,” he told him.

“Won’t be long now,” Marcus mused.

“We’ll see how she reacts now to it. Hopefully, she won’t be totally freaked out that I was playing with her ass.” He dried his hands and waited on his brother to wash his before they left the bathroom to join their woman back in bed.

They found Darla curled up under the covers, her eyes closed. Randall could tell she wasn’t asleep though. He climbed into bed and pulled her tight against him. The bed dipped, and Marcus slid between the covers and positioned himself with his back against her front. He reached around her to find her arm and pulled it over his waist where he could clasp her hand with his.

Randall brushed the hair from her face and kissed her cheek. She looked so delicate lying between them.

“Sweetheart? How do you feel?” he asked.

He didn’t think she was going to answer at first, but after a few seconds, she cleared her throat and spoke.

“I’m okay,” she said.

“Just okay? Maybe we should do it again then.” He moved his hand to her waist where he squeezed her.

“I mean it was wonderful, and I’m fine. You always get me to come, and I’ve never had more than one climax in a night. Somehow I’m having two and three sometimes.” She cut off as if thinking better of telling him.

“If we have our way, you’ll have two and three every time we make love to you.” Randall waited for her reply.

“I don’t know if I can handle that,” she said in a small voice.

“You can, and you will love it.” Randall chuckled. “What did you think when I played with your ass?”

She stilled in his arms then drew in a deep breath only to let it out in a long sigh.

“It was okay. I suppose I knew that you would want to do that eventually.”

“Do what?” he asked.

“Um, take me in my ass. I’m scared though. You’re both so big. I don’t see how I can take you there.”

“That’s why I was stretching you, to get you ready. You can take us. I promise.” He kissed her shoulder. “Get some sleep now.”

Randall could tell Marcus had already fallen asleep. He smiled. His brother had gotten his rocks off, so he was sated. He, however, hadn’t and was hard as a rock. He willed himself to sleep. Still it was a long time coming. He eventually rolled out of bed, careful not to wake either Darla or his brother. He walked into the bathroom and closed the door. He turned on the shower and stepped into the multiple sprays letting the warm water pound on his shoulders and back before he soaped up a cloth and cleaned himself. Then he rinsed off everywhere except his groin. He stepped out of the spray and took hold of his cock. He’d jack off and then be able to fall asleep.

Randall pictured Darla on her knees in front of him. He pumped his shaft as he imagined her mouth slowly enveloping him. He reached down with his other hand and cupped his balls, squeezing them lightly then rolling them around in his hand. He pulled on his dick, picking up speed as he got closer to coming.

In and out he thought about Darla’s mouth taking his cock to the back of her throat and swallowing. Pre-cum oozed from the slit in the mushroom head. He spread it around the top of his shaft and pumped harder and harder. Darla’s tongue would dip into that slit when she came back up from deep-throating him. Faster and faster his hand fisted around his cock as he drew closer. When he began to come, Randall propped one hand against the tiled wall in the back of the shower and rose up on his toes as ribbons of cum shot from his dick onto his hand and belly.

Sighing, he rested his head against the cool tiles before back into the spray and turning around to wash away the evidence of his relief. Now he was ready to go to sleep, he thought. After drying off, he walked back into the bedroom and climbed back into bed. When he scooted closer to Darla spooning her from behind, she yelped.

“You’re like a block of ice. Where have you been?” she asked in a raspy whisper.

“Sorry, I took a shower. I couldn’t sleep.”

She seemed to be thinking about this before she answered.

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly.

“For what?” he asked.

“For not taking care of you after Marcus. I left you needing to come, didn’t I?”

“It’s okay, Darla. I don’t have to come every time Marcus does, and he isn’t going to complain when he doesn’t come. The one thing that has to happen is you have to climax each time. You’re the one who is important here.” Randall brushed aside her hair and kissed her neck beneath her ear.

“Now go to sleep.” He squeezed her then buried his face in her neck and slowly fell asleep.

Chapter Seven

Early the next morning Darla awoke between the two men. Sometime during the night she had thrown her arm over Randall's chest and now had her head resting on his shoulder. Marcus spooned her from behind with one arm over her waist.

How in the world was she going to extract herself from between them without waking them up? She needed to get up for more than one reason. Besides needing to relieve herself, she needed to get downstairs and start breakfast. If she were going to be sleeping with them, they were going to have to let her out of bed on time.

Darla took Marcus's hand off her pelvis and pushed it over her waist and toward him. Then she slowly inched her way down Randall's body toward the foot of the bed. He groaned and opened one eye.

"Where are you going?" he asked in a sleepy, raspy voice.

"The bathroom," she answered.

"Um-hmm," he said and let her continue her path to the end of the bed.

Marcus never woke up. After finishing up in the bathroom, Darla made her way downstairs to the kitchen where she immediately started coffee. She checked the time and found she was a little over forty-five minutes ahead of schedule. She stretched and yawned before fishing out makings for waffles. She'd found the waffle iron in the back of one of the cabinets one day when she was looking for a large skillet. She pulled out sausage and cut off seven pieces. That should be enough for them, she decided.

When the coffee finished dripping, she poured a mug and sat at the kitchen table sipping it and musing over the last few days. She'd gone from homeless to having a home complete with two men who wanted to share her. How had it all happened? She supposed she was lucky in some respects and others worried her.

She stood up and crossed to the back door to look out of the glass. She could feel the cold seep in around the door as she looked out the window at the blowing snow. It was nearly impossible to see the barn from where she stood in the warmth of the kitchen.

How would they ever find it?

"You left us in bed," Marcus complained behind her.

Startled, she spun around and gasped. "You scared me."

"Sorry. Snowing hard out there?" he asked.

"It's blowing pretty hard. How in the world can you find your way to the barn and back?"

"We stretched rope from the barn to the house so we can follow it. Then there is a rope from the barn to the fence where the water troughs are. The men in the bunk house did the same thing. It is the easiest way to make sure you don't wander off in the snow and get lost. You wouldn't last a day in that mess." He poured a cup of coffee and smiled when he sniffed of it.

"You know how to make coffee. That's great. Nothing worse to me than a weak cup of coffee.

"I like it sort of strong. I'm glad you like it that way." Darla crossed to the kitchen to start breakfast. "Is Randall up yet?"

"Yeah, he'll be down in a minute." He strode over to the bar and sat down on one of the stools. "You got the waffle iron out. Does that mean what I think it means?"

"Yep, waffles for breakfast. Would you mind getting out the syrup so it can start to warm up?"

Marcus jumped up and got the syrup from the fridge. About that time, Randall walked in. He walked over to Darla and, hugging her from behind, nuzzled her neck.

“Morning, baby.”

“Good morning.”

“Next time you get up, wake one of us up with you,” he said.

“Why? You need your sleep.”

“‘Cause we don’t like to wake up hugging each other,” Marcus said with a smirk on his face.

Darla burst out laughing. The thought of the two men embracing each other and waking up to find themselves like that sent her into another peal of laughter.

Randall and Marcus exchanged grins. Darla realized it was the first time she’d actually laughed in a very long time. It wasn’t a chuckle but a full-out belly laugh, and the men seemed to like it.

“Okay, I’ll wake one of you up, although I don’t know what’s wrong with hugging each other. You are brothers.”

“He-men don’t hug other men,” Marcus groused.

Darla busied herself making batter and frying the sausage. In no time at all she had it on the table. The men dug in as she fixed her own plate and ate with them. As soon as they were through, she cleaned up the kitchen. The men piled on the clothes and headed out to the barn to check on the horses and break the water in the troughs. She couldn’t conceive of a place where you had to string rope to find your way back and forth. It amazed her.

She emptied the boys’ rooms of dirty clothes and washed and dried them. She needed to keep up with the laundry in case they lost power. The morning flew by, and she realized when it neared the lunch hour that they hadn’t come back inside. She instantly got worried. A bit uneasy, Darla made sandwiches, placing them in zippered bags to keep them fresh. Then she opened a couple of cans of vegetable soup to warm them up on the inside when they got back.

At a quarter of one, she heard them stomping their feet on the back porch. They piled inside the warm kitchen, bringing in the cold with them. Randall closed the door and began peeling off a couple of layers of clothes with Marcus doing the same thing.

“Ah, man. She fixed soup with our sandwiches, Randall.” Marcus hurried over to the stove where she was dipping soup into the bowls.

“Take yours and Randall’s for me,” she said.

Marcus leaned in and kissed her neck.

She jerked back nearly knocking the soup pan off the stove.

“Don’t do that! Your nose is like ice.”

Marcus laughed, taking the bowls and heading for the table. She heard a defiant snort from Randall, who was already sitting at the table waiting on them. He had unwrapped his sandwiches and poured a glass of tea.

“I’ll make some coffee real quick,” Darla said.

“Come eat first,” Randall insisted.

“It will only take a second. You can unwrap my sandwich for me.” She hurried over to the coffee pot and poured the already measured water into the reservoir and turned it on.

“See, only a second.” She slid into her chair and smiled as the men started eating.

They had waited on her. It was sweet of them. How would she ever manage to leave when the time came?

“What are you thinking so hard about? You have frown lines on your face,” Marcus said.

He dipped his sandwich into the hot soup and took a large bite out of it.

“Nothing really.” She smiled brightly at him and returned to sipping her soup.

“It looked...”

Randall interrupted him. “This is really good. Thanks for making the soup. It helps to warm up.”

“It’s just store-bought soup, but I figured you would like something warm after being out in that weather all morning.” She risked a look at Marcus, but he seemed engrossed in his meal.

After they were finished with lunch, they piled into the living room to check the weather. Marcus added another log to the fire and

they all curled up on the couch together waiting on The Weather Channel to give them a clue about how bad the storm was going to be.

“We managed to get about everyone in closer to the barn. I’m sure we missed someone, but at the best count we were on target,” Randall told her.

“I’ve never asked, but do you raise horses, too?” She had been curious about that ever since she had arrived.

Marcus spoke up before Randall could swallow his food.

“We don’t raise them as a business, but we do foal about three mares a year and either keep them or sell them once they get old enough. We do a lot of riding around here. Have to use snowmobiles in the winter but during the spring and summer a horse is the best way to get around out here.”

“Some people use motorcycles when the weather is nice, but the upkeep for only being able to use them a couple of months a year just isn’t worth it to me. You can’t ride them when it’s rained too much or while the snow is melting. It’s too muddy,” Randall added.

“I’ll take you to look at the horses as soon as the weather clears up enough you can walk out there. Then when spring gets here, you can see the foals as they’re born. They’re cute as a button when they’re at that wobbly, young age,” Marcus said.

“Do you know how to ride, Darla?” Randall asked.

“I’ve ridden before a few times, but only on a trail with a guide. I’m afraid I’d fall off of a real horse ride.” She smiled shyly and concentrated on watching the TV.

“We’ll teach you as soon as it’s pretty enough. You have to know how to ride around here. You never know when you’ll need to get on a horse.”

Marcus shushed them. “The weather is on.”

They sat in silence as the weather man danced around the nation before centering in Montana and the snowstorm just beginning to make itself known. Randall turned the sound up, and they all listened as nearly two feet of snow was predicted. The low was dipping well

below them, bringing freezing air down from Canada to drop their temperatures well below zero for the next several days.

“Well, hell,” Marcus said. “We’ll be stuck here for at least a week unless we take the time to plow down the drive.”

“And that’s assuming the city will attempt to plow the highway from there to here,” Randall added.

Marcus squeezed her thigh. “I think we can find something to do, though,” he said.

Darla nearly squealed when Randall’s hand snaked up to rub lightly over her breasts. Her nipples pebbled immediately. It didn’t take much from these two to turn her on in a big way. It sounded like they planned to spend a lot of time in bed. Was she up to it? Oh, yes. Was it a good idea? Probably not.

Speaking of which, Randall rose from the couch dragging her along with him. She heard Marcus stand up behind her. The three of them walked toward the stairs. Every step caused friction between her legs as her clit peaked out from beneath its hood in anticipation of more to come.

As soon as they made it into the master suite, Randall pulled her into his arms for a scorching kiss. His mouth ate at hers as his tongue twirled and tickled hers in the process. They seemed to be moving and she realized he was walking them backward toward the bed. When the back of her legs hit the bed, she nearly fell. She had to climb into the bed as it was so tall. Instead, Randall pulled back from their kiss and picked her up. He gently laid her in the bed.

Marcus already had his shirt and jeans off and was kneeling in his thermals next to her. He bent down and kissed her with as much heat as his brother had earlier. He licked along the seam of her lips then when she opened them, he sucked her bottom lip into his mouth to tickle and tease with his tongue. He nipped it then kissed it. She couldn’t stop the moan when he closed a hand over her breast and squeezed. She needed more contact.

Darla loosened her hands from Marcus's hair to unbutton her shirt with shaking hands. The buttons eluded her time and again till another pair of hands began helping her. She sighed into Marcus's mouth and ran her hands inside his thermals to rub along his washboard abs. Skin to skin she rolled his thermals up to his armpits and struggled to pull away so she could finish undressing him.

"Easy, baby. Let's undress you first," Randall said.

He tugged her shirt out of her pants, and Marcus took over pulling it off of her. Randall worked on her belt and then her jeans. Soon they had her naked and shivering in the slightly cool room. Randall bundled her into bed so she would be warm while they stripped the rest of their clothes off.

"Damn the cold and having to wear these dang thermals. They're hard as hell to pull off in a hurry," Marcus muttered.

Darla couldn't help but giggle at that.

"Why are you in such a hurry? Is the house on fire?" She giggled.

"Can't wait to get my hands on those sweet tits," Marcus answered.

Randall slid into bed only seconds ahead of Marcus. They turned to her and immediately began touching and petting her. They each took a breast and sucked her hard nipples into their hot, wet mouths swirling their tongues all around it.

Marcus suckled hard at her breast as Randall teased it with his tongue. She shuddered when they both pulled back and blew across them.

"Aren't they just the prettiest pair of tits you've ever seen?" Marcus asked Randall.

"I don't think they come as pretty as these. Dusky rose and ripe for the plucking." He proved it by pinching them between his thumb and forefinger, drawing it out until she groaned.

"You like that, don't you, Darla? You like a little pinch now and then." Randall dropped kisses over her breasts, then moved lower under the covers toward her weeping pussy.

They hadn't touched her there and already it was sopping wet. Marcus moved to the head of the bed and pulled the pillow from behind her head so it lay flat on the bed. Then he positioned his hard cock at her mouth.

"Suck me, baby. Swallow me down." Marcus slowly fed his erection to her, letting her get used to it.

Darla dipped the tip of her tongue deep into the slit and was rewarded with a drop of pre-cum. Its salty taste proved to be a bit tangier than his brother's had tasted. She ran her tongue around beneath the head of his cock and sucked at the underside. He grabbed her hair and held on with a groan. There was nothing sexier than his and Randall's groans when she sucked their cocks. The control she had over them sang through her blood.

A jolt of awareness had her crying out around Marcus's cock as Randall slid his tongue down her slit before pulling her pussy lips apart. She hummed her appreciation as he began licking her as if she were a lollipop to be savored and enjoyed. Distracted now, she had a much more difficult time concentrating on the heaving cock in her mouth. Marcus didn't seem to mind as he pushed in between her lips and pulled out over and over.

"Fuck, she's wet and hot, Marcus." Randall's muffled voice came from beneath the covers.

"Same here. I can't get enough of her hot little mouth. She swallows me, and I just about shoot my load. Do you think she's aroused enough she won't notice the cold if we pull the covers down the bed?" Marcus asked then sighed when he pushed his throbbing cock back into her mouth.

"Do it," Randall said.

* * * *

Marcus reluctantly pulled out of Darla's mouth and shoved the covers down her body and off of Randall to the foot of the bed. Darla

cried out at the sudden loss of heat. Marcus returned to lie down beside her and rub her arms and breasts to warm her up. He once again pulled a breast into his mouth and used his hand on the other one. Soon she was moaning and twisting again at the onslaught of sensations bombarding her. Marcus smiled and gently nipped at her nipple.

“Get a condom on, Marcus.” Randall’s voice came from below.

Marcus rolled over and pulled two condoms from the bedside table throwing one on the bed next to where Randall had his face buried in Darla’s pussy. Marcus licked his lips and leaned over to sneak a taste from her pussy. He dipped his finger in when Randall pulled away to see what he was doing. His brother grinned at him.

“It tastes like honey and sunshine,” Randall told him.

Marcus sucked his finger and closed his eyes in appreciation. Randall was right. It tasted great. Their little Darla was sweet all over.

“Hurry up, Marcus. She’s on the edge, and I’m having a difficult time keeping her there without pushing her over.”

Marcus scrambled back up the bed and, kneeling, tore the condom package down one side to pull it out and roll it on his aching cock. He stretched out beside Darla and pulled her over on top of him. She must have realized she was going to ride Marcus because she immediately grasped his dick and positioned him at the mouth of her pussy. She lowered herself as he surged upwards, impaling her in one swift stroke. She screamed and began bucking over him. Taking him had pushed her over. He marveled at how her sweet pussy contracted around him almost painfully. He was already close thanks to her clever mouth.

“Randall, hurry up. I can’t hold on much longer.”

“I need to prep her. Try to take it slower.”

Marcus grunted his answer. He wasn’t made of stone.

* * * *

Randall nearly laughed on hearing his brother grunt. He knew just how hot and wet Darla was. He figured his brother was hanging on by a thread. Grabbing the condom, he opened it and slipped it on his jumping dick. Each throb of his pulse had the head bouncing. He reached out and gently pushed Darla's back until she was laying against his brother. They grew still, then began rocking.

The globes of her ass pointed straight at his cock. He drew in a deep breath and slowly let it out as he rubbed them then lightly swatted each of them. She yelped in surprise but didn't complain. Her tiny rosette winked at him as he opened the bottle of lube. When he let it drop directly over the little hole, she gave a startled "Oh" but didn't protest as he gently rubbed the lube around her hole and used his pinkie to dip in with each round.

The bud blossomed when he traded his pinkie for his first finger and another drop of the lube. He wiggled his finger once he had it all the way in to the knuckle. She moaned. It turned to a gasp when he added a second finger and began pumping them in and out. She writhed on top of Marcus, and his brother groaned.

"Randall," his brother hissed.

"Almost," he returned.

When he added a third finger, she began pumping back with each stroke. She was ready, he decided. He pulled his fingers out and covered his sheathed cock in lube before positioning the organ at her back door. When he pushed forward, she whimpered and drew back.

"Easy, baby. Relax and push back. Let him in." Marcus soothed her. "I promise it will hurt so good soon."

She panted between them and pushed back against Randall's dick. He surged farther in and stopped to let her get use to him. He was almost fully seated. Another few breaths and he seated himself fully inside of her. She moaned and wiggled.

"Do something!" she cried. "Fuck me."

At this Randall pulled out and then tunneled back in as his brother pulled out. They rode her in tandem with one of them always inside of

her. She gave into the feelings and let them do all the work as if trying to keep up with them was more than she could handle. When she began to keen and tighten down on him, he knew she was about to climax. He heard his brother shout his release even as Darla cried out and clamped down on them both with her pelvic muscles. He pushed in two more times and joined them in the aftermath of the hardest climax he'd ever had.

Evidently his brother agreed as he continued to pant beneath them. He groaned and pulled out. He needed to see to his condom and her. They gently rolled her off of Marcus to the bed. Marcus petted her and smoothed the hair from her head, giving her little kisses all over her face.

Randall cleaned up then wet a bath cloth with hot water and proceeded to clean her up. She moaned at the first touch of the warm cloth between her legs.

"I can do that," she complained halfheartedly.

"I know, but I want to," Randall told her.

Once he was finished, he handed the cloth to his brother and traded positions with him. While Marcus cleaned up, he curled up around Darla, burying his face in the fragrant tresses of her hair.

"Mmm, you smell delicious. Makes me want to eat you all over again."

"Not yet. I need to rest. I'm worn out."

"We didn't really hurt you, did we?" he asked and tensed, waiting on her reply.

"No, it was the most wonderful feeling once I got past the first pinch." Darla squirmed against him. "I think I'm going to be sore all over though."

"There's nothing for you to do but rest for as long as you want. With the snow settling in, we'll be in and out checking on the animals, but we can take care of ourselves. You don't have to get up at all." Randall brushed her hair behind her ear and turned her head to face up so he could kiss her.

He was still kissing her when his brother eased into the bed beneath the covers. They all snuggled while warming up. He heard each of them slowly drop off to sleep with his brother lightly snoring. He grinned. He loved ribbing him about his snoring.

He lay awake for some time thinking over the implications of their actions. She was theirs. There was no doubt in his mind she belonged with them. He still thought there was something that had happened back in Mississippi that had sent her to such a remote area of the United States. He could only hope it wouldn't be something that would cause them all trouble later. Right now, he wanted to make her their wife and put a ring on her finger.

Still, he wanted to know what had caused her to leave everything and everyone she knew behind. Had it been another man, or was she in some type of trouble with the law? They hadn't checked her references because they'd instantly known she belonged to them. But he needed to know what had caused her to run. Then there was the possibility she could be pregnant with their child. He would welcome a baby with open arms. The thought of Darla round with their child pulled a smile out of him. His brother would be beyond happy. Marcus wanted children in a big way. He did, too, but knew their forgetting the condom had been a major mess-up. It should be a decision between all three of them. He looked at Darla's glowing face one more time and relaxed into the mattress, resigned to what he planned to do. He would check into her background to be sure nothing would come as a surprise. It would be a secret he hoped wouldn't cost them the first light of happiness they'd had in a long time.

Chapter Eight

A whoosh of cold air hit her back and ass, jump-starting her heart as she shot up in bed. She looked toward where the offending breeze had originated and found Randall slipping into his thermals.

“Sorry. I tried to get out without waking you up.” Randall winced

“Next time slide out from under them instead of throwing them back to get out of bed,” she grouched.

He looked so cute in the long johns that she had to smile. Then her gaze traveled south and the clingy material emphasized the bulge at his groin. She licked her lips at the sight.

“Careful there,” Randall whispered. “You’re going to wake up more than Marcus with all that panting.”

“I’m not panting!” she fumed.

Darla frowned up at Randall. He had moved on to pulling up his jeans and fastening them. How he managed to get the zipper over his obviously engorged cock, she’d never understand.

“Where are you going?” she asked, snuggling closer to Marcus.

“I need to check the barn and make sure the water troughs are all broken. I keep saying I’m going to invest in some warmers to keep the water from freezing. Remind me come spring to see about it.” Randall pulled on his flannel shirt and stepped into his boots. He walked over and leaned down to give her a kiss.

“Hurry back. My back will get cold without you here to keep it warm.” She looked up at him through her lashes.

Randall groaned then huffed out a breath as if in resignation.

"I'll get back as soon as I can. Wake Sleeping Beauty up over there, and he'll keep you warm till I get back." He winked at her and walked out of the bedroom door.

"Who is he talking about?" Marcus mumbled into the covers.

"You, sleepyhead." She grinned when he growled in protest.

"I'm just resting my eyes is all. Are you ready to get up?" he asked.

"No. I want to stay here for a little while longer, but I need to make something to eat and put wood on the fire."

Marcus rolled over and pulled her into the crook of his arm. Her cheek rested on his shoulder, and he ran his hand up and down her arm.

"Randall will see to the fire before he goes outside. It will keep for a little longer." She watched as he grinned a slow smile that lit up his eyes.

"And what did you have in mind before we get up?" she asked.

He winked and pinched her nipple. "I can think of a few activities that will serve two purposes."

"And what would that be?"

"It will keep you warm and make you feel good all at one time."

"And?" she asked again.

"I want to fuck that amazing pussy of yours again." Marcus ran his hand down her torso to her mound then slipped a finger through her crease until he found her wet center.

"I'm not complaining," she said and reached down to grab hold of his hardened cock.

While he played with her pussy lips, Darla ran her hand up and down the stalk of his cock spreading the pearl of pre-cum around to make him slick. He moaned even as he teased her opening with his fingers. When he breached her slit, it was her turn to moan. She rocked her hips toward his questing fingers.

"I need you, Marcus. Now."

Without saying a word, he reached over to the bedside table and coaxed a condom from the opened box sitting there. He quickly rolled it on and positioned himself between her legs. He lifted them over his arms and plunged into her tight pussy. It was swollen in need but also from the night before. It took him several thrusts before he nudged her cervix. She sighed in contentment when he rested there for a few seconds. It felt so good to have him inside her.

He set a rhythm that was slow and easy. She rocked with him as he rode her, and a slow burn began deep in her womb. He worked it into a heated fire then, as he increased his pace, it turned into a roaring flame. She grabbed his arms as he pistoned in over and over.

“Oh, God, I’m going to come,” she managed to get out.

“Come on my cock, Darla. I want your cum all over it.”

He reached between them and rubbed her clit in just the right way. She exploded around him. Lights flashed behind her closed lids. How could it be any better than last night? Maybe it wasn’t. Maybe it was just different. Marcus lost his rhythm as he drew close. In three pumps of his cock, he came sending another thrill through her system. He collapsed over her but managed to keep the majority of his weight off of her. His rough breathing made her smile. She’d been just as out of breath when she’d climaxed.

“I’ll move in a few seconds. I’ve got to get my breath back. You wear me out.” He swallowed hard enough his Adam’s apple jumped.

Darla laughed and raked her nails lightly across his shoulders. He shuddered.

“Don’t do that. I’ll fall on you,” he complained.

She just smiled and cocked her head.

Once he’d caught his breath, Marcus rolled off her and eased off the edge of the bed. He disappeared into the bathroom, and a moment later she heard the toilet flush. She scooted over a few inches to locate the warmest spot in the bed and then closed her eyes and drifted. She felt sated and happy. Her belly growled. Well, almost satisfied. She seemed to be hungry. She had worked up an appetite, she admitted.

When Marcus returned to the bedroom, she was grouching about needing to find her panties. She wasn't sure where they had thrown them the night before, and she was getting really cold.

"What is it, baby?" he asked.

"I need my panties. I can't find them, and I'm freezing my ass off."

"Can't let that happen. I'm partial to that pretty peach." He helped her look, but they couldn't locate them.

She gave up and pulled out a fresh pair. She'd wanted to take a shower before she changed clothes to clean ones, but she needed coffee first.

"You take a shower and get dressed, and I'll make coffee."

Marcus had to have read her mind. She dropped the panties on the bed and hugged him. Then ran into the bathroom and shut the door to hold in the heat. She reached in and turned on the water to let it heat up. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror before the steam began fogging it up. She looked like a woman well used. Used...were they doing that? Just using her for their pleasure and when they tired of her, they'd send her on her way?

She swore then stepped into the hot spray of the shower jets. They claimed they wanted her for good. Did that mean forever, though? How did that work anyway? She remembered that their mother had invited her to call her anytime. She could ask her, but decided she'd be too embarrassed to admit she was having sex with her two boys. No, she couldn't talk to her.

Finished in the shower, Darla stepped out and began drying off. Just as she reached for the door, it opened. Marcus smiled and handed her a mug of coffee.

"Room service," he said with a smile.

Darla took a sip and winced. It was hot and black like she liked it but a little bit strong for her taste. Didn't matter. She would drink it anyway. After another sip of the hot liquid, she sat it on the dresser

and began dressing. When she started to put on a bra, Marcus stopped her.

“Let me.”

He settled the bra over her shoulders then pulled it together in front to fasten it. Once he’d done that, he reached into each cup and settled her breast comfortably in the material. It surprised her that he would know about that. She frowned at where her thoughts were going. They’d learned everything they’d done to her and for her from someone. That didn’t sit well, and she realized she was jealous of someone she didn’t even know.

“Why the frown, baby? Did I do it wrong?” he asked, a puzzled look on his face.

“Nothing. I was just thinking of something. Nothing important.” She hurried to put on her boots and hurried through the door and down the stairs.

When she got to the kitchen, she realized she’d left her coffee upstairs. Resigned to having to go back up to get it she nearly ran into Marcus as he walked into the kitchen. He held out her mug.

“You forgot this,” he said with his brows furrowed in worry.

Great, she’d upset him. She hadn’t meant to. Everything had been going great until she let her mind wander. She needed to put her past behind her and not worry about their past either. Nothing good would come of it.

She plastered a smile on her face and reached up to kiss him. He kissed her back before she drew away and walked over to the fridge.

“How about ham, eggs, and toast today?”

“Sounds good to me. I bet Randall will be back in before too long and be hungry as a bear. Marcus grabbed a mug from the cabinet over the coffee pot and poured a cup for himself. He closed his eyes when he swallowed.

“Hmmm, good, but a bit strong. Yours is much better,” he praised.

“Well, make yourself useful and gather all those dirty clothes from upstairs and carry them to the laundry for me. I’ll get them to washing as soon as I get breakfast started.”

He only half complained about bossy women as he headed up to the bedroom. She smiled at that. He obviously didn’t mean it since he was smiling as he did. He and Randall both seemed to really care about her, but they hadn’t really said as much. If they didn’t say it, she wasn’t sure how deep their feelings really went.

Marcus returned with a basket overflowing with dirty clothes. He carried it through the kitchen to the laundry room and deposited it out of sight. When he came back, she had the toast buttered and the ham cooking. She was scrambling the eggs with a little cheese in them. They could use the added protein and calories she figured.

“I’m going to see about the fire. If you need me, just holler,” Marcus said.

He’d only been gone a few seconds when sounds of Randall stomping on the back porch sent butterflies fluttering in her stomach. She didn’t have long to wonder at that when he opened the back door then pushed to shove it closed again. Cold air circled in the room.

“Whew. The wind has picked up something fierce out there.” He peeled off his coat and gloves before stepping out of his boots and into the pair of loafers they kept by the back door for just that reason.

“How much snow is out there now?” she asked.

“A good foot. The bad thing is, with the wind blowing like it is, there are drifts several feet high. It’s piling up against this side of the house. We’ll need to shovel it periodically so we can get out.”

“I’ll help,” she began.

Randall cut her off. “Hell, no! You’re not to step foot out that door. It’s too dangerous.”

She pouted since he yelled at her. She knew he was right, but it was the principle of the matter. She had feelings.

As if knowing he'd upset her, Randall walked up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. "I'm sorry I yelled. It's just that the thought of you out there lost in the snow scares the hell out of me."

"Fine, I'm not going to go out. Just don't yell at me."

"Why'd he yell at you?" Marcus walked through the door from the living room.

"I shouldn't have. She was talking about going outside to help us shovel snow, and I freaked."

Marcus turned to her with a stern look on his face. "He's right. Under no circumstances will you walk out that door. Now promise me."

"I promise, okay?" She was aggravated now. "Get washed up, Randall. Breakfast will be on the table in the next few minutes."

She saw the two men exchange glances before she turned her back to them and began scrambling the eggs. They could have their "man" moment. She would sulk like any self-respecting woman that had been fussed at.

She was just putting the food on the table when Randall walked back in the kitchen. He crossed the room and tried to hug her, but she moved out of his arms.

"None of that. Go sit down, or breakfast will get cold." She saw Marcus smile at Randall.

Breakfast was a silent affair. She knew she should let him off the hook, but she wanted to make her point. She didn't want to be yelled at. The two men took their coffee into the living room to watch the weather. She busied herself cleaning up and thinking about what to cook for dinner that night. She settled on chili. She'd make enough for several meals. She could always freeze part of it if they didn't need it all. She still expected the electricity to go off at any time.

Back when she lived in Mississippi, all it had to do was threaten to snow and the lights went out. Here, they seemed to have the problem under control. Darla separated the clothes next and started a load of laundry. With that taken care of, she had time on her hands

waiting for the washer to finish. She might as well go in the living room and let Randall off the hook now.

She walked in to find Marcus in the chair and Randall on the couch with his elbows on his knees gripping his coffee cup in two hands. Just looking at him sent another wave of fluttering in her belly. When she looked at Marcus, it was just as bad but different. He was the playful one of the two. Randall was the more serious. Since he was the oldest, that made sense. He had the majority of the pressure on his shoulders.

Ready to make peace with him, Darla plopped down next to him. He had to quickly set his coffee down on the coffee table to keep from spilling it.

“Easy there. I’ll spill it all over your clean floors,” Randall said.

She nudged his arm until he lifted it and wound it around her.

“Am I forgiven?” he asked.

“Hmmm, I guess so. Just don’t let it happen again.”

Marcus jumped up from his chair and joined them on the couch. They each took turns kissing and petting her until the weather came on. Then they all settled back to learn what they could expect over the next twenty-four to forty-eight hours. It didn’t look good.

“If it follows the path they are projecting it will,” Randall began. “It will dump another foot or so of snow on us.”

“It’s a given. We’ll lose electricity before it’s over with,” Marcus shook his head.

“How are we on fuel for the generator?” Randall asked.

“Enough for twenty-four hours straight, so we can stretch it if we only use it at night.”

“We’ll close off the vents upstairs and move the air mattress in here to sleep on at night. We can stay warm with the fireplace when we shut off the generator,” Randall said.

“I’ll gather up some blankets.” Darla worried her lower lip.

“Don’t worry, baby,” Marcus said and squeezed her shoulder. “It won’t be that bad. We’ll all be together camping out in front of the fire. It will be fun.”

Randall snorted and stood up. “Need to shovel that snow, Marcus.”

Marcus rolled his eyes and brushed a kiss across her lips before following his brother into the kitchen. Darla scooted in behind him and watched them layer the clothes on to keep out the cold as they shoveled snow.

“We’ll be back in an hour or so. I want to get the path cleared from here to the barn,” Randall told her.

“Don’t worry about us. Just keep the fire going,” Marcus said.

The two men opened the door and stepped outside into the blowing snow. Marcus struggled to pull the door closed behind him, so Darla pushed against it on her side until it latched. The kitchen had dropped a few degrees from the door being open. She hurried over to the stove and started the chili. By the time the meat was brown, she was warm once again.

When the chili was all but ready, she left it on low to simmer while she gathered up blankets and piled them in the living room. She looked at her watch and realized they had been gone for nearly an hour now. They should be in soon, she thought.

After adding a log to the fire, Darla finished folding a load of clothes and changed over the ones in the washer to the dryer. One more load and she would have it all caught up. Glancing up, she noticed the clock on the kitchen wall said the boys had been out for well over an hour now. She pulled aside the curtain in the kitchen to look outside but all she could see was snow—everywhere. It seemed to swirl around the porch at a breakneck speed.

When two hours had passed, she became really worried and debated going to look for them. If she did and they were fine, Randall would tan her hide. If they weren’t okay, she wouldn’t know what to do. There was nothing she could do but wait. About the time she

pulled out crackers for the chili, the sound of stomping boots on the back porch sent a wave of joy through her body. She let out a breath, not realizing she'd been holding off and on all morning.

This time when the men opened the door and slipped in, Randall struggled with the door. Once they were inside, Randall and Marcus both bent over with their hands on their upper legs to hold them while they struggled to catch their breath. She figured between the work of shoveling snow and the icy cold temperatures, it was hard to breathe out there.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked, wringing her hands with worry.

"No. Be okay in a second," Randall managed to get out between puffs.

She decided she couldn't just stand there and watch them struggling to breathe and get warm. Instead, she began unbuttoning Marcus's coat and pulled it off of him along with his gloves and scarf. She hung them up then warmed her hands under her arms for a few seconds before helping Randall off with his coat, scarf, and gloves. Both men took their hats off their heads and hung them on the hooks next to their coats. Again she shoved her hands under her arms to warm them.

"You two get in there where the fire is and I'll have the chili ready for you in a few minutes."

She shoed them out, then proceeded to turn the stove back on medium to warm the chili sooner. She would have liked it to simmer a bit longer, but it would do. The next time they had it, it would be better.

Darla crossed the room to the living room and stopped to watch her two men. She stopped and realized she had labeled them *her* men. She thought of where she lived as home and now she thought of Marcus and Randall as her men. It felt right to her. For the first time she thought they might just be able to make a family with the three of them after all. Beyond that she couldn't even imagine.

She licked her lips and walked into the living room. The men both looked up and smiled. Her heart flip-flopped in her chest then lodged in her throat. It took two tries of clearing her throat before she could get out that dinner was ready. They didn't seem to notice as they pushed her along with them back into the kitchen. She ladled the chili into bowls and sat down to eat.

Once the dishes were put away some forty-five minutes later, Darla dried her hands on the dish towel and followed the weird shooshing noise to the living room. The couch and coffee table had been moved back from the fireplace and the beginnings of a bed lay in the floor. Both men were on their knees beside the not yet aired up bed. Randall plugged in a hair dryer and fit it in an opening on the side of the bed. Marcus held it in place as the dryer tended to blow the bed across the room as it inflated it. They were concentrating so hard neither one of them noticed her there watching them from the doorway.

"I don't remember it taking so dang long," Marcus fussed.

"You're just low on patience is all," Randall said.

Unable to stand it any longer, Darla walked into the room and plopped down on the couch. Both men looked up, and immediately, their concerned faces turned to smiles for her.

"Hey, baby. We're just about to get this thing up and ready," Marcus reported.

"It looks comfortable, but it will be a tight fit. Is it really a king-size bed?" she asked.

It really didn't look much larger than a double bed. She couldn't imagine all three of them fitting on it, but they assured her it would work.

"Yep, it's a king all right. A little snuggling will be fun," Marcus added.

Randall turned off the dryer once the bed would only give a little bit when he pushed down on it.

"If you don't like how firm it is," Randall began. "We can let some of the air out to make it softer."

"I'm sure it will be fine. Besides, I can always sleep on top of one of you," she teased.

Marcus growled and advanced on her. She backed up and then turned to run around the couch. Randall shook his head at her and Marcus and gathered up the bed linen and began making the bed.

"Truce," she begged. "Let's save this until the weather clears up some."

"You just want to wait until you can go outside to hide." Marcus clucked his tongue at her.

"Well, there is that," she laughed and eased around the couch on the opposite side of Marcus.

"Okay, truce...for now." He smirked and helped Randall stretch the comforter over the stack of blankets he had piled on the makeshift bed.

"Let's get ready for bed. I'll have to get up early and start shoveling again," Randall said.

Darla took the stairs intent on a nice soak before she went to bed. When she had the water running and was just sinking down into the blessed heat, Randall wandered in and sat on the edge of the tub. Darla's nipples peeked out from the water, and Randall took advantage of it by running the rough pad of his finger over them until they grew harder.

"Your breasts are lovely, pale skin with dusky pink nipples on top." He pinched one of them before flicking them with his thumb and forefinger.

Darla groaned then laughed when he lost his balance and nearly fell into the tub with her.

"Guess I better leave you to your bath. I'll be waiting in the bedroom to help you dry off." Randall held himself with his hands on either side of the tub and swooped down for a quick kiss. Then he walked out closing the door behind him.

Her fingers rose to trace her lips where he had kissed her. She tried to decipher her feelings for the two men. Every time they touched her, she grew weak with need. When they went outside, she worried and fretted over them. When they touched her, she fairly caught fire. It sounded like love to her, but she refused to believe it. She'd only known them a handful of days. Besides, they still hadn't told her how they felt other than to say they wanted her and she belonged with them.

The water began to cool, so she stood up and stepped out of the tub. She grabbed the towel and bent over to let the water out of the tub. When a hard groin pressed against her, she yelped in surprise. A hand came out to steady her so she didn't fall over into the tub.

"Easy there, baby." Marcus held on.

"You scared me. Don't do that," she complained.

"Sorry. I thought you heard me open the door."

"What are you doing in here?" she asked after standing up again.

"I'm going to dry you off," he said, looking innocent.

"Yeah, right. We'll see." She jammed her hands on her hips and cocked her head to look at him.

He took the towel from her hand and began drying her, making sure to get under her breasts then between her legs. No spot was left wet on her body.

"Can't let you catch a chill. I brought your underwear and a big T-shirt for you to put on," he said.

Darla smiled her thanks and found the pile of clothes on the closed lid of the toilet. He watched her as she dressed. He'd even remembered to bring a pair of the thick socks she liked. He was so thoughtful. It made her feel cared for. If only they would say the words, she thought.

Marcus opened the bathroom door and let her walk through first. Randall was already dressed in thermals. His hair appeared to be slightly wet.

“You’re going to catch pneumonia with your head wet like that,” she fussed.

“I’m going to dry it in a minute.”

“I’m going to take my shower now,” Marcus told her. “I’ll meet you downstairs in the living room.” He placed a kiss on her nose.

Randall crossed the room to pull her into his arms. The minute he touched her, Darla felt like she’d come home. His serious demeanor made her feel safe. Sometimes it got on her nerves how controlled he was, but for the most part she liked it.

“Come on,” she said. “Let’s get your hair dry. I’ll do it.”

Darla led him into the bathroom where her hair dryer was plugged up. She’d have to do without the mirror since it was once again fogged up. When she turned the dryer on, Marcus stuck his head out of the shower and grinned.

“Will you dry my hair, too?”

“Yes.” She laughed.

Randall had to sit on the closed lid of the toilet so she could reach his hair. The long tresses could use a trim, but she would mention that another time. Instead, she picked up the dryer and turned it on, using her brush to draw it out so the hot air could dry it. It took a good five minutes before she had his hair totally dry and by then, Marcus was out of the shower drying off.

“Don’t forget me,” he said with a grin.

“Never. Sit here and be still”

She didn’t miss the look he and his brother exchanged. Had she really said never? Never was a long time. Putting it out of her mind, Darla began brushing Marcus’s hair using a brush and the hair dryer on him as well.

“I’m going down stairs to check the fire,” Randall said and slipped out of the bathroom door. The cool air rushed in and instantly sent a shiver down her spine.

“Are you cold, baby? I’ll dry my hair, and you go get in the bed.” He reached up to take the brush from her.

“Sit still. I’m not cold. I just got a little of the cool air when Randall opened the door.”

He stiffened his jaw but didn’t protest as she once again began drying his hair. Though he didn’t have hair quite the length of Randall’s, he did have thicker hair. It took just as long to dry his as it had Randall’s. Once she had finished, she put away the dryer and turned around to find him looking at her with barely contained lust in his eyes. She felt the now familiar butterflies twittering around inside of her.

“Let’s go downstairs and get you comfortable on the bed.”

She followed him down the stairs and over to the air mattress. It looked like a giant pile of blankets, which is what it was. Randall sat on the couch listening to The Weather Channel again.

Chapter Nine

“Any change?” Marcus asked.

“Nope. Still predicting it will go south and pull down the frigid air as far south as Purple Creek. We’re about thirty miles north of them. I don’t think we’ll get any freezing rain, but the snow is bad enough.” The short reprieve they were going to get before it hit wouldn’t be enough time to do all the things that needed to be done.

“Damn. What a freaking mess,” he grouched.

“Might as well get some sleep. We’ll be up and down all night shoveling snow to keep ahead of it,” Randall said.

Marcus blew out a breath in resignation. Randall knew how his brother felt. It sucked to be them right then. Then he looked at Darla and realized he was wrong. They had her to come home to each day. Nothing could put a damper on his mind as long as she was around, he realized. With a smile, he walked over to where she sat on the foot stool in front of the chair. He pulled her to her feet and attacked her mouth.

She tasted like spring rain and vanilla. He dove into her open mouth with his tongue and licked along the roof of her mouth. She shivered and sucked on his tongue when he dove in again. She lightly scraped her teeth over his tongue before sucking his bottom lip into her mouth. Never had he enjoyed a kiss more, he decided in the back of his mind. There wasn’t much of anyone to compare her with, anyhow. They spent all their time on the ranch with quick trips into town for supplies. He wanted more, and he knew he could get it from her. As soon as he talked her into marrying them, then he would have everything.

They each climbed on the air mattress with them dipping low on it pushing Darla up in the middle. Every time they moved, it threw her up in the air. It surprised him when she didn't complain that they kept moving. She didn't seem to notice when he climbed out of the makeshift bed to go shovel snow several hours later. She rolled over and snuggled up to Marcus without waking up.

Randall stood there for several long minutes contemplating their future. With her in it, they were complete. He worried though that she would refuse their plan to marry her. She had embraced the two of them, but would she be willing to make it permanent? Throwing his head back, Randall blew out a breath and turned and walked away. That snow wasn't moving itself.

As soon as he entered the kitchen, he knew the electricity was off. The clock on the microwave was dark and the little night light next to the coffee maker was no longer on. Great, he thought. It would be at least twenty-four if not forty-eight hours once the snow began to stop and the town started clearing the streets with the snow plows until they got their power back on.

Pulling on his coat, gloves, and hat as well as the scarf, he took stock of his clothes and decided he would do. It had been really genius of Marcus to insist on a door in the kitchen that went out on the back porch. Had they not had it, they would have tracked in at the front door or in the backyard behind the stair case. Now he opened the door and walked outside struggling with the door to close it behind him. Finally he got it closed, and he turned around. The snow fell softly without the wind to blow it around.

He thought about the big freeze coming their way. Randall hoped they were overestimating the storm. He pulled the door closed behind him and nearly groaned at how much snow had accumulated not only on the porch, but along the path they'd dug through yesterday alongside the rope. His face grimaced as he tackled the first shovel of snow.

An hour later, he'd finished the back porch and had stepped off the porch to find himself waist deep in the crap. It took him another hour of struggling to dig a path from where he had jumped to the porch steps. A few snowflakes still fell here and there, but nothing like the blizzard of earlier. He shoveled around to the generator and started it up. It only took a couple of tries. They kept it well tended all year long.

Randall stomped the snow off his boots and quickly stepped inside the house where slightly warmer air greeted him. His gloves came off first, and he stuffed them in his coat pocket. He took off his boots right there, and then struggled with the scarf and coat. By the time he'd managed to strip down to his clothes, he was just as tired as if he'd shoveled snow another hour.

A hot cup of coffee would be welcomed he decided and set about to fix a pot. Marcus would thank him for it when he woke his brother. Smiling, Randall thought about how he would wake up. Usually he was hard to wake and equally tough to get out of bed. Since Darla had been there, he hadn't had to wake his brother up once. She was good for many reasons, but the fact that she made Marcus happy made him love her even more. Maybe he could wake her up once Marcus left. He just wanted to hear her voice raspy from sleep tell him good morning.

He waited until the coffee was barely dripping and slipped the pot out of the coffee maker and poured some in his coffee mug. He sipped the hot liquid and enjoyed the burn all the way down as it warmed tissues. Once he finished the mug of coffee, he rinsed out his cup and left it in the drainer. He could reuse it if Darla didn't put it up later. She tended to keep things spotless in the kitchen and throughout the house.

He poured a half cup of coffee into another mug and headed toward the living room. He found Marcus curled around Darla with his face buried in her neck. Resigned to the cursing his brother would do, he called his name softly and shook his shoulder.

“Marcus, get up. I’ve got coffee for you.”

After two more tries, Marcus finally turned over and eyed him, a pissed look on his face.

“Man, you know how to ruin a great dream.” He glanced over at Darla and sighed deeply.

“Sure hate to get out of bed and leave her,” he said.

“I understand, but it’s your turn to shovel. I’ll keep her warm. She will be getting up soon, knowing her.” Randall stood up and waited for Marcus to do the same.

His brother slowly slid from under covers and off the makeshift bed to land on his ass.

“Damn,” he said. Then he stood up and took the cup of coffee from Randall.

“We need to talk before you go outside,” Randall said.

“What’s up?” he asked.

“In the kitchen, I don’t want to wake her up.”

Marcus followed him into the kitchen, still buttoning up his shirt.

“I’m worried about why she left Mississippi, and I think it may have something to do with a man. I don’t want her thinking about that part of her life, and she is. Haven’t you noticed how she frowns sometimes and when we ask says it’s nothing?” Randall asked.

“Yeah, but what are you planning to do?”

“I’m going to check her references and see if anyone can tell us more about her. Maybe someone will know what happened to make her want to leave everything she knew behind to come up here.” Randall took a sip of the coffee.

“Man, she’s going to think we don’t trust her,” Marcus said.

“She doesn’t have to know. Besides, as employers, we have the right to check her references, right?”

“Yeah, but we told her we trusted her and weren’t going to check them.”

"I think knowing what is in her past will help us with our future with her. We'll know what not to do to upset her," Randall said as Marcus suited up to go outside.

"If you say so. Just don't let her find out," Marcus said.

He nodded and returned to the living room, where Darla lay warm and waiting for him in bed.

Randall quickly undressed down to his thermals and eased into bed next to Darla. He grinned at how warm she felt. She soon had him toasty, too. It wasn't long before he was fast asleep.

* * * *

Darla slowly woke from a restless sleep. She noted Randall was in the bed with her, so she figured Marcus was outside shoveling snow. He would be cold when he came in. She eased out of the bed without disturbing Randall. After handling the bathroom business, Darla dressed in warm ups, a pair of jeans, a shirt, and thick socks. As soon as she was dressed, she hurried back downstairs and into the kitchen. It proved to be even colder in there. She guessed it was because there were only two vents in the entire room. Then she noted that none of the devices worked. The electricity was off. She could have sworn Randall had coffee when he woke Marcus up.

No wonder it was so cold, she thought. How would she make coffee? She had an idea. She got a strainer out of the cabinet and put two and a half scoops of coffee into it. Then she put a boiler of water on the stove and sat the strainer over the pot so that the coffee was below the water. The gas stove was wonderful since the electricity was off.

After about five minutes of slightly boiling water, Darla turned the stove off and let the coffee steep for about ten minutes. She laid the strainer aside in case she needed to let it sit longer. Grabbing a mug, she poured a few swallows into her coffee cup and sipped at it after blowing. The coffee proved to be just about right. Smiling, she

discarded the grounds from the strainer and poured more coffee into her mug.

Unsure what she needed to do next with the electricity off, Darla sat at the kitchen table and surveyed her choices of what to feed the men. First of all, she needed to warm up the roast and take out the rolls. She rose and began setting up the boiler for the English peas. Maybe she should fix tuna salad for sandwiches. It would be a nice change for them. Grabbing four eggs from the fridge, she pulled out a pot and filled it halfway with water. Then she sat the eggs into the water while it started to boil. A few minutes later, she turned off the stove and let the eggs sit in the hot water for a few more minutes before she rinsed them in cold water.

She began making tuna salad, adding chopped-up onion, the chopped-up eggs, sweet pickles, and some mustard to the mix before she added the mayo. Once the tuna salad was finished, she really had nothing more to do until time to start breakfast. She looked at her watch and frowned.

She wondered how long had Marcus been out there.

Darla peeked into the living room and saw that Randall was still asleep. She tiptoed into the living room and then up the stairs, making sure she walked as quietly as possible. She needed a change of clothes. She had on the jeans over the last couple of days now.

She made it up the stairs without waking Randall up. The poor man was exhausted. He needed to sleep. Darla put on a new pair of jeans and her new blouse. She hurried down stairs when she was fully dressed and stood quietly in front of the fire. She added another log after standing there for a few minutes. Then she returned to the kitchen and sat on a bar stool. No sooner than she had, Marcus came stomping up to the porch. He opened the door then immediately shut it again.

"Damn, it's cold outside," he said.

“Shh, don’t wake Randall up. I’ll start breakfast while you clean up.” Darla started the meal, hoping Randall would sleep through the cooking part.

No sooner had she started then he came shuffling in with his nose in the air.

“Something smells good,” he said in a sleep-roughened voice.

“It will be ready in a few minutes. Grab some coffee, and you’ll feel better.”

Randall and Marcus discussed the snow and how much they would need to shovel out during the day. By the time they had finished breakfast, they had a plan in mind and Randall looked well awake.

“I’m going to take a shower,” Randall said. “I smell.”

Darla laughed, and he grabbed her around the waist.

“How about scrubbing my back?”

“Darla, don’t do it. Once he gets you in there he’ll have his wicked way with you,” Marcus teased.

“Hmmm, maybe I’d like that,” she returned.

Randall dragged her toward the stairs. She laughed all the way to the bedroom.

“Off with your clothes, wench.”

Darla made a big show of slowly removing her clothes. Turning around she bent over while she pulled her jeans off. She heard him growl behind her. She really wasn’t surprised when he gave her a swat on the bottom that stung just a bit.

“Hey!” She yelped and stood up.

“You’re taking too long. I’m already undressed,” Randall complained.

“You go ahead and warm the water up, and I’ll be in there in just a second,” she said.

Randall dropped a kiss on her head and walked into the bathroom to fiddle with the water.

Darla sat on the edge of the bed and finished pulling off her jeans after removing her boots. When she was nude, she strode into the bathroom to find him already soaped up.

"You started without me," she teased as she climbed into the shower.

"That's what happens when you poke around."

The second she was in the shower, he attacked. He pulled her into his arms spreading soap all over her chest as he did. When he took possession of her mouth, Darla didn't resist. His kisses were like candy to her. She craved them. He sucked her lower lip into his mouth and stroked with his tongue. All the while, his hands caressed and explored her body. When one of his hands found her breast, she moaned into his kiss.

"I want you all the time," Randall said. "Even when I've just had you, I still want you. You go to my head like fine wine."

He took her words away from her by delving into her mouth again and drawing her tongue out for him to suck on. She all but climbed his body, and he had to brace himself against the shower wall.

"Easy, Darla. We don't want to fall."

"I need you," she said.

"I'll take care of you, baby."

Randall walked her back to the back of the shower. His fingers delved between her legs as his mouth sought out her nipple. He latched onto it and sucked. She nearly screamed, it felt so good. His fingers found her opening and pushed inside then circled her clit. It wasn't long before she was fucking herself against his fingers.

When he removed them she cried out in disappointment, but he lifted one of her legs and aligned his hardened cock with her pussy. He pushed inside, and Darla muffled her scream against his shoulder.

"Fuck, you're tight," he said.

"Oh, God. You've got to stop."

"Why?" He continued pumping inside of her.

"No condom." She gasped.

He stopped and leaned his head against the shower wall. She felt his chest heaving against her.

“Hold on.” He dropped her leg and climbed out of the shower. When he returned a few seconds later he had one on.

“What?” she asked as her brows furrowed above her eyes.

“Nothing, baby. Just hated stopping. Now, where were we?” He took her mouth again and lifted her leg until she curled it around his hips.

* * * *

Randall plunged inside of her hot, wet pussy in one stroke. He captured her scream with his mouth, groaning as well. She made him feel strong and weak all in the same second. Her pussy sucked on his dick each time he withdrew.

He bent and picked up her other leg until she was suspended between the shower wall and his body, impaled on his dick. He picked up speed as his balls began to burn with the need to climax.

“God, you turn me on, Darla. I can’t get enough of you.”

“Please, please I need to come.”

Her pleading spurred him on, and he fucked her harder and faster until his balls drew up and cum streamed out of his cock and into the condom. He held himself inside of her for a few seconds as he caught his breath. Her chest heaved against his as well. He’d felt her climax just before he’d shot off. She’d squeezed him like a vise as her pelvic muscles milked him of his seed.

Randall slowly let her body slide down his and held her until she seemed steady on her feet. She looked up into his eyes with such emotion he wondered if it were love. Surely she had fallen in love with them by now.

“Looks like we both need to clean up now,” he said as he traced a pattern in the soap covering her chest.

“Your chest hair lathered it all up.”

He turned her around toward the shower head and helped her rinse off. Then he did the same. When they stepped out of the shower, Marcus was waiting with an extra large towel in his hands. He immediately took Darla from him and began toweling her dry.

“Am I next, little brother?” he asked with a smile.

“Screw you, bro. You can dry yourself off.”

Randall chuckled and watched as he snagged another towel to dry himself. His brother looked down on her with such love in his eyes that Randall didn’t see how she could miss it. Then maybe she just wasn’t looking, he thought. Maybe she really didn’t feel that way about them, so she didn’t notice how lovesick his little brother looked. It was obvious to him though.

Marcus finished drying her off and picked her up to carry her in the bedroom. He watched them go. Marcus kicked the bathroom door shut behind him to keep the warm air in the bathroom. He appreciated that. Randall took his time drying off so he could think.

He’d started the search through his lawyer doing a normal background check and told him to find out why she’d left Mississippi as well. He felt guilty now and wondered if he should stop it. It was done now, might as well go through with it. He would just make sure she never found out or he was sure she would leave them.

As soon as he was dry, Randall pulled on his thermals that he’d brought into the bathroom with him. They still hadn’t moved their clothes into the master suite with her, and he didn’t want to run down the hall in the cold for all his clothes. When he opened the bathroom door, the bedroom was empty. Evidently she had gotten dressed and they’d gone downstairs ahead of him. He hurried to his room and pulled on socks, jeans, and a clean shirt. Then he jogged downstairs to see what they were up to.

* * * *

“Hey. Wondered when you were going to come downstairs,” Marcus said. “I’m going to check e-mail and do a couple of things before I shut down the generator for the day.”

“Sounds good. What is Darla doing?” Randall asked.

“She is in the kitchen cooking again. Said something about chili I think.” He rubbed his hands together. “I’m all for it, too.”

“Chili will sure go down good after being outside all day,” Randall said.

“Randall,” he began. “Let’s go in the office. I want to talk, but I don’t want her to overhear us.”

“Sure. What’s wrong?”

Marcus looked troubled. They walked into the office, and Randall closed the door. He propped against his desk and waited while Marcus took a seat behind his desk. He turned on the computer to let it boot up.

“So?” Randall asked.

“Don’t you feel the least bit guilty about lying to her and checking up on her? I mean, what happens when she finds out? She could leave us, and what if she is pregnant? She could take the baby with her.”

Randall’s eyes grew large. He jumped up from his chair.

“We can’t let her do that.”

“I agree, but we are guilty of lying to her by omission,” Marcus reminded him.

“I love her, Marcus. It would kill me if she left us.” Randall rubbed his face with both hands.

“I know. I love her, too. I think it’s time we let her know how we feel, and then tell her what we’ve done. We should never have tricked her like we have.”

“You’re right. Damn!” He smacked his hands down on the desk. “Let’s tell her how we feel first, and then wait a day or two and confess about the background check. That way she will have time for it to sink in and maybe she won’t be that mad about it when we tell her the rest.”

“Okay, I can live with that,” Randall said.

There was a knock at the door. They looked at each other and closed their eyes. Then Randall walked over and opened the door.

“Um, I don’t mean to bother you, but one of the ranch hands is at the back door needing to see you.” She looked uncomfortable, and for a minute he was afraid she’d overheard them.

“Thanks, baby. I’ll check and see what they need.” Marcus shot out the door before Randall could.

“We were just talking about the horses. You’re not interrupting anything.” He pulled her into his arms and kissed the top of her head. He closed his eyes as he hugged her, praying they hadn’t done something she wouldn’t forgive them for.

“So, Marcus says you’re cooking chili for tonight.”

“Yeah, I hope that will be okay with you.”

“I love chili. The hotter the better,” he admitted.

She pulled out of his arms and frowned up at him. “I may not make it hot enough for you. You might have to add some hot sauce to it.”

“I can do that. Don’t worry about it.”

Marcus came jogging in. “Got a problem with one of the mares. She’s down.”

Randall cursed. “Okay, I’m on my way.” He turned to Darla.

“Keep the fire going. We may be awhile.”

“I’m going to turn off the generator, too, so watch your step around the house,” Marcus told her.

“You two go on. I’ll be fine.”

Randall took another look at her, then kissed her hard and quick before following Marcus to the kitchen to put on his gear. Having a horse down was a major problem. It could be anything. The usual problem was colic from bad feed. He would make sure they checked all the feed to be sure and not give any to the other horses if that was what it was.

Once outside, he took one last look back at the house then joined the ranch hand in the barn.

Chapter Ten

Darla had just turned the chili down to simmer when the electricity went off. Marcus must have turned off the generator, she thought. The rooms would get cold soon. She hurried up folding the clothes in the laundry room then put them up. It was a good thing Marcus had talked her into wearing a T-shirt under her flannel one. She already felt the cold seeping into the rooms.

Once she had everything finished that she could do without electricity, Darla put another log on the fire and curled up on the couch with a blanket. She couldn't read in the dark despite the fire in the fireplace. With the snow coming down like it was, there was little light outside to stream through the windows.

At least an hour had passed when she heard someone stomping at the back porch. She hurried into the kitchen wearing the blanket to see who it would be. Marcus pushed into the room closing the door behind him. A roll of snow followed at his feet.

"Damn snow," he mumbled.

"Is everything okay with the horse?" she asked.

"Don't know yet. Randall is working with her. Looks like colic, but we aren't sure how she ended up with it. All the feed looks fine." He shucked his outerwear and stuffed his feet into the loafers that sat under the coat rack for them.

"I'll boil some water, and we can make coffee," she offered. "It might taste a bit strong, but it will warm you up." She hesitated. "Unless you would rather have hot chocolate."

"Coffee, no matter how strong, will be wonderful. I'm going to get by the fire for a few minutes."

Darla cleaned up the mess on the floor from where the snow had blown in. It didn't melt, so she knew it was cold in the house. Next she put a pot of water on the stove and turned it on to boil. She located the strainer and put three small scoops of coffee into it. As soon as the water boiled, she would set the strainer with the coffee into the water. She hoped it would be palatable. She thought about her mother talk about doing it.

Thinking about that brought the memories of her mom and dad back. She'd lost them in a tornado when she was fifteen. Sometimes she could almost feel her in the room with her. Times like these she wished she had her to talk to.

The water began to boil, so she sat the strainer in the boiler and turned the heat down so it would simmer. More than likely it would be bitter, but it was the best she could do since they didn't have instant. She needed to put that on the grocery list for the next time they went into town.

Several minutes later she turned off the coffee and poured a cup for Marcus. She took a tentative sip of the hot liquid and nearly burned her tongue off. It wasn't half bad, but too hot to drink. Still, she carried it into the living room where Marcus was backed up to the fire.

"It's too hot to drink, but it's not too bad," she told him.

"Thanks, I doubt anything could be too hot right about now."

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"Helped them check the feed. Then I shoveled snow to keep the path clear. Hard to do with the wind like it is." He took a cautious sip and grimaced. "Yep. Mighty hot, but pretty good."

"Is there a battery operated radio around here?" Darla asked.

Marcus thought a few seconds then grinned. "Sure is. Wish I'd thought about that earlier."

He handed her his coffee and disappeared down the hall toward the office. A minute later he returned with a small clock radio with a handful of batteries.

“Needs batteries I think. I wasn’t sure what kind till I opened it up, so I brought a few of each. I figure it will take a *D* though.”

Handing her the batteries, he sat on the couch and opened the battery compartment. It was empty. He looked it over really well then held out his hand.

“I was right. *Ds*. Hand me two of them.”

Darla dropped two in his hand and watched as he loaded them into the clock radio. When he turned it over and switched it on static greeted them. He frowned and fiddled with the knob until he found a station that was fairly clear.

“Snow’s messing with the reception,” he said.

“At least it makes some noise. It’s really quiet with all the snow and all. I hear the wind some and the fire crackling, but that’s about it.”

“You can listen for weather reports for us while we’re outside. He stood up and stretched. “Speaking of which, I need to get back out there.”

She followed him into the kitchen where he donned all his gear once again. Before he opened the door he pulled her into his arms and kissed her.

“Love you, baby. Stand back so you don’t get covered in snow.”

Darla opened her mouth then closed it. He’d said he loved her. Or was it just a figure of speech? She stepped back so he could open the door and disappear into the snow. She shoved the door closed behind him then cleaned up the mess again.

What had he meant with that? Did he even realize he’d said it, she wondered. Her throat constricted at the implications. She couldn’t help the wide smile that bloomed. If he loved her, then maybe his brother would, too. Then she wouldn’t have to worry about needing to leave. A black thought crossed her mind though. *He* had said he loved her, too. Then he’d broken her heart.

She licked her lips and huffed out a breath. She wasn’t going to fall for anything this soon. How could they love her after only a few

days? But she loved them, didn't she? Wasn't that why she ached to hear them say it? It had only been a few days for her as well, but she knew in her heart she loved them both.

Nearly five hours later both men stomped into the kitchen strewing snow everywhere. She resigned herself to cleaning it up several times a day. There was nothing to be done to stop it.

"How is the horse?" she asked immediately.

"She's going to make it, but it was touch and go there for awhile. Getting her up was the hardest thing, but once we got her up, we could walk it out of her." Randall sat on the bench and pulled off his boots. He slipped into the loafers and standing up, stretched.

"Something sure smells good. We missed lunch, didn't we?" he said.

Marcus dropped his hat on a hook and walked to the stove to lift the lid on the pot and take a sniff.

"Why don't you two go warm up by the fire and I'll bring you some coffee?" Darla shooed them out of the kitchen and warmed up the coffee on the stove.

She carried two mugs of the steaming liquid to them and watched as they sipped it.

Randall grimaced but grinned afterwards. "Strong and good but a little bit bitter. How did you make it?"

Darla told him, and he laughed. "You're just full of surprises."

"I've listened to the radio off and on most of the day trying to catch some weather reports. The last one I heard was about thirty minutes ago. Said the worst of the storm was over, but there would still be another five or six hours of steady snow."

"Hallelujah to that." Marcus cheered. "I'm sick of this stuff, and we still have the rest of the winter to deal with."

"Yeah, but we only get a few storms like that where we lose power," Randall amended.

"It hasn't been too bad. I've had a couple of hot cowboys keeping me warm and busy." Darla winked at them.

“Who’ve you been letting in here when we aren’t around?” Randall teased.

Both men sidled up to her and squeezed her between them. She shivered but not from the cold. The two of them sported hard-ons the size of baseball bats. It thrilled her that they got that way for her.

“Seems like someone might feel neglected, little brother.” Randall ran a hand along her side stopping next to her breast.

“Think we should show her how much she means to us?” Marcus asked.

“Yeah, I think so.”

Randall pulled her into his arms and kissed her soundly. He devoured her mouth like a dessert and he was starved. She felt Marcus behind her. His hands wound around between her and Randall to unbutton her shirt. When he found the T-shirt, he fussed.

“Why did I suggest you wear that? Too many clothes on you,” he complained.

The two men began working together to get her naked. She soon found herself tucked between the covers on the air mattress while they undressed around her. Looking up she saw two massive cocks bobbing above her. She rose up and tried to lick them only to have them turn away.

“Uh-uh. Not yet. We’ll never last if you use that devilish mouth on us.” Randall climbed onto the bed next to her and began playing with her breasts.

“Crap! Your hands are like ice,” she complained.

Randall and Marcus both laughed. They pulled the blanket down and the cold air hit her wet tits, making her shiver. They immediately lowered their mouths and took a nipple to suck. Cool hands soon turned warm as they continued to mound them and play with them. Darla moaned as heat began to spread inside her. Little electric impulses sparked in her clit though neither man had touched her there. She didn’t have long, though, until a hand snaked its way down her

abdomen to her mound. She had no idea which brother was fingering her pussy lips, but she hoped he found what he was looking for soon.

Marcus ducked beneath the covers and she found out whose hand was teasing her slit. The younger brother licked his way down her abdomen and pelvis to reach her pussy. She felt his tongue against her clit, but it didn't stick around. Instead it followed the finger as it spread her lips and began to lap at the juices it stirred up.

Just when she got comfortably uncomfortable from their ministrations, Randall stopped sucking her nipple and straddled her chest. His massive erection tapped her on the nose. She laughed and Randall growled.

"Suck my cock. I'll teach you to laugh at me." Randall slowly fed his cock into her mouth, being careful not to choke her.

She swallowed around him, and he groaned. She loved hearing that when she gave him a blow job. It reminded her she had a certain amount of control over him. She sucked and nibbled him as he pushed in and out of her mouth. She reached up and found his balls. When he pulled nearly all the way out, she opened her mouth and pulled away from him to lick the sac. Then she drew one delicate ball into her mouth and tongued it until he was groaning above her. She opened her eyes and drew back to find him pumping his cock.

"Fuck, you have one wicked mouth, Darla."

She reached up and took his hard cock into her mouth again then began to suck in earnest. Until Marcus nipped at her clit, and she couldn't concentrate on anything but the pleasure eating her alive between her legs. She threw back her head and screamed as the climax began to wash over her.

Randall snatched his penis back before she bit it and chuckled. Then he sobered at the look she gave him when she opened her eyes again.

"What's so funny?" she demanded.

Marcus's head stuck out from the covers and glared at his older brother. Darla glared as well.

“Hey, I’m sorry, but you have no idea what it feels like for a woman to scream around your cock when it’s in her mouth.”

Marcus grinned. “Feels good, huh?”

“Let’s just say it tickles.”

Darla closed her eyes and tried to keep the laugh under control but couldn’t. It soon bubbled out of her mouth, and they joined in with her. They all collapsed on the air mattress and when they realized they were cold, they shimmed under the covers.

“I’m not finished with you yet,” Randall told her.

He rubbed his still hard dick back and forth across her mound. Darla smiled. He could do whatever he wanted to with her she decided. He and Marcus both could have her. She knew in that moment without a doubt that she loved both of them with all her heart. She almost told them, too, but decided that she would wait until they weren’t having sex so it wouldn’t seem like an “in the moment” sort of declaration.

Randall rose over her and began pushing his hard cock inside of her. He filled her with each thrust until he reached her cervix then pulled out and did it again. How she could take these men was a mystery to her. They were huge, and she didn’t expect that they could fuck her and she would still feel pleasure. But they surprised her. She found that she could take them without tearing apart.

“God, you’re sucking my cock inside of you,” Randall managed to say as he pumped inside of her over and over again.

The faster he drove into her the higher she flew. Any minute now she would explode. When it happened, she screamed her orgasm only to have Randall pull out and Marcus take his place almost in mid fuck. Dully, she realized he was pumping his cock over her chest where he shot cum across her breasts.

Marcus powered into her over and over again. Much to her surprise, her body rallied for another round. She didn’t think she could survive another orgasm like the last one, but no one had asked her. Randall leaned over and kissed her as Marcus lifted her legs over

his arms and began fucking her earnest now. His face was a mask of determination as he tunneled in and out of her. Warmth traveled up her abdomen again to pool at her clit. Each time his pelvis met hers his pubic hair rasped against her clit and sent shards of lightning deep inside her. Oh, God. She was going to come again.

The world tunneled down to the feelings bombarding her and the sparks jumping around in her body. How much more could she take?

“I’m gonna come,” Marcus warned her. “Randall.”

Randall seemed to know what he wanted because he reached between their bodies and found her clit and pressed on it over and over until she could no longer see past the lightning bolts dancing in front of her eyes.

A wet bath cloth ran over her chest, and she came to herself to realize Randall was cleaning his seed from her chest.

“What happened?” she asked in a raspy voice.

“You passed out, I think,” Marcus said.

She turned her head and found him dressed and looking over at her from the couch. He had a worried look on his face.

“Why are you dressed?” she asked.

“My turn to shovel some snow. I’ll be back in about an hour.”

“Be careful and keep warm,” she told him.

Marcus sank to his knees on the floor and bent over to give her a wet kiss. She reached up and grabbed his hair pulling him down for a longer one.

When he got back up, he looked much better. He’d been worried about her, she realized. It felt good for someone to worry about her.

“Don’t worry,” Randall began. “I’ll keep you warm till he gets back.”

She reached out to touch his bare leg. “Not if you stay out of the covers for very long. I don’t want cold flesh against me.”

He chuckled and tossed the bath cloth on the brick of the hearth. Someone had built the fire up to a roaring blaze. It felt good against

her cooled skin after having the wet cloth on it. She scooted down in the covers and pulled them up under her chin.

“No you don’t. Let me in. It’s cold out here,” Randall demanded.

She scooted over and let go of the covers just enough he was able to climb beneath them. He chased her over to one side of the bed before catching up with her. She yelped when he wrapped her in his arms. He was cold, but not as cold as she feared. In no time at all, they were both warm and drowsy. Randall fell asleep before she did as evidenced by the light snoring sound he made. She smiled to herself and enjoyed the noise. It sounded good to her. It was the last thing she heard before she slipped into sleep as well.

* * * *

Marcus stomped off the snow on his boots and hurried inside before too much snow blew in behind him. He cleaned up the mess then pulled off his gloves, boots, coat, and scarf. The kitchen was cold, and he hurried into the living room to find Randall and Darla fast asleep. He smiled, watching them for a few seconds before adding a log to the fire and stripping down to his thermals. He climbed into bed next to Darla with very little room to move. As it was, his ass was just about off the mattress.

“Hmmm, Marcus?” Darla murmured.

“It’s me, baby. Go on back to sleep.” He kissed her forehead then snuggled in, hoping to warm up soon so he could sleep.

Sometime around midnight, the sound of Randall getting up roused him. He realized he had managed to maneuver more space in the bed.

“What’s up?” he whispered to Randall.

“Woke up, so I thought I would go ahead and shovel some snow.”

“Man, it’s twenty below zero out there. Maybe you should wait until dawn anyway.” Marcus rose up on one elbow.

“I’ll be fine. Got some thinking to do.”

Marcus blew out a breath. When his brother needed thinking time, something was definitely up.

"I'll be out to spell you in a little while," he told him.

"No, keep her warm so she'll sleep."

"Guess that will depend on how long you stay out there, big brother." Marcus dropped back to the mattress.

"You always were a stubborn kid," Randall whispered.

"Back at you," Marcus said.

He watched his older brother walk into the kitchen. Long moments later the kitchen door opened and closed. The one thing he didn't hear was the wind. Good. He wouldn't get near as cold out there without the wind.

Marcus lay awake for awhile thinking about Darla and how much he loved her. He worried now about losing her because of their selfish decision. Hopefully, she would forgive them. That sure was a lot of hopeful thinking, he figured. He blew out a breath and turned over to hug Darla from behind. She hummed but didn't wake up. Marcus kissed her behind her ear then allowed himself to fall back asleep. He'd wake up before long and trade places with his brother. It was too cold out for him to be out there long.

Chapter Eleven

Snow fell softly to the already piled up mess in front of him. No longer was the wind an evil whine that seeped into your clothes and froze you. A deep quiet filled the land around him. Randall stood on the back porch listening to the silence. When he looked up, he saw patches of clear sky where stars peered down at him. It looked like the worst of the storm had passed.

The town would soon have the roads cleared, and when they could get down their road, they would be able to drive into town if they needed to. He vowed they would have more fuel for the generator from now on. When it had been just him and his brother, they hadn't worried about it, but with Darla there now, he wanted to keep her as warm as possible.

He stepped off the porch with the snow shovel and landed knee deep in frozen snow. Not only could he see his breath, but the frigid temperatures had frozen the snow until it was an icy, crunchy mantle of white covering everything. Shoveling it would be tough work. He got to work and slowly made progress with each shovelful he threw to the side.

He wasn't aware of how long he'd been outside, but his nose felt frozen, so he figured it had been long enough. Most of the thinking he'd gotten done centered around Darla and how to explain what they'd done with the least possible fallout. He wasn't sure that was possible. It would all depend on how she felt about them and what her state of mind was in when they told her. They needed to be sure she knew they loved her well before they told her. Starting today, he would make sure they proved to her how they felt.

About the time he reached the porch, the back door opened and Marcus stepped outside covered head to foot with clothes.

"Aren't you freezing your nuts off out here?" Marcus asked.

"Yeah, just about. I'm just going in."

"I'll dig for awhile. It looks like it might be over, doesn't it?"

"I figure so," Randall agreed. "Look, we need to be sure and tell Darla that we love her and make sure she believes it before we tell her about the background check. If we tell her before she knows we love her, she'll leave."

"I agree. I've said it, but she might not have heard me. I'll make sure she knows it. Maybe we should present a united front and tell her together," Marcus suggested.

"That's a good idea." Randall clapped his brother on the shoulder and climbed onto the porch.

He was ready to go inside and snuggle with her. Suddenly, all the thinking and talking about her leaving got to him, and he needed to touch her to be sure she was still there. When he opened the door, he smelled the coffee on the stove. Marcus must have made it for him knowing he would be freezing when he got inside. No sooner had he closed the door behind him when Darla appeared in a layer of clothes topped by sweats.

"Hey, you look frozen solid. You stayed out there too long," she fussed.

He found himself surrendering to her ministrations as she pulled off his coat and hung it up. He pulled off the gloves, but she unwound the scarf from around his neck and lower face.

"Hmmm, you haven't shaved in several days. The scarf is stuck to your beard." She smiled up into his eyes, and his heart nearly burst with the love he felt for her.

"How about you pour me some coffee, and I'll pull off my boots?" he suggested.

Suddenly, he didn't want to see all that love. Maybe later when he was prepared for it, but right now, it hurt to look at it. He pulled off

his boots and shoved his feet into the loafers. Darla brought him a hot cup of coffee and led him to the living room.

“You sit down and get warm by the fire. I’m cooking breakfast. It should be ready soon.”

She walked back to the kitchen and out of sight. He frowned down into his cup and swallowed the lump that had formed in his throat. Who was he kidding? She wouldn’t want to marry them and live like this for months at a time. If they didn’t ask her, she would probably want to leave anyway at the first sign of spring.

He sipped the coffee and winced. Not only was it hot, but it was bitter. He smiled. At least he had coffee. When it had been just them last winter, they went without more than they had it. They kept meaning to get instant coffee just for something to drink that was hot but never remembered when the time came to go into town and get supplies.

He heard something coming from the kitchen and strained to hear what it was. The soft notes of Darla humming to herself reached his ears. It didn’t sound like she was all that unhappy with everything. He shrugged and relaxed into the couch with his feet propped on the air mattress toward the fire.

A few minutes later, she returned with a plate piled high with eggs and bacon. He sat up straight and took the proffered plate with appreciation.

“Man, this looks good. I feel like I can eat it all, but I’m not so sure I can.”

“Eat what you can. You need it. Someone once told me that you needed all the fuel you can get to stay warm out here,” she said in a playful voice.

He lightly thumped her nose, and she laughed, leaning away from him.

“Do you think I should call for Marcus to come in and eat?” she asked.

"I don't want you opening that door for any reason. You'll catch your death dressed like you are." He hadn't meant to sound so rough, but he wanted to be sure she didn't chance it.

"Okay, I wasn't going to go out, just shout from the door, but I won't open the freaking door either." She frowned at him and stomped off.

He ground his teeth in frustration. He knew better than to yell at her. She'd as much as told him not to, and he'd done it anyway. He carried his plate into the kitchen where she was cleaning up the stove.

"Look, I'm sorry, Darla. I didn't mean to yell at you. It just scares me that you won't realize how dangerous it can be to get frostbite." He put the plate on the table and walked over to stand behind her.

She didn't turn around, but kept wiping at the stove with the dish cloth. "Fine. I understand. I won't open the door. It's too dangerous."

He heaved out a sigh and using her shoulders, turned her around to look at him. The tears in her eyes nearly broke his heart. He pulled her into a hug and ran his hand over her hair in a soothing motion. It soothed him even if it didn't sooth her.

"I'm sorry, baby. Please don't cry. I really didn't mean to snap at you. I guess it's all getting to me. Between the blasted weather and the horse going down, I'm snappish."

She sniffed and nodded her head. Randall pulled back and made sure she was okay before he let her go. She gave him a watery smile and pulled out of his arms. He held her there just a little longer and said the words.

"I love you, Darla. I wouldn't hurt you on purpose for anything."

She just stared at him for a minute then smiled back at him. "I love you, too. Now go and finish your breakfast. It's probably ice cold by now."

He squeezed her one last time and returned to the table where he sat down and ate. She was right. It was ice cold.

* * * *

A few minutes later, the lights came back on.

“Guess Marcus turned on the generator. He probably wants a bath and doesn’t want it to be in a cold house,” Randall said around the bacon in his mouth.

“I’ll start his food then. He can eat first.” Darla hurried over to the stove and turned it back on.

She added strips of bacon to the pan going in the oven and whipped up more eggs to scramble. About the time she poured the mixture into the skillet, Marcus walked in with a stream of icy cold in his wake. He grunted and shoved the door closed behind him.

“What? No heat? I turned on the freaking generator at least two minutes ago.”

“Ha ha,” Randall said.

“I’ve got your breakfast just about ready. Unwrap and sit down. I’ll pour you some coffee.” Darla fussed around until she had his breakfast sitting on the table in front of him.

She returned to the stove to clean it once again. Though she had told Randall it was okay about his yelling at her, she still felt a little sick at her stomach about it. She wasn’t sure why it bothered her so much unless it was because she did love him and didn’t want him angry with her. She’d told him she loved him back. Now she needed to tell Marcus as well. She couldn’t just blurt it out in the middle of his breakfast, but she couldn’t say it during sex either. He wouldn’t take her seriously.

She was so busy thinking that she yelped when Marcus suddenly grabbed her and hugged her.

“Thanks for breakfast. It was great.” He kissed her, and then, looking down in her eyes, he said, “I love you, Darla. More than anything, I love you.”

Her throat closed up with tears once again, but this time they were happy tears. She sniffed and squeezed him back.

"I love you, too, Marcus. I really do." He laughed and twirled her around.

She held on for dear life. When he stopped she had to hold on to keep from falling. Again a sick feeling developed in the pit of her stomach. It passed though once the dizziness was over.

"I'm going to take a shower. I'll be back down in a little bit," he said, giving her one last kiss.

When he'd left the kitchen and the sound of his boots on the stairs disappeared, Randall laughed.

"I think you've made him the second happiest man in Montana," Randall told her.

She blushed and sat down across the table from him. He looked tired, she thought. There were shadows under his eyes and lines at his mouth. The cold weather was taking its toll on him. When Marcus came back down after his shower, she would have to look and see if he had the same shadows and lines. It was a hard life even in modern times. It would mean she would have to be tough as well.

"Let's go watch TV while we have the generator going," Randall suggested.

"You go on, and I'll be right there. Let me get these dishes in the dishwasher so I can run it while it can."

Randall nodded and left her to her thoughts. Many of them were jumbled up in her mind. Like the fact that she loved two men at one time. Then there was her ex-fiancé and how he'd treated her.

She'd expected to marry him, and when she realized that wasn't going to happen because he'd lied to her, it had nearly broken her. The fact that it hadn't only proved that she hadn't really been in love with him at all. Could she trust her heart to know the real thing or not? Was there really a way to love two men equally? She felt the same amount of love for each of them, but it was different for each of them.

With Marcus, she loved his general good-natured demeanor and the way he made her laugh. With Randall, she loved how he made her

feel safe and cherished. He was someone she could depend on to do what was best. Both men appealed to different parts of her. Each held a special place in her heart.

She finished up with the dishes and turned the dishwasher on to run while they watched TV. Marcus had returned and was sitting in the living room on the opposite end of the couch from Randall. When she sat in the middle, they each moved over and sandwiched her in between them. Here she felt safe and secure and happy.

The weather came on, and they patiently waited for them to get to Montana and what they could expect. It looked like clear for the next few days with no expected snowfall for the remainder of the week.

“Thank God.” Randall breathed out.

“So how long until it starts to melt?” she asked.

Randall and Marcus looked at each other over her head.

“It doesn’t really melt, Darla. Some of it will go away, but for the most part, it doesn’t get above freezing at all during the winter,” Marcus explained.

“We’ll be able to go into town in a few days, but for now, it’s just us and the hands,” Randall told her.

“Oh. Goodness, I need more books to read then,” she said.

“Told you that you would,” Marcus teased her.

“You can get some when we go into town. Start another grocery list of what you need. It may be the last time we get there for awhile,” Randall told her.

“What do you all do when you can’t go anywhere, but it’s not actually snowing?” she asked.

Marcus laughed. “Well, we used to work outside some and then inside some. Then we watched a lot of movies on DVDs. Now, I think we might spend a good part of it in bed.” He laughed when she slapped his arm.

“Seriously!” He insisted.

She shook her head then turned to Randall. “Since it’s not actively snowing and it’s sunny outside tomorrow, will you take me around to

see the horses and cows? I've never seen Montana cows. I want to see if they look any different than Mississippi cows."

They smirked and tried to hide their laughs but didn't succeed.

"You two are terrible." She turned back to Randall. "Well? Can I?"

"We'll see how cold it is tomorrow around noon. If it isn't too cold for the clothes you have, we'll make a quick run through for you to see the cows," he agreed.

"And the horses," she reminded him.

"And the horses," he said.

* * * *

Several days later, after the snow plows had cleared the roads to town, one of the hands ran the mini-dozer they had up and down the drive so they could get to the street. Darla woke up not feeling well for the second day in a row. She'd quickly gotten over the sick feeling, and it didn't come back the rest of the day. Now, once again, she felt ill. She hadn't said anything to the men. She'd managed to make their breakfast without throwing up. She would do it again.

An hour later, the men thundered down the staircase and into the kitchen. They took turns hugging and kissing her as if they hadn't seen her in days. It all made her feel loved and cherished, but was a little hard to take with the way she was feeling. She swatted away their hands and turned back to the stove.

"Uh-oh, must be coming up on that time of the month," Marcus teased.

Randall laughed. "If I were you, I wouldn't be saying anything, little brother."

Darla nearly dropped the egg she was holding. Dear Lord. Her period. She hadn't had one last week.

Oh, God. Could I be pregnant? Surely not after only a couple of weeks. Besides, we used condoms.

She sighed and assured herself that she couldn't be. It was all the changes in her life that had her off schedule.

After breakfast, the men bundled her up within an inch of smothering her and led her outside to the truck. Randall had already started it and left it running to get warm. By the time they managed to shove her into the truck, she was already sweating from the thick layers.

"I'm going to suffocate if you don't let me pull some of this off in the truck," she complained.

"I'm not taking a chance you get sick. It's dangerous. You're not use to this kind of weather yet." Randall climbed in on the driver's side and checked her seat belt.

She felt like a little girl with all their hovering. She pouted just for good measure when Marcus settled in beside her grinning.

"Oh, stop it," she fussed.

"Stop what?" Marcus asked with an innocent look.

"Smirking."

"You look so cute. All trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey," he chuckled.

"Just wait till you are hungry again. See if I fix you anything sweet to eat."

"I'm sorry." He truly sounded it, too.

They talked all the way into town. The long ride was slow and took nearly twice as long as usual, but Randall was being careful. She knew he was worried about going in, but they needed more feed, as well as fresh produce.

When they drove into town, it looked like some sort of disaster area. There were piles of snow over the top of her head along the road and around the buildings. The snow plows had shoved it off the roads but had nowhere to put it, so the piles lined the streets. How in the world they were going to get anything was lost to her.

Once they parked, she could see that there were paths to and from the different stores where snow had been cleared. Marcus jumped

down from the truck and reached in to get her. He carefully set her down on the ground where there was gravel for her to keep her footing.

“Don’t move. I’ll be right back,” he said.

Darla heaved out a heartfelt sigh and stayed where he had planted her. She didn’t want to get them riled up in town, that was for sure. He circled the truck then came back around.

“Okay, I’m going with you, and Randall’s going to see about the feed,” Marcus told her.

“I can shop on my own, you know,” she grouched.

“I know, but you can’t negotiate the snow drifts with packages alone.”

The fact that he was probably right only fueled her fire of indignation more, but she would pick her battles, she decided. Instead, she held out her hand and let him lead her through the snow to the department store.

“What do we need here? I didn’t have anything on my list,” she said as Marcus opened the door for her to go in.

“You need more clothes. You don’t have enough of the right ones for winter.”

Panic set in. She didn’t have enough money to buy a shirt, let alone anything else. She hadn’t received her first paycheck yet.

“Really, I can get it later,” she tried.

“May not be back to town for weeks or even up to a month depending on the weather. Another storm like the last one could cover us up for a long time, Darla. You need more clothes.”

She pulled his head down toward her so she could reach his ear.

“I don’t have the money to buy clothes right now.” It embarrassed her, and she could feel her face growing red.

Evidently, Marcus saw it and understood. He hugged her and placed a kiss on her forehead before whispering in her ear.

“You don’t pay for anything anymore, baby. You belong to us. We pay your bills for you.”

Her heart dropped into her stomach. What did he mean by that? Was she their concubine or something? Maybe their mistress. Anger flashed at the idea she meant no more than that to them. When she started to open her mouth and tell him what he could do with his clothes, the nice woman who'd helped her with choosing boots before strode up.

"Hey, Marcus, what can I do for you today?"

"This is our fiancée. She needs some of everything."

"Well, congratulations. I bet your folks are happy that you're finally settling down," she said.

"Well, keep it a secret for now. We haven't told them yet. We kind of wanted to be able to do it face-to-face."

Darla swallowed hard around the lump in her throat. Fiancée? Had he really just called her his fiancée? They hadn't said a thing about getting married. Dare she hope? Darla drew in a deep breath and let it out quietly. As soon as Marcus stopped talking with the saleslady, she jerked at his coat arm.

"What, honey?" he asked.

"Fiancée? We haven't talked about marriage, Marcus. Don't you think we need to talk about this before you go telling everyone in town?"

"Sorry, baby. It just slipped out. I know we haven't actually asked you yet, but you said you loved us." He stared into her eyes. "You do love us, right?"

"Yes, I do love you both. I just think I should have been consulted before you start the rumor mill running."

"Okay, here we go, Darla. I can call you Darla, right?" the lady asked.

"Yes, that's fine." She gaped at the underwear the sales lady had brought over for her to look at.

"I think you can find what you like in this. It's all the latest in lingerie."

"Um, I don't think I need underwear," she began.

“Sure you do. Yours is all worn out,” he said.

Oh, he really didn’t go there, did he? She glared at him, and the saleslady cleared her throat behind her.

“Let’s move on to the jeans.”

An hour later, she had an entire new wardrobe much to her embarrassment. He carried the bags to the truck but made her wait inside the department store. The saleslady walked over and stood next to her as she looked out the window.

“They’re good boys. You’re mighty lucky they fell in love with you. Been a lot of women around here trying to trap those two for quite some time.” She smiled at Darla then hurried over to help another customer.

Marcus came back in and hugged her. “Let’s go on over to the grocery store. They have a little of everything if you remember. Should have some books and DVDs we can get.”

“I have my list of things we need,” Darla said.

“We’ll get those after we look at books and DVDs. We have plenty of time.” Marcus drew her along the salted sidewalks, making sure she didn’t trip or slide.

When they entered the grocery store, she immediately got the feeling someone was staring at her. She looked around as they each grabbed a buggy. Standing at one of the cash registers was the same teenager—well, she could be twenty-one, she supposed—who’d glared at her before when they had been there. She obviously had a thing for Marcus if not both of the brothers. If looks could kill, Darla would be six feet under. She smiled at her and pushed her buggy behind Marcus since he seemed to know where they were going.

He stopped in front of a large display of books and magazines. Darla sighed. There would be plenty to choose from. She’d get a couple of books and choose one or two DVDs. She was used to rereading the same books, so two books would do her just fine. She walked over to the shelves and began browsing.

When Marcus returned some time later, she had two books and two DVDs in her buggy.

"I wondered if you had gotten lost," she teased.

His buggy was almost full. He'd obviously been gathering groceries while she wasted time looking at books.

"Nope, just gathering what we need. I have a few questions about the list though." He held out the well folded list. "What does this say?" He pointed to Karo syrup.

"It's Karo. You cook with it." She looked at where he'd crossed out most of the groceries. "You should have let me help. I thought we didn't have to be in a hurry."

"We don't. I just didn't think you would want me watching over your shoulder, so I kept busy."

She felt petty now. He was being considerate, and she had fussed at him. What was wrong with her? That small kernel of a thought bubbled up inside of her again. Could she be pregnant? Surely not. She shoved the thought to the back of her mind and smiled up at Marcus.

"Good idea. Thanks. I found what I needed." She indicated the items in her buggy.

"Only two books? You need more than two," he fussed. "Find a few more. You should have at least six or seven."

"That's too many. They cost an arm and a leg."

"Money doesn't matter to you, Darla. We have plenty of money for you to get a few books."

"I got a few."

He huffed out a breath and walked over to the books pulling down a handful and dropping them into her buggy.

"Now, if you don't want to read those, you better replace them with books you do want to read. We're buying that many, so you might as well have what you want to read." He frowned at her and jammed his hands in his pockets.

Darla stared down into the buggy at the books. He was serious. She didn't need to look at his face again to know he was pissed. She picked up the books and replaced them on the shelves then chose four more books that she would enjoy and placed them in the buggy.

"I honestly didn't see any DVDs I wanted to watch that you don't already have. I picked out these two anyway." She raised her chin daring him to argue with her now.

"Fine," he said. Then he sighed and grabbed her.

He kissed her as if they weren't in the middle of a grocery store in town. She couldn't help but respond until someone cleared their throat behind them. Darla felt the heat suffuse her face. Marcus didn't seem the least bit uncomfortable about being caught making out in the store.

"Howdy, Marcus. Heard tell that you and your brother had found yourself a woman."

The man could have been fifty or seventy. He had work roughened hands and permanent squint marks around his eyes. His skin appeared leathery, probably from being out in the sun.

"Darla, this is Sheriff Tom Hobson. He's ornery and mean as a snake, but honest as the day is long."

Darla frowned at Marcus and held out her hand. "Pleased to meet you."

"Same here, little lady. What you see in them two boys is a mystery to me. Sometime when you're in town without these two underfoot, you stop by my office and I'll tell you some stories about them that will have you running for the hills." He smiled and nodded his head to Marcus.

"See you around."

"Bye, Sheriff Hobson." Marcus squeezed her against him. "We better get a move on now. See if you can find what's left on the list."

Darla quickly located the few items he hadn't been able to find or decipher. They wheeled their buggies to the checkout lanes. Much to

her disappointment, he chose the line with the young woman who obviously wanted Marcus for herself.

They piled everything on the belt, and Marcus went to the bottom of the conveyer belt to bag up the groceries as the jealous woman checked them out. Every time she looked up, the girl with a name tag that read "Kristy" glared daggers at her. She looked down at Marcus, but he seemed oblivious of it, so she ignored it, too.

When everything had been checked out and bagged up, Kristy smiled over at Marcus and gave him the total. Marcus walked back up to where Darla stood and pulled out a check which he filled out, then accepted the mile long receipt. He put his arm around Darla and ushered her out of the grocery store. He'd already pushed the buggies outside.

"Did you know that Kristy has a crush on you?" Darla asked.

"The girl at the checkout? She's just a kid," he said as they waited for Randall to make the short drive from the feed and seed store.

"Well, she obviously has a major crush on you." Darla liked the way his face turned pink. It wasn't hers turning pink this time.

Before she could say anything more, Randall drove up with the truck. He jumped out and gave her a big hug and kiss before helping his brother load up the groceries. She glanced toward the grocery store and noted that Kristy was at the window watching them. She couldn't help it, she waved at the girl. With obvious disdain, she turned away from the window and returned to her post.

"You ready, honey? I thought we would stop by the diner and have dinner," Randall said.

"Sure, that will be fine. I'm kind of hungry."

"You didn't eat much at breakfast. I figured you would get hungry fast in these temperatures," Randall said.

"I wasn't really hungry this morning." She shrugged and let Marcus swing her into the truck next to Randall. Then Marcus followed her up and strapped in. When she fumbled with her belt, he fastened it for her.

They each got the diner special of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans. Darla was starved, but found she could barely eat. Every time she put a spoonful in her mouth, she nearly gagged. It took her twenty minutes to take five bites. If the men noticed, they didn't comment on it, for which she was eternally grateful. She moved her food around on her plate to make it look like she'd eaten more than she had.

"You ready to go?" Randall asked.

"Yeah, I'm full." She prayed he wouldn't call her on it.

"Marcus, you pay up and I'll get her out to the truck." Randall stood up and helped her from her chair.

"Got it." Marcus dug in his pocket for tip money then headed with the ticket to the front counter to pay.

"You look a little worn out. Are you feeling okay?" Marcus asked.

"Yeah, just overwhelmed, I guess. It's like we bought out the entire grocery store."

Randall chuckled. "I'm sure it's like a foreign land to you. You'll get use to it in time." He helped her into the truck then followed her. "I sure hope you got some warm clothes. You didn't get nearly enough last time."

"I think you'll be happy. Marcus bought out the underwear section of the store."

Randall laughed and squeezed her. "Did you model it for him?"

"No! Are you crazy? There were other people in the store. I was embarrassed as it was."

"Now what do you have to be embarrassed about?" Randall asked, his brows furrowing across his forehead.

"He told the sales lady my underwear was worn out," she hissed, indignant all over again.

"Oops. I am sure that didn't go over real well." Randall tried to keep the smile off his face but failed miserably. She punched him in the arm, and Marcus opened the truck door to climb in.

"Is there anything else we need, Marcus?" Randall asked.

Marcus fastened his seat belt and shook his head. "Can't think of anything."

"Guess we can get on the road then. It's going to be a little tougher getting back since we'll be going uphill."

Darla didn't say anything. She was still trying to calm down after getting all upset over the underwear thing again. She wasn't usually so emotional about things. That kernel of an idea tried to gain a foothold in her subconscious, but she shoved it back down again. She wasn't pregnant. She couldn't be. They'd used condoms.

"What are you thinking so hard about?" Marcus asked her. His arm hugged her closer to him.

"Nothing, really. Just going back over the grocery list in my head to be sure I didn't forget something."

Marcus looked like he didn't believe her, but he didn't challenge her on it. Points for him. Randall, on the other hand, wasn't so believing.

"Looks like something more serious than that if you ask me."

"I wasn't asking you," she huffed out.

He harrumphed and continued putting all of his concentration on the road.

They arrived home at nearly five that afternoon. Marcus helped her inside then returned to help Randall unload the groceries. She was to stay inside and put them away. Then they would drive over to the barn and unload the feed. She methodically put everything away then did the same with her new clothes. She blushed all over again when she got to the underwear. Oops, excuse her, lingerie.

She had to admit the clothes would be much warmer and maybe now that she had thermal underwear, not lingerie, they would let her out of the house some when it was pretty outside. As it was now, she couldn't really say anything since her clothes didn't keep her warm outside.

Suddenly, her stomach heaved. She ran for the bathroom and was sick. Whatever was going on? Had she eaten something to make her

sick? Were Randall and Marcus sick? They'd all eaten the same thing, and they had actually cleaned their plates. Long minutes later she managed to get up from the floor by the toilet and wipe her face with a warm bath cloth. She brushed her teeth, which almost made her sick again.

Darla decided she should lay down for awhile. A nap would be nice, she decided. She would cook dinner in a little while. The men would be busy outside for hours yet. She pulled off her boots and climbed onto the bed. She pulled the blanket they kept folded at the foot of the bed over her lower legs and promptly fell asleep.

Chapter Twelve

Marcus filled Randall in on what all had gone on in the department store and later in the grocery store. Randall found himself laughing over most of it.

“She was so pissed about it,” Marcus said after telling him about the books.

“I suppose she feels like she shouldn’t spend our money. We need to set her straight about that.” Randall threw another bag of grain toward one of the hands.

“Yeah. I think she’s still trying to decide if I was serious about calling her my fiancée. I suppose I shouldn’t have said that without talking it over with you, but I wanted to be sure they treated her right.” Marcus dropped a bag into his brother’s arms.

“It’s okay. We should have talked to her before we went into town. We’ve really got a lot to talk to her about. I got the dossier from our lawyer. I decided not to read it. I put it in the desk drawer to shred when we have the chance. I vote we talk to her tonight,” Randall said.

“If you think so, then yeah, tonight is as good as any other.”

“If she was pissed over the underwear and the books, she’s really gonna be upset about this,” Marcus admitted.

Randall had a sinking feeling in his gut about the background check. He was sure it was going to bite them on the ass when it came out. He just hoped they could smooth it over with her. Surely she would understand they loved her and weren’t thinking straight. They just wanted to keep her with them. Then again, he thought, she might not understand at all.

It was past dark when they finally climbed up the porch steps and walked into the kitchen. They looked around and frowned. Everything was cold. There was no sign of Darla. Randall's first thought was that she'd left them. But he knew her car was in the garage a check in the junk drawer produced her keys. She probably knew they were there, but they hadn't told her where they were or even where her car was.

"Let's check upstairs," Marcus said in a near whisper. "She has to be there."

They climbed the stairs almost at a dead run and slid down the hall to the bedroom door. It was slightly ajar. Marcus reached the room first and flung open the door. Randall was right behind him. There on the bed was Darla curled on her side sound asleep.

"Guess we wore her out today," Marcus said in a low voice.

"Shhh, come on," Randall said, indicating they should step back out in the hall.

Randall closed the door behind them. He didn't want to wake her up.

"We'll let her sleep. Let's cook something easy and eat. Then when she wakes up, we can fix her something." Randall nodded toward the stairs. "I'm going to go cover her and then I'll be downstairs," he said.

Marcus nodded and started toward the stairs. Randall opened the door again and carefully walked across the floor so as not to wake her up. He gently settled the blanket around her, covering her from toe to neck. He stood there just looking down at her for a long few minutes. She appeared relaxed in sleep. He realized she hadn't looked like that during the day in several days. Something was going on. He wanted to figure out what it was, but they had agreed not to read the report. God, he hoped she wasn't regretting her declaration of love.

He backed out of the bedroom again and closed the door. Then he went downstairs to help Marcus fix something to eat. She meant so much to both of them. He hoped whatever was going on with her they could fix. The alternative just wasn't acceptable.

They ate in silence and then washed up the dishes. Randall went up and checked on her again. She hadn't moved from that spot. It worried him. Maybe she was coming down with something.

"I'm going to go check the horses. I'll be back in a little bit," he told Marcus.

"I'll watch for her. If she wakes up, I'll fix her something to eat."

Randall stepped outside into the cold air. The hills of snow on either side of the path looked like walls closing in on him. He decided he needed to talk to one or both of his dads. There was so much he didn't know about courting a woman to be your wife. He and Marcus both had played the field as teenagers and young men, but actually trying to win someone's hand in marriage was new to him.

After checking on the horses and spending a little time with the one that had been sick, he thrust his hands in his pockets and contemplated their options when it came to Darla. Nothing he came up with seemed any easier than another. Maybe it would be best to just tell her outright.

Finally he walked back to the house and found Marcus sitting on the couch watching TV.

"She hasn't stirred. I'm worried about her, Randall."

"Me, too. Let's get ready for bed and see from there how she is when we get in bed with her," Randall suggested.

"Sounds good to me." Marcus stood up and switched off the TV with the remote, then he followed Randall upstairs. "I'll shower in my room." He peeled off heading for his old room.

Randall eased the bedroom door open, and finding that she hadn't moved, he continued on into the bathroom. He quickly showered and dried off. The cool air hit him, and he had to restrain himself from jumping under the covers. About that time Marcus walked in with a towel around him.

"I'm freezing my balls off," he said.

"Me, too. Ease into bed though so we don't disturb her. She must need the sleep." Randall climbed into bed trying not to jar the bed.

Marcus slipped under the covers as well.

“Ah hell,” Marcus said.

“What is it?” Randall asked.

“She’s cold as ice. We need to get her clothes off and get her under all the covers.” Marcus rolled out of bed.

Randall slid out from under the covers and the two of them gently undressed her before settling her between them under the blanket. Randall checked to make sure his side of the electric blanket was on high. She stirred a couple of times when they were undressing her and again when they settled her between them, but soon returned to a deep sleep. Randall began to really worry now.

An hour later, he was still awake making sure she warmed up and didn’t have a fever. Her breathing was easy so he was sure she didn’t have bronchitis or pneumonia. Something was wrong though. She’d never slept like this before.

Early the next morning, he was jolted awake when Darla climbed over him and out of the bed. She ran for the bathroom and a few seconds later retching could be heard.

“Ah, hell,” Marcus said behind him.

Randall climbed out of bed and went to help Darla however he could. He wet a bath cloth and knelt beside her to wash her face. She didn’t look at him.

“Oh, baby. It’s okay. I’m here,” he soothed while he gently rubbed her back.

“God, my stomach won’t quit churning.”

“Easy. It will pass,” he assured her. He had a feeling their time had run out.

“I want to get up.” Darla tried to push away from the toilet but couldn’t seem to get her feet under her.

Randall scooped her up in his arms and carried her back to the bed. Marcus pulled her back into his arms, murmuring nonsense in her ear as he gently rubbed her shoulders. Randall eased back in bed, careful not to jar it. He wasn’t too sure if it would cause her to be sick

again. Seeing her hanging over the toilet scared him. He didn't like to think of her sick. Because he knew she was pregnant. It would explain why she was tired, not hungry, and grouchy at times. She would be upset enough about that without telling her about the background check.

He glanced over her head at Marcus. His brother had undoubtedly come to the same conclusion. He looked as miserable as Randall felt.

Around eight, Randall got up and dressed to see about the animals and meet with the hands. He needed them to handle the animals in the mornings now, and he'd take the late afternoons. He would be there for Darla if she needed him. It was the least he could do.

When he returned to the house, Marcus was in the kitchen pouring a cup of coffee. He handed it to Randall and poured another one for himself.

"She still asleep?" Randall asked.

"Yeah. She stirred a little when I got up but settled down again."

"We've got to tell her, you know," Randall said.

"I know. If she's okay to talk, we should tell her tonight," Marcus decided.

"You're thinking if we wait till night, she won't be able to leave, aren't you?" Randall watched the worry roll over his brother's face.

"Yeah, I guess so."

A sound on the stairs alerted them that she was coming down. Randall walked over to the doorway and waited on her. When she appeared he grimaced. She looked frazzled, and she wouldn't look him in the eye.

"Morning, baby. Did you sleep okay last night?"

"Um yeah. I'm sorry I didn't wake up to cook dinner last night. I think I might have a bug."

He led her into the kitchen and sat her in a chair. Marcus smiled at her and went to kiss her, but she pulled back.

"I don't want you to catch whatever I have."

Randall carried a glass of milk to her. He sat down next to her and turned her face toward him with two fingers to her chin.

“Baby, I think you’re pregnant. Don’t you? You have all the signs.” He watched her face.

“I can’t be. We’ve been using condoms. It has to be a virus.” She shook her head.

Marcus cleared his throat and drew her attention.

“Remember, that first time the condom broke. It only takes once. It will be okay, though. I promise. We’ll take good care of you and the baby. As soon as we can arrange it, we’ll get married and...” He trailed off.

“No, we don’t have to get married just because I’m pregnant. If I’m pregnant,” Darla said.

“Of course we do. Our baby will have our name and be respected,” Randall insisted.

Marcus nodded his head at Randall to get his attention. When Darla was looking at Randall, he shook his head at Randall to let him know he didn’t think they should tell her right then with her probably being pregnant. They needed to give her a couple of days to get used to the idea before they hit her with the other.

Darla looked back and forth between the two of them and frowned.

“Besides, we don’t know that I am pregnant. I need to take a test.”

“We’ll get one in town tomorrow,” Randall assured her. “I’ll go myself and get one while Marcus stays here with you in case you need anything.”

“I just can’t believe I could be pregnant after one time,” she fussed, wringing her hands. “Oh, Lord.” She fingered the glass of milk, obviously worried.

Randall wondered what this would mean to their plans to marry her. Would she let them now? She’d already balked when they’d suggested it earlier. Surely she would settle down and realize that their love didn’t change just because she was pregnant.

The rest of the morning went by with Darla carrying on as if nothing was wrong. After lunch, she went upstairs to take a nap. Randall figured that would be what her routine would be like from now on. Marcus could take care of her in the afternoons when he checked on the ranch. He'd be there for her in the mornings should she need anything.

The more he thought about a baby, the more excited he became. Then he remembered they still had to tell her they'd had her checked out. She would be furious with them for lying to her. She'd get past it, though, he was sure, especially if she really was pregnant. She'd want her baby to have its fathers.

Now he wondered if he needed to shred the papers or hand them over to her unread. He hadn't broken the seal. Surely that would account for something. All he could do was hope.

* * * *

Early the next morning, Darla woke up again sick to her stomach and raced for the bathroom. She heaved until she couldn't anymore. Randall and Marcus were right there with her, holding cool clothes to her head and neck. They picked her up once she was finished and carried her back to bed, where they cuddled her until she fell back asleep.

Once she woke up for good, she showered, dressed, and eased down the stairs. Randall and Marcus were talking in the kitchen when she walked in. They stopped talking to stare at her.

"What?" she asked, suddenly self-conscious.

"You just look so beautiful, baby," Marcus said and pulled her in for a kiss and a hug.

Randall pulled her from his brother's arms and kissed her as well.

"I'm on my way to town. Do you need anything else while I'm there?" he asked, rubbing up and down her arms.

"No, I can't think of anything."

“Get those prenatal vitamins they have while you’re there. She needs to be on those from day one,” Marcus told him.

“I might not be pregnant!” she shouted, then frowned at her obvious temper tantrum.

“It won’t hurt to be prepared in case you are,” Marcus told her.

“I’ll be back as soon as I can. If you need anything at all, let Marcus help you, baby. Okay?” Randall leaned in for another kiss.

“Okay,” she sighed.

She watched Randall pull out of the drive in the truck. She had plenty of chores to keep her busy all morning. Between the washing, fixing lunch, and preparing something for dinner, she would keep her mind occupied and away from that niggling feeling that they were right and she really was pregnant.

Around lunchtime, she figured Randall would be home soon and went in search of Marcus. He wasn’t in the office, so he would probably be out in the barn. She’d have to wait until he came in to fix the sandwiches.

Before she got out of the office, the phone rang. She raced to Randall’s desk and picked it up.

“Hello?”

“Is Randall in?” a male voice on the other end asked.

“No, he’s in town but should be back at any time now. Can I take a message?” she asked.

“Please.”

She scrambled, trying to find something to write with. Not a pen lay in sight. She pulled open his drawers, thinking to find one in them. Instead, she found a sealed envelope with her name and social security number on it as well as a lawyer’s insignia.

“Ma’am? You still there?” the voice on the other end of the phone asked.

She grabbed at a pen and told him to go ahead. She took his name, and number, and left it on the desk. After she hung up, she pulled the envelope out and sat down in Randall’s desk chair.

Why would they have an envelope with her social security number on it? Why was it sealed? She'd filled out the paperwork they'd given her. They claimed they didn't need to check her references. What would be in that envelope other than information about her? Why would they use a lawyer to find out anything about her? They could have just called the phone numbers.

She fumed and huffed out a breath. They'd lied to her. She tore open the envelope and began reading all about her miserable life. Every little detail was in there, including her indiscretion with her ex. Everything. Tears threatened to fall, but she held them in. She wasn't going to break down. She wanted to throw it in their face for lying to her.

She heard Randall's truck pull up in the front yard. Now that he was home, she just needed Marcus to come in and she could confront the bastards about it. How dare they! Fury had her heart racing and her hands shaking as she folded the envelope of information and stuck it under her arm. She picked up the phone message for Randall and left the office to find them.

* * * *

Randall walked in the house. Something didn't feel right. He didn't hear anyone, for one thing. Then Darla came out of the office and held out a note to him.

"You have a phone message. I'll be in the kitchen getting lunch ready. See if you can find Marcus and come eat." She breezed out again.

What was up with her? She hadn't so much as hugged or kissed him. He didn't like this one bit. Randall folded the paper and stuck it in his pocket, then went in search of Marcus. Maybe he knew what in the hell was going on.

Randall found Marcus outside with the foreman talking over the weird behavior of one of the horses.

“Hey, you’re back. Did you get everything?” Marcus asked.

“Yeah. What’s going on with Darla?”

“What do you mean? She was fine when I left her in the kitchen. I just ran out here for a few minutes to look at one of the horses.” Marcus began to panic and head for the house.

“Whoa, she’s fine physically, but she’s acting weird. She didn’t kiss me or hug me when I got home.”

“I don’t know. She was fine with me. Maybe it’s just pregnancy hormones,” Marcus suggested.

“Maybe.” But Randall didn’t think so. Something was wrong.

“We’re supposed to come in for lunch now.”

“I’m ready.” Marcus waved off the foreman and followed Randall in the house.

They shook off the cold and undressed from their outside clothes. The table was set, and there were sandwiches in each plate in Ziploc bags. There were chips and their iced tea sitting in front of them, but there were only two plates.

Randall figured she must still be feeling queasy. He looked around for her in the laundry room but didn’t see her. Then he yelled down the cellar steps, but the light was off, so he knew she wasn’t there either.

Just as he began to panic, she walked in and slammed down an envelope, crumpled, but looking strangely familiar. His heart sank.

“Why did you have me investigated? You could have just called my references like I told you to. Were you making sure I would be good enough to be your woman? Your wife?” she yelled.

“Baby, we did it because we were worried you were running from someone and might need help. You were so secretive about why you left Mississippi that we worried you’d up and leave us if trouble came. We didn’t want to lose you, Darla.”

“Like that makes everything okay. I should have known it was too good to be true,” she said. She crossed her arms, an angry look on her face.

“You’re not any better than my ex-fiancé. You lied to me just like he did.”

Darla burst into tears and raced out of the kitchen. Randall followed her, afraid she would do something crazy. He raced up the stairs only to be closed out of the bedroom. He stood there a few seconds, then opened the door only to find the bathroom closed and locked.

“Baby, please let me in. I know what we did was wrong, but we were scared you would leave instead of letting us help you.”

He could hear her crying behind the door. It tore him up inside to know they had hurt her so badly. What could he do to get her to forgive them? The crying turned to muffled sobs. This couldn’t be good for the baby either. Marcus appeared in the bedroom doorway, a stricken look on his face.

“She’s not going to forgive us, is she?” he said.

“She will. It will just take time,” Randall assured him. Inside, he didn’t feel so sure though.

“Maybe we should leave for a little while until she calms down,” Marcus said.

Randall figured he was right. He nodded his head and turned away from the bathroom door. They would go out and check the cattle and horses and give her some time alone to think. Although, he wasn’t sure letting her think about it was a good idea.

Randall walked through the doorway, making sure Marcus followed him down the stairs and into the kitchen. They pulled on their coats and gloves after shoving their feet into their boots. Once they were out in the barn, Randall’s heart dropped. They were going to lose her. He would hide her keys so she couldn’t leave. He should have done that to begin with. Then he thought better of it. That wouldn’t be any better than having her investigated like a criminal.

“Randall? She’s going to leave us, isn’t she?”

“I don’t know.” He didn’t want to put it into words as if that would make it so, but deep down in his heart, he knew she would.

They checked the horse in silence and then followed the fence line around to where the water troughs were to break the ice. It had already been taken care of though. He figured they could walk on around to the bunkhouse and check in with his foreman again.

It hit him then. She'd said she had an ex-fiancé. They hadn't known about that. It was probably the reason she'd fled Mississippi. It was also the reason she was so upset. They had proved to be just as bad as or worse than her last lover. He groaned just thinking about it. He wondered what the ex had done to her for her to come all the way to Montana. Surely it was worse. But he didn't believe it.

They found his foreman and one of the men working on the mini-dozer, the noise from the engine making it nearly impossible to talk. His foreman held up his finger indicating he needed just a few minutes more. He watched them work on it. Marcus paced around the machine, obviously restless and upset.

Finally, they cut the engine and greeted them. They went over how things were going and discussed the strategy for the next big snow. It kept him from thinking about Darla for a few minutes anyway. Then he and Marcus continued around the fence line until they came to where the cattle were eating out of the troughs. The water here had been take care of well.

Satisfied everything was good, at least with the ranch, he walked back around toward the house. Marcus hadn't spoken since they'd left the barn. Randall knew he was mulling everything over in his head. They walked into the house after stomping the snow off their boots. Peeling off his coat and gloves, Randall sat on the bench and pulled off his boots. Marcus did the same.

"Marcus, we'll make it all right somehow," he finally said.

"Even if she forgives us, she won't forget it." Marcus dropped his boot to the floor with a loud plop.

Randall remembered he wanted to hide her car keys and pulled open the junk drawer to look for them. He couldn't find them. He

nearly raked everything out on the floor looking for them. They weren't there.

"What is it?" Marcus asked watching him.

"Her car keys are gone."

They looked at each other then ran for the stairs. Marcus beat him to the bedroom. He flung open the door and went to the closet.

"They're gone," he said. "Her clothes and suitcase are gone." Marcus sounded close to tears.

"Shit. She doesn't know how to drive in the snow," Randall said. "We've got to catch up with her."

Marcus said nothing but raced out the door and down the stairs. Randall caught up with him outside climbing into the driver's side of the truck.

"Marcus, I'm driving. Get in on the other side and don't argue. We don't have time for it."

His brother cursed but stepped down and ran around to the other side. He hardly had his door closed before Randall had the truck in gear headed for the drive. Randall struggled with his seatbelt as he drove. He slowed down when he fishtailed, realizing they couldn't stop her if they ended up in a ditch. The thought of her careening into a ditch filled his head, making him curse silently. He didn't want to alarm his brother, but he needed him to watch the ditches to be sure they didn't miss her. Some of them were fifteen and twenty feet deep.

"Marcus, watch the ditches in case she slid off the road. I can't drive and look."

He heard Marcus curse, knowing he was now picturing it as he had. He had a sinking feeling when he noticed how the tracks ahead of him veered back and forth across the road. She wasn't handling the car well at all. He knew she didn't have tire chains on, so she couldn't get a lot of traction on the icy road. He prayed that God would watch over her and keep her on the road until they could find her. Somehow, though, he knew she was in trouble. He risked increasing his speed

and told Marcus to hold on. He had to get to her before something happened to her.

Chapter Thirteen

Darla fought the wheel to keep the car on the road. It didn't help that she couldn't quit crying. Through teary eyes, she worked hard at negotiating the snow and ice. Maybe it hadn't been such a good idea to leave right now. She didn't know how to drive on icy roads, and she didn't know her way around either. What if she made the wrong turn? She hadn't driven since she took the job.

A fresh wave of tears flooded her eyes just thinking about that first night. They had been so insistent that she stay there that night. How had they planned to use the information they had to keep her there? Did they think they could learn from someone else's mistakes? All they had to do was be honest with her.

The car slid toward the bridge rails, stopping when it hit gravel. She made the mistake of gunning it and slid to the opposite side. She was going to get herself killed if she didn't pay more attention, but thoughts of the brothers' faces when she'd last seen them forced themselves into her memory. They'd looked so defeated. Well, of course they would, she groused. They'd screwed up, and they knew the gig was up. But, deep down she knew they looked repentant as well. Maybe they really did love her, she thought. Darla shook that out of her head. They'd lied to her, pure and simple. They'd lied just like her bastard of an ex-fiancé.

There were deep gullies on either side of her. How deep she didn't know with how high the snow was piled up. If she slid off into one of them, she could be covered with snow and no one would find her for days, maybe weeks. It was almost enough to have her turning around.

Except she was sure she couldn't turn around on the slick road. Panic set in as she inched along. Maybe this hadn't been such a good idea after all. She hadn't been thinking straight at the time. She should have waited until she wasn't so upset to leave. Then again, if she had waited, they might have hid her keys so she couldn't leave. She realized she had probably gotten herself out of hot water only to jump into the fire. She hadn't been thinking when she grabbed her suitcase and packed her clothes. All she could think about was what they had done.

"You knew you couldn't trust a man, Darla, but you went ahead and trusted two anyway."

The car slid again, this time actually hitting the guardrail before she stopped. Her heart was in her throat, and it took her several long seconds to catch her breath. She carefully eased away from the guardrail and continued down the road, trying to be extra careful.

"You've gotten yourself into a real mess now."

Not only was she probably pregnant and alone, but she didn't have a job or any money. Where was she going to go, and how would she live?

"You'll get out of this just like you got out of the last mess," she told herself.

"But how do you stop loving someone?"

Darla realized she'd never really loved her ex. She loved Randall and Marcus with all her heart. She couldn't deny it. Even now her heart wanted to forgive them and return to the ranch. Her brain said no.

No way would she be able to trust them again. They'd just break her heart again.

"You can't trust them," she told herself over and over.

She risked a glance in her rearview mirror to be sure they weren't already following her. She'd heard them go outside after she'd barricaded herself in the bathroom. It had been her one chance, she decided. They would be gone awhile planning their next round of

deceit. She'd flung everything that would fit into one suitcase because she didn't think she could risk going back for a second one and she sure couldn't carry two down the stairs. Her only regret was that she hadn't been able to take her beloved books with her. She would replace them once she was on her feet again.

"I'll be fine once I get away," she insisted. But she knew raising a child alone would be a big hardship.

She would never contemplate an abortion, and she knew she couldn't give the baby up for adoption. She'd just have to find a job and save up her money for when she couldn't work. She could do it. She was strong enough.

An image of the brothers flashed into her mind. Would her baby look like them? She didn't even know which of them was the father. That bothered her almost as much as leaving did. Not knowing the father of her baby made her a tramp, didn't it? She couldn't believe she'd actually slept with both of them—and at the same time at that.

Suddenly, a deer shot out of the tree line to her left. She slammed on the brakes and missed the deer only to start sliding in circles in the middle of the road. She veered off one side rail only to hit the opposite one, going through it and down into the snow hidden ditch. Her head hit the steering wheel then bounced off the driver's side window. She heard grinding metal and then nothing.

* * * *

"Look at her tracks, Randall. She's all over the road." Marcus leaned forward to see better.

He feared they would be too late. The way she was driving, she wasn't going to be able to stay on the road for any length of time. What worried him was that they could be too late getting to her. If she were hurt in these temperatures, it wouldn't be long before shock set in and then... He didn't want to think of what would happen.

"Watch both sides for her tracks," Randall said.

Marcus could almost feel the tension radiating off of his older brother. They just had to find her soon.

“Damn, it’s getting harder to see her tracks now. The wind is kicking up, blowing the snow.” Marcus gripped the dash.

“Keep looking. I’m scared to go too fast or we’ll end up in a ditch ourselves.” Randall’s knuckles were white from gripping the steering wheel.

Marcus tried to put the what-ifs out of his mind so he could concentrate on following the tracks and watching for her car. The little car wouldn’t offer her much safety if she ran off into one of the ravines that lay on either side of the winding road. He couldn’t help but wonder how fast she was going. Did she realize what kind of danger she was in? Marcus tried to relax his jaw from where he was clenching it. He would crack a tooth if he didn’t relax some. But how could he relax knowing the woman he loved might be hurt or dying somewhere out there?

“Damn, Randall. I can’t see her tracks anymore. The wind has blown the snow all over the road.”

“Look for where a lot of snow might have been knocked off the road,” he suggested.

“Hell.” Marcus drew in a deep breath and concentrated on the edges of the road for any sign a car might have gone off it.

After what seemed like hours later, Marcus spotted where a large amount of snow had been knocked off the road. Evidently his brother had noticed it at the same time he had.

“I see it,” Randall said as he pulled the truck over as close to the edge as he dared.

Both men jumped out of the truck to look down the ravine. He could see the path the car had taken, but he couldn’t see the car at first. He started to climb down, but Randall grabbed his shoulder and stopped him.

“You’ll step off into a snow hole, and I’ll be fishing you instead of looking for Darla. Get the rope out of the back. We’ll tie it to the bumper and use it as an anchor.”

Marcus hurried back to the truck and grabbed the rope out of the back. Then he tied it to the bumper of the truck. He handed the rest of the coiled rope to Randall and watched as his brother threw it out and down into the snow. The rope hit something that clanged and stopped.

“Must be the car,” Randall said. “It gives us an idea of where to start looking. Remember, don’t step off without holding on to the rope. There is no telling how deep this is.”

“I’ve got it. Let’s just get down there. Time is wasting.”

Randall nodded and, grabbing the rope, began the long journey down. Marcus waited until his brother was almost all the way down before he took hold of the rope and lowered himself as well. He heard when Randall’s boots hit metal. Someone’s car was down there all right. Unfortunately, it was probably Darla’s.

He continued down and landed next to where Randall knelt brushing off snow. It looked like he was uncovering a door. The car was on its side. He fell to his knees and began brushing off the snow as fast as he could. The window to the passenger side emerged intact. He peered inside and groaned. The driver’s side window was broken as was the windshield. Snow poured inside until only her shoulders and head were above it.

“Randall,” he began.

“I know. We have to hurry. Looks like the windshield is the best place to get inside. Start getting rid of the snow as best you can.”

Randall grabbed the rope and eased off the car to climb through the broken windshield, careful not to put any pressure on Darla. Snow kept trickling in now that they had unsettled it. Marcus stopped long enough to see Randall climb through the hole and inside with her. He reached down to feel for a pulse then gave Marcus a thumbs-up. Marcus let out a quick breath in relief. They needed to get her out of there and quick.

He scooped armfuls of snow off the car by leaning over the edge. He wanted to be the one inside with her. But Randall was the oldest and had a greater knowledge of first aid and safety than he did. He had moved as much snow as he could without falling head first into the mess. Now he watched his brother work to get their woman out of the car.

One thing he knew was that it could be dangerous to move her without using some sort of backboard, but exposure posed the greatest threat now, so they couldn't wait for an ambulance to get there. Besides, they couldn't get reception to call out where they were now. He heard Randall, curse and his stomach took a nose dive.

"What is it?"

"She's stuck behind the steering wheel. I'm can't get her out without pulling on her," Randall said.

"You've got to do it. Every second she's in that snow is counting down her chances of surviving, Randall."

"Don't you think I know that?" his brother yelled.

He seemed to realize he had yelled and apologized. "I'm sorry, Marcus. I'm just so damn worried and frustrated."

"I know. Just do the best you can. I'm up here, so when you get her out from behind the steering wheel, I can help haul her out and on the side of the car." Marcus knelt on the car watching his brother.

Randall turned her on her back and wrapped his arms under her arms and pulled her out from under the wheel. She didn't make a sound despite how much it had to hurt. Once Randall had her out of the car, he picked her up in his arms and handed her up to Marcus. Marcus rolled, pulling her up and out of Randall's arms. She landed on top of him. When Randall managed to climb back up using the rope, he checked her over.

"She's got a huge knot on the side of her head where she must have hit the side window. Looks like several cuts on her face and in her scalp. That would be from the shattered glass." Randall continued his evaluation until he was satisfied with what he found.

“She’s got a concussion, I’m sure, and the cuts. The one on her forehead would have bled like a stuck pig if the snow hadn’t stopped it.”

“How are we going to get her up the side of this blasted ditch?” Marcus asked.

Randall studied the problem for a few seconds then appeared to come to a conclusion. His brother was good at figuring out stuff.

“Okay, you go on up using the rope. Then get in the truck and slowly pull us up when I tell you I’m ready. I’m going to wrap the rope around us, and I’m going to carry her up. Listen for my directions in case I need you to stop for some reason.” Randall began gathering up the rope.

Marcus hurried up the side of the ravine, losing his footing once. Once he made it to the top, he climbed in the truck and waited for Randall’s word. The seconds slowly slid by. He was about to get out and go see what was taking so long when Randall called out to bring them up slow and easy. Marcus put the truck in reverse and slowly backed the truck up until he heard Randall call out to stop. He shoved it into park and raced over to the edge to help Randall get Darla up and over the edge.

For the first time, he held her cold body next to his. He felt for a pulse and though it was thready, it was there. He had hope. Maybe they got to her in time.

Randall fooled with the rope. Marcus called out from where he’d climbed in the truck with Darla.

“We need to get her to the hospital fast.”

“I’m getting the rope off the bumper so we don’t end up with it in the undercarriage. That would slow us down.”

Marcus knew he was right, but he didn’t have any patience. Not with her cold body lying in his arms.

Randall got in the truck with a blanket from the back seat and wrapped it around Darla. Then he climbed inside and turned the heat on full blast. He shoved it in gear and raced down the road toward the

hospital. He had to slow down several times so that they didn't slide off the road themselves.

"Damn, now that she is warming up, her wounds are starting to bleed again," Marcus said.

"We should be to Main Street in five minutes," Randall said.

"Well, when you get there, if the roads are okay, floor it." Marcus applied pressure to the cut on her forehead that had started to bleed.

By the time they reached the hospital, Darla was shivering. Randall assured Marcus it was a good sign. They pulled into the ambulance entrance of the hospital emergency room and a nurse ran out the door along with someone with a gurney.

"What do you have?" the nurse asked.

Marcus didn't want to relinquish his hold on Darla but knew the nurses would take care of her.

"She ran off the road into a ravine. Don't know how long she was there, but she was covered in snow, so she's probably suffering from exposure." Randall filled them in.

Marcus followed them into the emergency room when Randall handed him the keys and told him to move the truck. It grated on his nerves, but he knew the truck needed to be moved. Naturally, it fell to him as the youngest. Randall would know more information to give them anyway.

After he found a parking slot large enough to house their truck, he jogged back to the emergency room and asked to go back with Darla.

"There's already someone with her. I can't let you in till he comes out," the nurse told him.

Marcus paced in the waiting room until he felt ready to scream in frustration. He even broke down and prayed for her to be okay. The last few minutes of their conversation with her played over and over in his head until he managed to shove it out. Several long minutes later Randall appeared. He looked grim. The news wasn't good by the look on his face. Marcus prepared himself for the worst.

Randall drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly without looking at Marcus.

“What is it?” he asked.

“She’s in shock and suffering from exposure. She also has a severe concussion. They’re waiting on the results of the CT. They were on their way when I got kicked out. She could have internal injuries. Right now, all they do know is that she probably has some broken ribs. They don’t think she broke any of her arms or legs, but like I said, they are worried about internal injuries.” His brother rubbed his face. Dark circles emphasized the lines at his eyes.

“What are her chances?” Marcus almost didn’t ask.

“The doctor said right now with what they know, about fifty-fifty. She looks bad, Marcus. She’s white as a sheet and all that blood everywhere...” He trailed off and looked up toward the ceiling, obviously trying to get hold of his emotions.

“What about the baby?” Marcus was almost afraid to ask.

“So far she hasn’t lost it. She still could, though.”

“When can I see her?”

“It may be awhile. They kicked me out once they had the information about her they wanted.” Randall remained in one place while Marcus paced.

“Calm down, Marcus. You’re not going to help her if you’re wound tight as a clock.”

Marcus stopped pacing and jammed his hands in his pockets. He ached to see her. To reassure himself that she was really alive—at least for now. According to his brother, she was in bad shape. If they hadn’t lied to her, she wouldn’t have gone off half-cocked and gotten hurt. It had been his idea, and he truly regretted it. If she died, it would be on his hands.

Chapter Fourteen

“Seems like we should be calling someone about her, her family or some kin,” Randall said.

“She didn’t put anyone down on the paperwork, and she never talked about family or friends. I tried to get her to talk a couple of times, but she always changed the subject. We should have brought those damn papers with us.” Marcus shoved his hands back into his pockets and kicked one of the chairs bolted to the floor.

“Breaking your foot isn’t going to help matters any,” Randall told him.

“I feel like I should be doing something,” Marcus said.

“All we can do for now is wait for the doctor to come tell us what her tests show.” Randall looked around as if lost before finally settling in a chair close to the door. He watched Marcus collapse in the chair across from him.

Randall leaned forward and propped his arms on his knees and did just that, waited. It seemed to him that time had stood still. People came and went over the next hour, and each time the inside door opened, Randall and Marcus both looked up hoping to see a doctor and each time they were disappointed.

Finally, almost two hours from when Randall had been kicked out of her room, the door swung open and an African American man of about forty stepped into the room. Weariness creased his eyes at the corners, matching the lines at his mouth. Both brothers stood up and waited for the doctor to speak.

“Are the two of you with Ms. Moore?” he asked.

“That’s right,” Randall said. “I’m Randall Sanders, and this is my brother, Marcus. She’s our fiancée.”

The doctor blinked twice then recovered.

“I’m Dr. Walker. I’m in charge of Ms. Moore’s case.”

“What can you tell us about Darla? Is she going to be all right?” Marcus asked.

“Let me start from the beginning.” He walked over to the chairs and took one.

Randall nodded at Marcus, and they both returned to their seats, waiting to hear what the doctor would tell them.

“She’s got a serious concussion, which means there is some swelling in her brain from being knocked around when her car hit whatever it hit. So far, there is no bleeding, so that increases her chances of coming out of this relatively intact.”

Randall interrupted him. “What do you mean intact?”

“Without any lasting damage from the concussion. You see, there is some danger that she will have permanent changes, such as loss of sensation in her right side or her memory may never come back. We just won’t know until she wakes up. And that is another danger. She could slip into a coma, and that poses all sorts of new problems. Right now, she’s responsive to pain,” Dr. Walker told them.

“What about internal injuries?” Randall finally asked.

“We don’t see any at this time. Unless something changes, we won’t be operating on her. If the swelling in her brain doesn’t go down fast enough, we will drill a small hole in her skull and drain some of the fluid out, but we don’t want to do that if we don’t have to. It increases her chance of infection.”

He drew in a deep breath and let it out. “Which brings me to another problem. She was exposed to the cold for a good bit of time, I’m told. In some aspects, it was to her advantage in that she didn’t bleed to death from her cuts. The one on her forehead was deep enough to require ten stitches and the two on her shoulder needed

another twenty more. Still, the exposure has caused some other problems.”

Marcus interrupted him again. “Like what kind of problems?”

“For one, she probably will have pneumonia. We are dosing her up on antibiotics for the lacerations and to help decrease the odds of the pneumonia being a bad case. I don’t have to tell you how dangerous pneumonia can be. You’re from here, and pneumonia is a common problem in this area.”

“No sir, you don’t,” Randall agreed.

“What about the baby?” Marcus asked.

“She’s only about three weeks pregnant. It’s too early to tell. She isn’t spotting vaginally at this time. The problem this poses is that some antibiotics and other drugs we may need to use could endanger the baby.”

“When can we see her?” Randall asked.

“I will let you see her for ten minutes. They are getting a room ready for her in ICU. There are posted times for visiting hours. You will need to follow them. I will write an order that you can see her despite not being related to her. She’s going to need someone she knows talking to her to pull her out of this I’m afraid.” He stood up.

“We need her next of kin if possible. Do you have that information?” He looked to Randall.

“No, we don’t. She has never talked about her family or friends since she left Mississippi.”

“If you come up with any, please let us know. We need to notify family if possible,” he said.

“We’ll look in her things to see if she has them written down somewhere,” Marcus assured him.

Randall held out his hand, “Thanks, Dr. Walker, for telling us what is going on. She means everything to us.”

The doctor nodded and motioned them through the door to the back. They followed him to a walled off room with swinging doors that said “Trauma Two” above them. Randall knew what to expect

when they walked through them, but Marcus didn't. He looked over at his brother and grimaced. He looked almost as stricken as Randall felt.

"She's going to be okay, right?" he asked.

Randall could only nod his head. The knot in his throat prevented him from answering.

Marcus pushed through the doors first and Randall followed behind him.

"Ah, fuck, Randall. Look at her." Marcus had stopped just shy of the bed.

Since he had been gone, they'd sewn up the cuts on her head, and a white bandage wound around her head, emphasizing the paleness of her face. They still had her covered from the shoulders down with several thick blankets. He knew they had been heated from when he had been back there with her before. The edge of a bandage stuck out where her left shoulder was covered with the blanket. The beginnings of black circles around her eyes could be seen, as well as bruises along her jaw.

"I know, Marcus. I know." Randall swallowed hard and walked over to clap a hand on his brother's shoulder in comfort.

"Do you think she knows we are here?" Marcus asked, not taking his eyes off of Darla.

"I don't know, but I'm going believe she can. We need to talk to her, and tell her we love her. The doc said we should."

Marcus nodded his head but didn't say anything. Randall looked over and found tears in his brother's eyes. He probably couldn't speak right then. God knows he wasn't sure he'd be able to say anything without crying.

Finally, Marcus cleared his throat and started talking to her.

"Darla, baby. Randall and I are here for you. Baby, we love you. Don't leave us." Marcus reached under the covers until he found her hand.

Randall walked over to the other side of the bed and did the same thing. He made sure he didn't touch the tubes running into her inner elbow. He squeezed her hand lightly.

"Darla, can you hear us? We love you. Squeeze my hand if you hear me, baby." Randall waited, hoping to feel even a flutter of movement, but there was none.

Marcus looked across her at Randall silently asking if he'd felt anything. Randall shook his head. His brother closed his eyes and then looked away.

"Sir?" a nurse walked in with a plastic folder in her hand. "We need to move her now. I'm going to have to ask you to step out while we get her ready."

Marcus looked like he would argue, but seemed to change his mind and nodded. They walked out together but didn't go back to the waiting room. Randall planned on following them when they moved her to ICU. That way they would know for sure where she was. He didn't want to lose sight of her at all, but they weren't going to let them in ICU until visiting hours.

"Randall, we can't lose her. We just can't." Marcus seemed to have aged ten years in those few hours since they'd found her in the ravine

"I know, Marcus. I know," was all he could think to say.

* * * *

Marcus jumped from the waiting room chair as soon as visiting hours were announced. Randall hadn't returned yet from dealing with ranch business. They had been taking turns being with her for the last three days. So far, nothing had changed. They were going to make a decision today on whether or not to place the drain hole in her skull. He hoped they didn't have to. She was already battling pneumonia. She didn't need another kind of infection to deal with, too.

As soon as they let him and the other three visitors there for other patients through the doors, he claimed the sink and washed his hands exactly the way they had shown them how to prevent spreading germs. He dried his hands then hurried over to cubicle four where Darla lay in much the same way as the last time he saw her. He knew they turned her periodically, but usually during visiting hours they had her on her back.

He reached for her hand and squeezed it to let her know he was there. Then he started talking to her. He wasn't sure what he said anymore. He just talked about the ranch and the everyday things that went on there.

"Randall cooked breakfast this morning. I sure miss your scrambled eggs. His are always brown when he cooks them. Course, I can't do any better. My vegetable soup turned out okay, except it was way too watery."

There was no response to either his words or his hand stroking hers. He rested his forehead on the cool railing of the bed. He felt defeated and hated it. Why didn't she wake up?

He sighed and looked at her through the bars of the railing. Since she'd come in, the bruising on her face had begun to change colors. Now it was as sickly greenish black and blue color. It hurt him to look at her like that. He huffed out a breath and tried again.

"Darla, baby. We miss you so much. Randall will be here soon. Wake up baby and talk to us. You can scream at us if you want to, just wake up. Please."

He squeezed her hand a little more forceful than usual. He was frustrated. Nothing he did or said was working. He almost let go of her hand to pull up the chair and sit for awhile when it fluttered. The barest of movement had him smiling like an idiot.

"That's it, baby. Let me know you're there. I know you are. Squeeze my hand, baby."

Marcus waited and was rewarded with another movement in her hand. He laughed and brought her hand up to his mouth to kiss it.

Then he gently replaced it on top of the covers and hurried out of the room to find a nurse. Someone needed to know.

He found one at the desk typing in the computer. She looked up when he slid to a stop in front of her.

“What’s wrong?” she immediately asked as she stood up.

“She moved her hand. Darla moved her hand.” He all but shouted.

“Shhh. Okay, let’s go check on her.”

The nurse walked into the room eyeing all the monitor equipment before taking Darla’s hand in her own.

“Talk to her and tell her to squeeze my hand,” the nurse told him.

“Darla. It’s me again. I need you to squeeze the nurse’s hand for me, baby.” He leaned over and gently kissed her cheek. “Can you hear me?”

Marcus looked over at the nurse who shook her head. Disappointment curled around his heart and squeezed. He tried again.

“Come on, Darla. Don’t give up. Show the nurse that you can do it. Squeeze her hand, baby.”

He watched her hand in the nurse’s, and when she moved it a tiny bit, he breathed out a sigh of relief. The nurse beamed at him.

“Keep talking to her. I’m going to call the doctor and let him know.”

“Thanks,” Marcus said. He took her place holding Darla’s hand.

“Way to go, Darla. I know you can hear me. Have you been listening to Randall and me telling you how much we love you? We do. More than anything, Darla. Come back to us, baby.”

She didn’t squeeze his hand that time. Maybe she was tired, he thought. Or maybe she was still mad. He grinned at that. She’d wake up soon and light into them for sure. He couldn’t wait to tell Randall. He couldn’t use his cell phone in the ICU, so he would have to wait until the visiting hour was over. He wasn’t leaving her until they made him.

He continued talking to her until the nurse came and shook her head at him with a smile. He grinned and nodded that he understood.

It was time to go. He bent over and kissed Darla lightly on the lips then again on her chin.

“Love you, baby. I’ll be back as soon as they let me. You just keep on getting better.” He squeezed her hand one last time, and she wiggled her fingers.

Marcus left her room a little lighter then when he’d gone in. He had his cell phone out and dialing Randall before he’d even returned to the waiting area. Randall answered on the third ring.

“What is it? Is she okay?”

“She moved her fingers, Randall. She actually moved them for me.”

“Hot damn! She’s going to be all right.”

Randall’s voice sounded watery to Marcus. He felt the same way. Tears were threatening to fall, only they were tears of joy this time.

“I’ll be there for the next visitation,” Randall told him.

Marcus hung up and slid the phone back in its holder on his belt. He thought about calling his mom and dads and letting them know, but decided to let Randall see her first, and then they could call them together. For the first time since they’d brought her in, Marcus could breathe a little easier.

* * * *

Randall finished handling ranch business as fast as he could and headed for the hospital. He couldn’t wait to see her and feel her squeeze his hand. Hope flared to life inside him as he drove toward the hospital. It would be close to nine p.m. by the time he got there, but visiting hours weren’t until ten fifteen anyway. He would have time to bring Marcus up to date on the ranch and find out what had been going on there at the hospital.

They had been taking turns being there at visiting hours for the last three days. The longer she remained unresponsive, the less chance she would come back to them. Now they had hope again.

He got several odd looks when he jogged down the hall to the ICU waiting area. He knew better than to run, but couldn't keep the urgency from his steps. He wanted to find out just what all had occurred. Had her squeeze been strong? What about her breathing? Had it returned to normal? The pneumonia had made it hard for her breathe, and they actually thought about putting her on the ventilator to help her. Randall was glad they hadn't done it. One more machine and she would look like a refugee from a science fiction film.

"Randall." Marcus called out as he reached the waiting room. "The doctor is here now seeing her. The nurse called to let me know so we wouldn't leave. He might want to talk to us."

"He better talk to us. This is major," Randall fussed.

"I kept asking her to squeeze my hand and telling her how much we loved her. She wiggled her fingers in my hand," Marcus told him.

His younger brother spoke ninety miles an hour about what had happened. Randall wanted to hug him and tell him to shut up. He grinned. She was going to be okay. If she woke up soon, they would move her to a room. As long as she was unconscious and had pneumonia, they would keep her in ICU.

Randall filled Marcus in on what was going on at the ranch while they waited for the doctor to come talk to them. He kept looking toward the door to ICU expecting the doctor to walk through them at any minute.

Finally, the door swung open, and the ICU doctor walked through it. He immediately saw Randall and Marcus and walked in their direction.

"How are you two holding up?" he asked.

"As well as can be expected," Randall said. "How is she doing?"

"I'm pleased with this latest development to say the least. She still has a long way to recovery though. She is moving her fingers on command. She hasn't squeezed with them yet. I'm sure that is just a matter of time."

“How long before she can be moved to a room so we can stay with her?” Marcus asked.

“I don’t want to move her until she is either over the pneumonia or is awake and able to cough.”

“Why do I get the feeling that there is more?” Randall frowned at the doctor.

“I’m worried about the baby. We’re monitoring her of course, but the baby is too small right now and is easily affected by her condition. I’ve called in a neonatologist and a high risk specialist. We are communicating back and forth through the Internet. They have been given all her records and are helping us to do all we can to keep the baby, but I have to tell you. There is a very big chance she will lose it, and if she doesn’t, we don’t know how all of this will affect its development.”

Marcus shook his head. Randall knew how he felt. Sure, they wanted the baby, but Darla was more important. They could give her more babies.

“So what you are saying is the baby could be retarded or have some birth defects?” Randall asked point blank.

The doctor sighed and nodded. “Yes, that is what I’m saying. You need to know what to expect.”

“We appreciate you leveling with us. You’re right. We need to know what to expect.” Marcus sighed and shoved his hands in his pockets.

“I’ve got to go now. When you visit her, keep stimulating her and urge her to squeeze your hands. The more activity we can engage her in, the sooner she’ll regain consciousness.” The ICU doctor walked back through the ICU waiting room doors.

“You go ahead at the ten o’clock visit, and I’ll wait here to find out how it went. Then I’ll go home and check on the ranch.” Marcus pulled out his cell phone and checked for any missed calls.

“Have you talked to Mom or the Dads since yesterday?” Marcus asked.

“Yeah, talked to Jim. Mom was outside with Paul. He said he’d fill them in on what was happening now. I told him one of us would let him know when we knew more. He said they were all praying for her.” Randall walked over to the two chairs they’d commandeered as their spot. He sat down and propped one ankle over his knee.

A few minutes later they announced visiting hours over the loudspeaker. Randall joined the other visitors walking toward the ICU receiving area. They washed their hands and proceeded to their individual loved one’s room. Randall opened the glass door to Darla’s room and smiled at seeing her look so much better. The bruises continued to change colors, but for the most part, her complexion had improved from the pale white to having a little color in her cheeks.

Randall crossed the room and immediately picked up her hand and squeezed it gently.

“Darla, honey. It’s Randall. Can you squeeze my hand? Let me know you can hear me, baby.”

He felt the tiniest flutter of her fingers against his hand. He nearly wept with relief. He knew what his brother had said was true, but he felt like it was really true when he felt it for himself. He squeezed her hand again.

“I feel it, baby. You rest now. I’m not going anywhere as long as they will let me stay.”

Randall talked to her about the ranch and Marcus’s attempt at cooking for them.

“I know he talks about mine, but his is really worse,” Randall said.

His time was up before he knew it. He knew they wouldn’t let him stay a little longer, so he bent over and kissed her lightly on the lips. He thought she smiled but wasn’t sure. Her face looked peaceful. He hoped she wasn’t hurting somewhere. Not being able to tell someone you needed something for pain was scary.

Walking back through the ICU doors, he hurried back to the waiting area. As soon as Marcus saw him, he headed in Randall's direction.

"So, did she move them for you?" Marcus asked.

"Yeah. It was the best feeling in the world," he said.

"I know what you mean," Marcus agreed. "Okay, I'm out of here. I'll call you from the ranch when I get there."

"I'll keep a watch on my phone since I have it on vibrate. You be careful. I can't handle you and her in here," he said.

"I will. Oh, and Tater called. He pulled the car out of the ravine today. He hauled it back to his shop until we tell him what to do about it. He has her things locked up when we want to come get them."

"How 'bout I go by and pick up her stuff. I'll look at the car when I get there to see how bad it is," Randall suggested.

"Sounds like a plan to me." Marcus grabbed his coat and hat and headed out the door. Randall settled down for a long night.

Chapter Fifteen

Each day, Darla improved. She graduated from moving her fingers to lightly squeezing their hands to tell them how she was and that she understood them. Marcus just couldn't understand why she didn't wake up when she was obviously aware of things around her. He and Randall continued to trade off times so each of them had time with her. It wasn't exactly quality time since they could only stay fifteen minutes or so each time. Marcus continued to ask every day when they would move her to a room. He got the same answer each time. "When she wakes up enough she's able to cough."

One day, Marcus was putting cream on her lips so they wouldn't dry out and crack when she actually moaned and turned her head. She didn't open her eyes, but she did move her hand off the bed for a few seconds.

Marcus smiled as big as the state of Texas. He couldn't wait to tell Randall. He'd hate that he missed it.

"That's real good, Darla. You keep it up and you'll be up and bitching at us in no time." He straightened the covers then leaned over and kissed her. "I'll be back soon. Randall will be here next time. Show him a good time, baby."

He wondered what she would think of that. No doubt she was seething at him where ever she was in there. He stopped by the nurse's desk and let them know her progress. He was on a first name basis with most of the nurses now. They flirted with him and Randall, knowing that it would go nowhere.

"Physical therapy started yesterday, and she doesn't seem to be stiff anywhere yet, they said," the nurse smiled.

“Great,” he told her. “I’ll tell Randall. He’ll be here at the next visiting hour.”

“Durn, that’s after my shift is over,” she pouted. “I always miss him.”

“Careful, I’ll think you like him more than me.”

Marcus whistled all the way to the truck. She would be okay. He and Randall would will her to be. Now he needed to concentrate on business.

He and Randall were running themselves ragged taking care of ranch business and coming to visit Darla at least twice a day. They had been lucky so far and the weather had stayed cold but clear. That could change at any minute. He would need to be caught up so he could stay with Darla while Randall took care of the ranch business. He wouldn’t like not being able to see her, but it couldn’t be helped.

Marcus pulled into the drive and noticed fresh tracks. Someone was here or had been here recently. When he pulled up outside the house, he smiled. It was their mother and one of their dads. He knew one of the dads was with her because they never let her drive in the snow.

He climbed out of the truck and was on the porch when the door opened and his mom smiled, holding the door for him.

“Hey, Mom.” He hugged her. “How are you doing?”

“Doing good. How is Darla?” she asked with a look of concern falling over her face.

“She moved her head and lifted her arm up off the bed today,” he said proudly.

“That’s real good. Who’s with you today?”

“Jim. He’s out talking with Randall.” She pursed her lips. “Randall is working too hard, isn’t he?”

“Yeah, I don’t think he’s slept much at all since the accident.”

“What I don’t get is why she was driving in the first place. I can’t believe you boys let her.” His mom was fishing for the truth.

Marcus wasn't sure what to say, so he didn't say anything at all. He knew how she would react to what they had done. She would have fussed at them and told them how disappointed she was in them. It would hurt worse than anything she could do or say.

The sound of stomping feet could be heard on the back porch. Randall and Jim walked through the door when he opened it for them. Jim immediately pulled him into a bear hug and clapped him on the back.

"Good to see you, son," he said.

"You, too." Marcus glanced at Randall.

Randall nodded his head and walked to the laundry room to clean up. There were worry lines at his mouth, and his face looked haggard. Marcus had to figure out a way to help him. As it was, he didn't have to worry. Jim announced he was going to stay and help with the ranch. Randall of course told him there was no need for him to.

"Son, let me help. We don't have as much to do, and I can help you out. That's what parents do for their children." Jim wrapped an arm around their mother.

"And just how is Mom going to get home?" Randall demanded.

"Paul is going to come over in a little while and take her home with him." Jim tried to hide a smile, but didn't manage it.

"Son, face it. You never grow up," Jim said.

Finally, Randall settled down and thanked Jim for the help.

"Marcus, how was Darla?" he asked.

"She moved her hand off the bed and turned her head." He was proud of her and knew it showed on his face.

"That's great!" Randall and his mom said at the same time.

They looked at each other and laughed. It was the first smile, let alone a laugh, he'd seen from Randall since the accident. Things would get better.

Randall pulled out of the drive to go to the hospital around a quarter of six. Then next visiting hour was at seven fifteen. Marcus

prayed she would move for him. He would be disappointed if she didn't.

* * * *

Randall arrived in the ICU waiting room at ten till seven. He willed his heart to slow down. Right then it was pumping a thousand miles an hour. He'd worried needlessly they would have visiting early and he would miss his chance. One of the other visitors in the room assured him that he had plenty of time.

He watched the clock. Its hands seemed to move in slow motion. The seconds stretched into minutes, and when seven fifteen came and went without the announcement to let them in, he began to worry all over again.

Finally at seven thirty a nurse came out to talk to them.

"We have a new patient, so we are trying to get him settled before we can let you in. I'm sorry you are having to wait, but it shouldn't be more than another twenty or thirty minutes." Everyone groaned, but no one fussed at the nurse. Randall drew in a deep breath and let it out. Then he located his chair and relaxed as much as he could until they let him in to visit with Darla.

Unfortunately, it gave him time to think. So far he'd avoided thinking overly much by working himself into exhaustion. Now he had nothing to do but think. Every detail of Darla swirled in his head. How she laughed, how she smiled. When she was amused but didn't want them to know it, she bit her lower lip and looked up.

Thoughts of her ample breasts and rounded ass broke into his thoughts. With the erotic pictures came the devastating knowledge that what they had done by going behind her back had put her there in the hospital in that ICU bed.

"Sir? Sir?" A timid voice broke into his memories.

"Huh?"

“They just called for visitors. I thought you would want to know.” The young woman smiled at him.

“Yes, thanks. I was thinking too hard I guess.” He stood up and hurried to the door that separated him from his Darla.

When he entered her room, he noticed there was a little more room than before. One of the machines had been removed. He took that as a good sign. A beep, beep, beep echoed in the small enclosed space. He knew from questioning the nurse it was her heart monitor and as long as it was steady and at least fifty beats a minute, they were happy with it. Hers showed sixty-two at the moment.

She lay on the stark white sheets looking pale and beautiful despite the bandages on her head and at her shoulder. He was almost afraid to approach the bed now. What if she didn’t respond to him? Maybe Marcus had dreamed it in the first place. Shaking that thought off, he carefully grasped her hand with his and squeezed.

“Hey, baby. It’s Randall. I missed you today. Marcus said you were doing better today. Can you squeeze my hand for me?” He waited anxiously for some small movement. Her hand remained limp in his.

Randall closed his eyes in disappointment. Instead of giving up, he bent over and kissed her on the lips. Then he whispered how much he loved her in her ear.

“I love you more than I love that ranch, Darla. Please come back to us. We are so sorry we lied to you. That’s what it was, a lie. Please forgive us, baby.”

The noises of the ICU filtered in through the door. Nurses talked and visitors visited. Still, she didn’t acknowledge him. It hurt. He took her hand again and ran his thumb over her knuckles and talked to her about anything and everything.

“Mom and the Dads are at the ranch right now. They want to meet you. They can’t come back here though, so you have to get well so you can move to a room,” he said.

Frustration got the better of him.

“Dammit, Darla, do something. Let me know you’re in there. You’ve had long enough to rest. It’s time to get up now.” As soon as he said it, he regretted it.

But her hand moved in his. She closed it loosely around his. He didn’t move, afraid if he did, it would all be a dream. It was one he didn’t want to wake up from at the minute. She turned her head toward him and opened her mouth just wide enough her tongue could wet her lips. Randall nearly yelled out loud. Instead, he squeezed her hand back and raced out the door to find a nurse. He grabbed the first one he came to.

“She’s licking her lips. I think she is thirsty. Can I give her something?”

“She can’t have anything until she wakes up, but you can rub some ice chips across her lips and she can lick the water off.”

Randall nodded a little too quickly and hurried in the direction the nurse pointed to get some ice. He filled a small cup with it then returned to find Darla quiet once again. He didn’t let it upset him. Instead, he took a small chunk of ice and rubbed it across her lips. Immediately, her tongue came out and licked it away. Joy filled his heart. He couldn’t wait to tell everyone.

Over and over again he wet her lips until she turned her head away. She’d had enough, he decided. He set the plastic cup on the bedside table and dabbed at her lips with a napkin to remove the drops that she didn’t lick away.

“You did so good, baby. I’m proud of you.”

“Sir? Visiting hours are over now.” A nurse slipped her head in the door and indicated the time on the clock on the wall across from the bed.

“I’ll be right out,” he assured her.

She nodded and backed out of the room.

Randall leaned over Darla and kissed her on the lips and on the tip of her nose.

"I love you, Darla. You rest now. Marcus will be here in the morning," he told her.

She made a slight humming noise. He had to lean in close to her lips to hear, but it was something. She was going to get better now. He figured it was only a matter of time before she woke up to rain all sorts of hell down on them. His good mood lasted all the way home.

When he pulled into the drive at close to nine-thirty, he noticed that Jim's truck was still there. True to his word, he was staying to help them. Now that Darla was responding, he was relieved to have the help. Marcus met him at the door.

"How is she?" Marcus demanded as soon as Randall walked in.

"She licked her lips, so I asked the nurse if we could give her some water or something." Randall filled him in on how he wet her lips with the ice chips and squeezed his hand.

"I told you. She's getting better. She'll be awake in no time, now," Marcus said.

Randall smiled past his brother at Jim. The big man smiled back and headed back toward the living room.

"Do you think she knows us, Randall?" Marcus asked.

"Yeah, I do. She made a noise when I told her you would be there in the morning," he told his brother.

"What are we going to do if she doesn't remember us when she wakes up?"

"For one thing, we're going to tell her the truth. Maybe not all at one time, but I'm not making that mistake again. It almost cost us her life. Not to mention the baby."

"Any news on the baby?" Marcus followed Randall into the kitchen.

He poured a glass of milk, hoping it would help settle his stomach. There had been too many events lately. He figured he had the beginnings of an ulcer brewing in his gut.

"The nurse said she hasn't bled any, so that's a good sign. It's too early to hear a heartbeat. When you go tomorrow, wait around for the

doctors and see what you can find out. I don't like not knowing what to expect."

"I will. Surely they will think about moving her out of ICU soon. It's been almost five days now," Marcus complained.

"I don't want them to move her any sooner than they need to. Right now she has nurses around the clock. Once they move her, we will be her main nurses. I'm not sure I'd know what to do."

"I hadn't thought of that." Marcus let out a breath and nodded his head.

"We need to get some rest. Have you seen a weather report tonight?" Randall asked.

"Yeah, snow expected starting tomorrow night. Nothing major, but the roads might be closed in some areas." Marcus leaned back against the cabinet and crossed his arms.

"We'll see what it shapes up to be, then make a decision about Darla. More than likely you will need to go to town and stay there with her. I'll have to take care of the ranch. With Dad here to help, we'll be okay."

"I can take my laptop and work while I'm there. I noticed they have Wi-Fi throughout the hospital. I can work down in the cafeteria when I'm not visiting her," he said.

"Good." Randall stretched. He was exhausted.

"Better head on to bed. Tomorrow will be a busy one for both of us," Marcus told him.

"I'm on my way there now."

Since Darla had been the hospital, they'd returned to sleeping in their old rooms. Neither of them wanted to sleep together. Randall figured it was a man thing. Jim wondered into the kitchen and nodded at Randall.

"Everything going okay with Darla?" he asked.

"Yeah, she's beginning to respond to us."

"Good. You know your mom is praying for her."

"I know."

Jim patted his shoulder and left him and Marcus alone. They smiled at each other then Marcus shrugged and headed for his room. He followed his brother upstairs and after a brisk shower, fell into sleep. The first deep sleep he'd had since the wreck.

* * * *

Darla focused on the voice begging her to wake up. She tried, but couldn't figure out how to do it. She was so thirsty. She licked her lips. That was easy to do, so she tried lifting her hand. She must have done it because Marcus kissed her hard on the mouth. Why couldn't she wake up?

She tried to think back to what had happened that she was like this. The more she tried to remember, the harder it became and the more her head ached. Finally, she gave up and concentrated on what she did know. She was in a hospital. The nurses told her where she was and what the date was all day everyday. They were trying to orient her, she realized, but it meant nothing to her right then. All she wanted to do was wake up. Wake up and see Randall and Marcus again. They would tell her what happened.

Marcus's voice near her ear teased her with what he wanted to do to her when she got well.

"I'll kiss you all over. From your head down to your dainty little toes," he told her.

The thought of him kissing her that way sped up her heart. The droning machine that beeped began to beep faster.

"You like that, huh?" Marcus drawled next to her ear.

Yes, she wanted that. She worked at forming the words, but they wouldn't come. Instead, she got out a garbled couple of words. Marcus responded by raining kisses all over her face. It felt so good, she tried again. This time she was able to say her rendition of Marcus. It had the right number of syllables, but lacked distinction between

the letters. Frustrated to the point of screaming, Darla punched the bed with her hand.

Marcus grabbed her hand and carried it to his lips for a kiss. The feel of them against his mouth struck a new round of arousal. She wanted to be able to see them. She worked at opening her eyes, but they felt glued shut. She was tired again. She'd just take a little nap. Then she would work on waking up.

Somewhere in her mind a thought kept threatening to come out. It eluded her though, and she knew for some reason it was important for her to know. She relaxed and let sleep claim her.

* * * *

Marcus arrived in the ICU waiting room with enough time to set up his computer for work. Since the weather predicted another six inches of snow, he would spend the night at the hospital so he could check on Darla. Randall and Jim would handle the ranch. Once again he was thankful for their family living close by. Without their help, it would have been nearly impossible to spend as much time with Darla at the hospital as they had.

If the weather didn't pan out or was lighter than anticipated, Randall would drive to town to visit with Darla while Jim handled the ranch for a couple of hours. Randall insisted that Marcus would stay overnight regardless. He didn't want to chance that someone wouldn't be there for her when she woke up.

The clock above the water fountain showed he had five more minutes till they would announce visiting hours and let them back. He fingered the book in his hand. It was one of hers. It looked well worn, so he hoped it was a favorite one. He planned to read to her from it, thinking it might help her to come back to them.

The minute they announced visiting time, Marcus was in line for the sink to wash his hands. He couldn't wait to see what Darla might

do today. She had been steadily improving for the last couple of days. He just knew she would open her eyes soon.

He still worried she wouldn't remember them. The doctor had warned them she might have various levels of amnesia. She could remember everything, or nothing, or something in between. Depending on how much it upset her, they were to help her remember simple things at first like their names, where she was, and things about her life. Marcus figured it was going to be a testimony in patience and discretion. They would need to hold off telling her all the details of why she had been leaving until she was strong enough to handle it. Maybe they were just putting it off because they were afraid of what she would say.

Marcus walked into her room to find her sitting up in bed. It appeared that they had washed her hair and brushed until it shined. The bandage was gone now. He could easily see the stitches on her temple where she'd hit the driver's side window. Still, she looked great as far as he was concerned. He smiled and kissed her.

"Hey, baby. You look beautiful."

To his astonishment, she opened her eyes and smiled back at him.

Chapter Sixteen

Randall could hardly wait to get to the hospital that day. This was the day they were going to move Darla to a private room. Marcus was already there and had been with her almost every day since.

They figured out that she remembered everything up until the day before the wreck. They hadn't told her anything concerning it yet. He planned to tell her everything in a couple of days. She had the right to know. If they didn't tell her, and she remembered later, it would be the same as if they'd had her investigated all over again.

He almost ran down the hall to the ICU when a nurse shook a finger at him. He grinned like an idiot and slowed his pace. When he entered the ICU visitor's waiting room, there was no sight of Marcus or his "temporary office" he'd set up. Panic threatened to close his throat. He pulled out his phone and glanced down to see he'd missed a call. He punched autodial, recognizing the phone number as Marcus's.

"Hey! Where have you been? They moved Darla to her room early," Marcus told him.

"Damn, I didn't feel it vibrate to answer it. What room are you in?" he asked.

Marcus filled him in, and Randall walked as he talked. When he reached the nurse's desk that covered the set of rooms where Darla was located, he checked the room numbers and hurried toward room two fifty-two.

Without saying anything, he hung up on his brother and eased the door to her room open. He could hear Marcus calling his name into

his phone. He grinned, even knowing it was childish, but he was so happy right then he felt like a child on Christmas morning.

"I'm here, Marcus," Randall whispered as he walked into the room.

Marcus shook his head but smiled. They both turned toward the bed when they heard a quiet little laugh. Darla was awake and had witnessed the joke. Randall smiled at her.

"Hey, baby. I'm so glad to see that pretty smile again," Randall said.

Darla blushed. He had worried he might never see her pretty face suffused with pink again. But there it was. He leaned over the bed and gave her a soft kiss. He so wanted to lay his hand on her belly knowing that their child was there. Marcus seemed to know what was on his mind.

"All her tests are normal so far."

He emphasized all, so Randall figured he was including the baby as well. That was welcomed news. "Darla, our mom and dads are coming this afternoon to see you. I know you haven't met them yet, but you have spoken to Mom on the phone." Randall watched her face for any signs of panic or discomfort.

She didn't look particularly worried about the prospect of meeting their parents. That relieved him. He wasn't sure how he would have asked them not to come, but if Darla had looked panicked or upset at it, he would have. He didn't want her upset if they could avoid it. The time was coming when they would confess their sins to her and that was soon enough.

"It will be nice to meet them," she said with a nervous looking smile.

"You've been practicing, haven't you?" Randall asked.

"Marcus has been helping me," she said.

"Really, it's all just coming back to her in bits and pieces," Marcus said. He elevated his eyebrows in a silent message.

Randall deciphered it to mean they needed to come clean soon, or she was going to remember on her own. They needed to talk to the doctors today. Randall would make sure they caught them. She was aware of herself and them and remembering more each day. It was time.

* * * *

Darla watched the two men talk together. She knew them and remembered how she'd come to be living with them. She even remembered that they called her their fiancée and said they loved her more than anything. What she didn't remember was the wreck and why she had been driving in such dangerous conditions? She wasn't a stupid person. She would never have put her life in danger like that.

"Hey. What are you looking so serious about?" Randall asked her.

"Nothing really. Just trying to remember what happened that day to make me run off like that." There, she'd hit the nail on the head.

Both men looked worried. They were keeping something from her. She just wasn't sure what it was yet, but she would remember eventually. Right now, all she remembered was how loved she'd felt with them. They pampered her despite the fact that she was also their cook and housekeeper. She supposed as their fiancée she wasn't technically their cook and housekeeper anymore.

"Marcus, you probably need to work on your accounts. I don't need you here all the time to babysit me. I can call the nurse if I need anything. I just push the button..." She trailed off, feeling lost.

Where was the button? What did it look like? She couldn't remember. Damn it, why couldn't she remember? Frustration brought tears to her eyes. She seemed to cry over every little thing.

"Here you go, baby." He handed her the button that was clipped on the bed next to her.

She looked at it and still didn't recognize it. She didn't let on that she didn't that she didn't understand. It upset Marcus when she

couldn't think of a word. She did pretty good most of the time, but sometimes the littlest thing would stump her.

"I brought everything I need with me so I can work here with you," Marcus told her.

"Oh, okay."

He looked at her oddly, and she wondered if he'd told her that already. Damn, why was she having so much trouble with the little things? She could sit up and talk and eat without help, but she hadn't known what to do with the brush he gave her. Why didn't she know it was to brush her hair? Even now, knowing that, she couldn't picture what it looked like in her head.

"Have your doctors been in yet?" he asked her.

"Um, I don't think so. It's so hard to keep up with the days now."

Randall looked stressed to say the least, Darla thought. She knew that she was the reason for it, and it troubled her. She also knew they were keeping something else important from her. Was it that she would never fully recover? Would she always have trouble remembering things? She didn't think she could live like that. Someone would always have to be close by to help her if she forgot how to do something. Tears built up in the back of her eyes. She blinked to keep them at bay.

"I think I'm going to take a little nap now," she told them. If she pretended to sleep, or if by some miracle she fell asleep, they couldn't see how confused she was right then.

"You go right ahead. We'll be quiet," Randall assured her. He took a seat in the straight back chair while Marcus stretched out in the lounge chair next to the bed.

She closed her eyes and willed herself to sleep. She was tired and knew there was something she was missing that was important. If they didn't tell her what was going on soon, she would start asking questions. Right now, she wanted to sleep and hide from whatever had made her run because deep down, that was what she knew she had done. Run from them.

* * * *

Marcus worked on his accounts, all the time keeping an ear open for Darla should she wake up and need anything. Randall was asleep in the chair opposite them. He usually snored, but this time, it wasn't him he could hear sawing logs. It was Darla. He loved her quiet, little snores. They were delicate, just like she was.

He and Randall were of the same mind. She had to know the details and fast. He could tell she was already beginning to remember enough to ask questions. In his mind, they weren't going to ask the doctors if they could tell her. They were going to tell them what they were going to do. He wasn't risking her thinking they were holding something back again. The only question now was if they told her before or after their parents came to see her. His vote was for afterwards. He hoped Randall would feel that way, too.

A knock at the door startled him. The door opened and two of Darla's doctor's walked in. The shorter of the two was the trauma doctor who took care of her when she first came in. The man next to him with the thinning brown hair was the neonatologist. So far, Darla hadn't read his name tag to know what he did. Would this be the time she did? He hoped not. They needed to make her comfortable before they told her she was pregnant with their child. And that they had deceived her.

Randall woke up when they knocked and ran a hand over his face before standing up and holding out his hand.

"Nice to see you again," he said.

"How is our patient doing today?"

"She's doing fine, and she's awake," Darla answered him.

Marcus hid his smile behind a cough. She was feisty all right. That hadn't changed about her at all. He and Randall loved that she was like that, but it might cause some problems down the road, Marcus realized.

“Well, let’s take a look at you. Gentlemen, would you step out?” A nurse appeared and shooed them out while she remained to assist the doctors.

“Don’t let them get away,” Marcus said. “We need to tell her tonight.”

“I agree. She’s smart. I think she has some of it already figured out,” Randall added.

They remained outside Darla’s room until the two men stepped back outside. They motioned for them to follow them a little down the hall so that Darla wouldn’t be able to hear them talking.

“How is she doing?” Marcus asked right off the bat.

“Much, much improved. I dare say with outpatient rehab she could go home in a few more days,” the trauma doctor said.

Marcus looked over at Randall and smiled. That was very good news.

“What about the baby?” Randall asked the other doctor.

“Right now, I would say she is going to be able to carry the child. All of the preliminary tests show the baby is viable and growing appropriately. She needs to see her own OB doctor as soon as possible. I’ll send all her files to whomever she chooses. They are going to want to follow her very closely.”

Marcus smiled. So far there was nothing but good news. The two doctors turned to leave, but Randall stopped them.

“We are going to tell her everything tonight,” he told them.

The two physicians looked at each other then nodded their heads.

“Since she is doing so well, it is as good a time as any. You do realize that she could ban you from her hospital room. The hospital would have no choice but to honor her wishes,” the neonatologist warned them.

“Damn, I didn’t think about that,” Randall said. “She doesn’t have anyone else to see about her.”

“Randall, we don’t have a choice. She’s going to remember if we don’t tell her. It’s just a matter of time now.”

Marcus waited until Randall nodded his head in ascension. The two doctors shrugged and after shaking hands all around, walked further down the hall.

Marcus turned and headed back to Darla's room. Randall caught up with him and stopped him.

"We're in agreement that we tell her as soon as our parents leave this afternoon."

Marcus nodded. "We'll have to hope and pray she doesn't throw us out. I honestly don't even want to contemplate our lives without her in it."

Randall knocked once on the door, then pushed it open. Darla was sitting in the lounge chair by the window. There wasn't much to look at outside other than piles of snow and the back of another building. She didn't seem to mind. Marcus could tell she was excited by the radiant smile on her face.

"Did they tell you? I can leave in a couple of days," she exclaimed. "I'm so excited. I'm tired of being cooped up in this place."

"That's great, baby," Randall said.

Marcus leaned down and gave her a warm kiss then watched and Randall did the same thing. Would it be the last time they got to touch her? He felt sick at the idea. He swallowed and stepped behind her to give her good shoulder a squeeze.

"Our parents should be here directly after lunch," Randall was saying. "They won't stay long. They don't want to tire you out on your first real day out of the unit."

"I can't wait to meet them. I'm still not sure how this works. I mean, marrying two men? I mean, it's not legal is it?" Her face wrinkled in confusion.

"Legally, you marry Randall because he is the oldest, but in a private ceremony we all exchange vows. It's binding to us," Marcus assured her.

“You can talk to Mom about it. She’ll tell you anything you want to know,” Randall added.

“Lunch should be here soon. You’re going to eat every bite of it, too.” Randall frowned at her when she pursed her lips and made a face.

This was what he wanted for their family, teasing and smiles and passion. He worried it was all about to come down around their ears. Tonight would decide everything. If she could forgive them, they had a lot of making up to do. If she didn’t forgive them... He couldn’t even finish the thought.

* * * *

Their parents showed up at one p.m. on the dot. Randall introduced them to Darla. His mom immediately took over and kept everything from getting out of hand.

“There are four too many men in here if you ask me,” she said with a wink at Darla.

Darla wasn’t sure what to make of all of them. They all truly seemed to be happy. She liked both of the fathers. They each leaned in and gave her a kiss on the cheek before hustling Randall and Marcus out of the room.

“Give them some girl time, boys,” Jim said as he closed the door behind them.

“How do you handle having two of them?” She burst out before she thought about it. “Oh.” She covered her mouth with her hand embarrassed that she’d asked the question.

“Call me Ann. Sometimes I could throw them off a cliff, but I wouldn’t really. You learn to temper their testosterone with your estrogen. Guilting them into things is one way, and treating them like the little boys they can be is another.”

She patted Darla’s hand and sat back in the chair. “I raised them to be good men, and I think they turned out okay, but men make

mistakes thinking they are doing what's best for their women. I've learned to forgive and overlook what I can and throw a hellacious fit when I can't."

"How did you know you loved them both? I mean, is it natural to be able to love both men equally?" Darla asked.

"You don't love them equally, Darla. You love them differently. Jim is my anchor in a storm. He is dependable and will always catch me if I fall. Sam is the storm." She laughed. "He whirls through and jumbles things up. There's never a dull moment in our house."

Darla drew in a deep breath and tried to relax. Something still niggled at her though. For the life of her, she couldn't grasp the thread to follow it. Everything was still too new to her. She was having to get her bearings all over again.

"Darla, anytime you need to talk, I'm here. Just call me or come over." She laughed again. "Of course, one of the boys will insist on driving you. Usually Jim drives me where I want to go.

"Don't you find it stifling to have someone with you all the time?" Darla asked.

"Oh, God, yes. I have my own little room where I do my quilting, and they are not allowed in it for any reason. If I'm in there with the door closed, they are to stay away unless the house or the barn is on fire." She patted Darla's hand. "Give yourself time. You weren't raised in a ménage family. I was."

Darla let it all sink in. She'd have to think about it all when she was by herself...if she ever was again. That thought brought a smile to her face.

They continued chatting until the men returned with offerings of Diet Cokes, candy bars, and chips.

"Goodness, where did you get all of this?" Darla asked.

"We ran to the corner market. We figured you would want something besides hospital food now that you are up and around. Nothing like junk food to make you feel better," Marcus said.

Randall opened the Diet Coke for her and handed it back.

“We better get going,” Sam told them. “Darla needs her rest. We can come back again.”

“I enjoyed your visit,” Darla told them with a smile.

She’d really enjoyed her chat with Ann. She knew they could become good friends and maybe coconspirators. She smiled through all the careful hugs and well wishes. Finally, the little group walked out the door with the promise to return. The silence in the room was deafening. Randall and Marcus had gone to walk them out. They would be back soon, and there would be that unease that had pestered her ever since she’d awakened.

She would ask them point blank tonight why she had been alone in her car driving in the snow. She was sure there would be a reason, and she wouldn’t like it. What would it mean to them as a possible family? She heard a commotion outside the door then it opened and Marcus and Randall walked in.

“What’s going on, you two?” she asked.

Both men looked guilty as hell of something. She wasn’t sure she wanted to know after all. When Randall pulled up the straight chair and took a seat. He looked over at Marcus who remained standing.

“Darla, we need to confess something that we are very sorry for,” he began.

“Is this why I was running away? I was running away, wasn’t I?” she said.

Both men looked at her and nodded their heads. She swallowed around the lump that suddenly blocked her throat. This was it.

Randall took her hand in both of his. “We love you more than anything, Darla. What we did was wrong, but we did it for the right reasons. We wanted you to stay with us as our wife and were afraid you would eventually leave.”

“What did you do?” she asked, almost afraid of the answer.

“We had you investigated.” Randall hurried on. “I thought you were running from something or someone, and we wanted to help

you. We were afraid you would leave again if whatever it was happened again.”

Darla gasped. They’d lied to her. No wonder she’d run away. She could handle a lot of things, but after what her ex-fiancé had done, she couldn’t tolerate lies. Even by omission.

Then a thought hit her as her memory began to return. She touched a hand to her belly and looked up.

“Yes, you’re pregnant.” Randall confirmed.

“Is the baby okay?” she asked, her voice cracking.

“They think so. It’s too small for them to tell much, but all the tests have come back positive,” Marcus supplied.

Randall recaptured the hand she’d snatched away when she realized they had lied to her. She didn’t fight him, but let him hold her hand.

“Please forgive us, baby. We screwed up big time. I know that,” Randall begged.

Marcus swallowed hard enough that she heard it. He opened his mouth to speak then closed it and turned around, jamming his hands in his pockets. He spoke with his back to her.

“Darla, I’m so sorry. We only wanted to help if you needed it. We weren’t trying to be nosy really. I’m so sorry.”

Randall shook his head and bent over the hand that he still held to kiss her knuckles. Darla didn’t know what to do or think. How could she trust them when they had lied to her? What sort of life would they have if she was forever doubting them? She closed her eyes.

“I need some time to think. I’m so angry with both of you. I’m not sure what to say.”

“What can we do to convince you how sorry we are?” Randall asked.

Darla just looked at him and shook her head. “I don’t know if there is anything that can accomplish that right now. I need to be alone to think.” She closed her eyes. “Leave. I don’t want to see either of you right now.”

She opened her eyes as they closed the door behind them. She felt all alone now. She pressed her hand on her abdomen. No, not alone anymore. She had a baby to think of. She couldn't make a decision based on her wants and needs. What mattered now was what was best for the baby. She rubbed a circle around her abdomen and wondered if it were a girl or a boy. She sighed. She didn't even know who the father was, but did that really matter in the whole scheme of things?

Chapter Seventeen

“She hates us,” Marcus said as they climbed into Randall’s truck.

“Maybe not. She didn’t say she never wanted to see us again. She just said right now.”

“What are we going to do?” Marcus ran a hand over his face.

Everything was lost as far as he was concerned. If she rejected them and left, taking the baby with her, Marcus wasn’t sure what he would do. She had become everything to him and now their child... He shook his head and looked out the side window as Randall drove them to who knows where.

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself,” Randall snapped. “We don’t know anything yet. She has to think about it. Remember, she just woke up from being unconscious for nearly two weeks. Then we spring this on her, and she’s overwhelmed.” Randall maneuvered the big truck easily through traffic.

“Yeah, you’re right. I just can’t get that look on her face out of my head. She looked as if we’d slapped her.”

Marcus couldn’t imagine she would ever forgive them. Randall might think so, but Marcus put himself in her shoes. If she had gone behind their back about something so major, he would have blown a gasket. He wasn’t sure he would have been able to ever forgive her for that. So how was he to expect she would forgive them?

Randall pulled into the little mom and pop motel and cut the engine. “We’ll stay here tonight and go back tomorrow and see if she will let us in.”

Marcus nodded in reply. If Randall could be optimistic, he guessed he could try.

They climbed out of the truck and walked into the office to get a room. Randall paid for one night in a room with two beds. He doubted he would get much sleep. He had too many things whirling around in his head. That was probably how she felt right then, too.

“Marcus, if she decides to leave us, we have to fight for our rights to see the child. You know that, don’t you?”

“You’d take her to court and go through all of that, put her through all of that?” Marcus asked.

Randall was silent for a few seconds. Finally, he shook his head.

“I guess not. We’re basically at her mercy when it comes to seeing our child. I wouldn’t put her through that, or drag a child through it for that matter.”

Marcus chose the bed closest to the door and stretched out on it. He wondered where they had gone wrong to begin with? Was it when they decided to place an ad for a housekeeper and cook when they were really looking for a wife? Probably. It had been a lie as well. She’d figured that out pretty quickly though. He just couldn’t for the life of him dredge up any hope. Randall might be optimistic, but he couldn’t see her forgiving them, just like that.

“I wonder what she and Mom talked about when they kicked us out,” Randall mused.

“Does it really matter?” Marcus asked, his temper beginning to get the best of him.

“It could matter. The dads told her what happened. Maybe she gave her some advice that will help us.”

“Yeah, and she’ll ream us a new one as soon as she has us alone. You hide and watch,” Marcus said.

“Don’t you think we deserve it?” Randall asked.

Marcus watched his brother pull off his boots and turn down the bed.

“Hell yeah, we deserve it, that and more. I still can’t believe we did it. What the fuck were we thinking?”

Randall shrugged. "We weren't thinking with our brains, that's for sure. We wanted her and wanted to make sure she didn't leave us."

"Get some sleep, Marcus. We're going to need it. I need to go back to the ranch tomorrow, but I'm going to stick around and see if she will eventually see us."

The dads said they would tend to the ranch for us," Marcus reminded him.

"Right."

Marcus could tell that Randall wasn't as optimistic as he pretended to be. He was trying to cheer him up. No amount of cheering was going to work for him right now. He wanted to wallow in self-pity just for a little while. Then he had to work on a strategy for winning her love again. Only this time, he wouldn't use deceit. He'd learned his lesson well.

* * * *

That night, Darla dreamed of living with Randall and Marcus. Their days were spent much the same way as before with her cooking and cleaning, only now, she tended to a child, as well. Their nights were spent in lovemaking. One minute soft and sensual, the next, hard and dirty. They kept her satisfied sexually and constantly told her they loved her. She was happy in the dream.

Despite the cheerful atmosphere, Darla worried about them lying to her again. They assured her they never would, but could she believe them? Every time she grew too quiet around them, they drew her into a sensual dance where the ultimate prize was to bring the other one to completion. It seemed like they always won.

Marcus would start with licking her earlobe and sucking it into his hot mouth. Randall would join in by licking her neck then nipping her chin and around her jaw to her other ear lobe. It drove her wild for them to play with her ears, and they knew it. They knew every

erogenous zone on her body and touched each and every one with either their mouths or their fingers.

Randall moved from her earlobe to her mouth, taking his time to lick her lips then nip at her lower lip and suck it into his mouth. Marcus focused on her shoulder, nipping then licking the wound. She thought she would come before they even touched her sexually. It didn't help when Randall ran a hand along her side and over her pelvis to tease her mound with his fingers. She kept waiting on him to touch her pussy, but he only teased.

A mouth closed around her nipple and sucked, while deft fingers worked her other nipple until she writhed on the bed needing more. Marcus knew how to make her come just by manipulating her breasts. He nipped at the nipple then licked it to soothe away the sting. Then he tickled the tip of her nipple with his tongue. He'd touch it with the tip then lick a circle around the areola before finally sucking it into his mouth. She thought she would die of ecstasy before they ever fucked her.

Once again Randall's hand massaged her mound then dipped a finger between her pussy lips. He stroked all along the slit without entering her or touching her clit. She moaned, willing him to touch her there. Still, he didn't. Instead, he spread openmouthed kisses along her belly until he reached her aching cunt. God, she needed him. Right then he could have asked just about anything of her and she would have agreed just to come.

Marcus continued teasing and tormenting her aching breasts while Randall stretched between her legs and spread her pussy lips to give him room to work his magic tongue.

It all felt so real even though she knew she was dreaming. When he pushed a finger inside her, she called out his name. She nearly wept when he withdrew it only to plunge in two fingers and pumped them in and out of her.

All this time Marcus continued his assault on her defenseless breasts. His mouth, his fingers worked together to drive her insane.

He pinched and pulled at her nipples until she felt the beginning of her climax. It spiraled up and up, pulling at her until she panted trying to catch her breath knowing that when she came, there would be no breathing.

As if they had choreographed it, Randall plunged three fingers inside of her and pinched her clit at the same time Marcus plucked at one nipple and bit the other one. She screamed her release until she was too hoarse to. Her breathing became jagged as she fought to draw in air. Her body continued to spasm even after they had stopped stimulating her. It was if it was caught in a cycle and couldn't break it.

Randall placed a hand on her pelvis and pressed to ease the tremors inside of her. Darla slowly caught her breath as the men curled up around her. They didn't expect her to take care of them. That would come later, she knew. For now, she basked in the afterglow and cuddled with the two of them.

Darla woke in the early hours of the morning aching for relief. How could she leave the two men who made her feel whole? Not just sexually, but as a human missing something in her life. Could she forgive them? Maybe one day. Could she leave them? Darla knew deep down in her heart she'd die if she did. They already held a piece of her in their hands. Leaving would mean missing out on a family, something she'd always wanted.

She eased out of bed and walked to the bathroom. She wanted a shower to rinse away the night's sweat and the evidence of her tears. The nurses would be coming to make rounds soon. She wanted to be back in bed by then. As it was, she made it with plenty of time to compose herself. They took her vital signs and assured her that the doctor would be making rounds soon.

It was her plan to ask that she be able to go home the next day. She needed today to regain all her strength and think. She figured she would need all her strength both physically and emotionally to deal with the bothers. She had little doubt they would come to see her

today. She hadn't decided yet if she would see them. It would serve them right to suffer for awhile. She had never thought herself a vindictive person, but for this, she would be. They had betrayed her trust, and she couldn't easily forgive that. But for the sake of her unborn baby, she would let them back into her life. They had the means to assure the child had everything they needed. Maybe it was wrong to stay with them for the welfare of her baby, but she had to do what she thought best. Staying with Randall and Marcus was the best move she could make in her situation.

Breakfast didn't appeal to her in the slightest, but she choked down some toast and the orange juice. The eggs turned her stomach, and the bacon was a bit too greasy for her taste. She waited another thirty minutes before the doctors showed up to talk and check her over.

"Can I go home tomorrow? I'm tired of lying around doing nothing."

"When you go home, you still can't do anything for another week or so," the doctor told her.

"I don't care. I want out of the hospital. No offense, but I really have had enough of this place to last me a life time."

"If you eat better tonight and in the morning, I'll look at letting you go."

She smiled and vowed to eat everything on her plate if that was what it took to get out. Now she had to decide what to do about Marcus and Randall. She had nowhere to go and no way to get there. She needed their help whether she wanted it or not. Then she remembered she had no car either. She wondered how badly the car was and if it could be fixed. Something else she would need them for. She wouldn't lie to them about why she was going back with them. She didn't lie.

* * * *

The next morning Randall and Marcus grabbed breakfast in the hospital cafeteria and planned their strategy to win Darla's love back. Randall sipped his coffee trying to wake up. First they had to get in to see her. The one thing they had going for them was the fact she had nowhere to go but home with them. They would use that shamelessly, too. Once they had her home they would woo her. Randall glanced over at Marcus as he finished up his second cup of coffee. Neither one of them had slept well.

"What do we say to her, Randall?" Marcus asked.

"The truth. We love her and don't want to live without her in our lives."

"Well, first we have to get in to see her. She may have told them not to let us in," Marcus reminded him. He grimaced as he turned the cup up and swallowed every last drop.

Randall stood up and stretched. "Let's go."

He'd put it off longer than he should have. It was already eight thirty. She would have finished her breakfast by now. Surely she would let them in to talk. They had a lot to talk about. Not the least of it was the baby.

They reached her room without anyone telling them to stop. Randall held out hope that she would be receptive of their help. If she would, then half the battle would be won. With this thought in mind, Randall knocked on her door.

A soft voice called out for them to come in. Randall walked in followed closely by his brother.

"Good morning," Randall offered.

"Good morning," she returned.

So far, so good. Marcus walked over and took her hand. He kissed it. Randall held his breath to see how she would react to that. She didn't pull her hand away. Marcus smiled. Randall shoved his hands in his pockets.

"I'm sorry, Darla," Marcus said. "I can never say it enough."

She didn't say anything at first. Randall almost held his breath. They had a long wait as she studied them. He wondered what she was thinking about. Contemplating whether to forgive them or not? Finally, she seemed to have made up mind, her face relaxing into an easy smile. Not a big one, mind you, but a smile none the less.

Unless she was into torture, they had a chance of getting back in her good graces. She looked as weary as they felt. He looked over at Marcus. He could tell his brother wanted to grab her and hug her. They both refrained though. Not only because she was hurt, but also because they couldn't be sure how much she wanted to punish them. The devious smile on her face assured him that they would suffer before it was over with.

"Darla, you need to rest. Why don't you let us take you home where you can recover?" Randall asked.

"They are letting me go tomorrow. I don't really have a home to go home to, do I?" she told them, her voice cracking.

They wanted her to come to their home where they could take care of her. Randall knew better than to push, but she had to know that they wanted her.

"You have a home with us, Darla. Let us take care of you, please," Marcus said.

Randall studied her face and knew the minute she capitulated. Her face looked so devastated. As if giving in and going home with them had robbed her of something. She held their happiness in the palm of her hand, and because there wasn't a vindictive bone in her body, she didn't crush them. Instead, she was giving in and going home with them. He saw it as a major step toward forgiveness. Now he needed to prove to her she could trust them from now on. It wouldn't be easy, but he and Marcus were up for the task.

Marcus beamed at him from across her bed. She looked from one to the other of them and sighed. She seemed to put everything in that sigh. All her energy and focus seemed to be on them at the moment.

She was sizing them up to see if she could believe them or not. He held his breath and knew his brother was as well.

“Fine, I’ll go with you, under one condition.”

“Anything that is mine to give is yours, Darla,” Randall told her.

“We want to make you happy,” Marcus added.

“As soon as I know for sure that I’m getting to go home, I’ll let you know,” she told them.

“Um, we were hoping to stay here with you in case you need anything,” Randall began.

Marcus cut in. “That way we’re available as soon as you are ready to go.”

“There’s really no need for you to spend the night here. I’m coming home...” She quickly changed it to, “I’m getting out of the hospital. That will be soon enough, I think.”

Randall decided to let it go. They would pick their battles. One more night in the motel wouldn’t kill them. He glanced over at Marcus and could see his own disappointment reflected on his brother’s face.

“I’ll bring something for you to wear out of here,” Marcus said.

“Oh, um, yeah, that would be great.” Darla blushed, and Randall grinned.

He couldn’t help herself. She was so damn cute when she blushed, and she blushed at the weirdest things. Like his bringing her something to wear out of the hospital.

They sat with her for several hours then when she began to nod off, they said good-bye and promised to be back the next morning to be there when the doctor came by. Marcus bent over and kissed her good-bye. Randall squeezed her hand and winked at her. She gave them a little half smile back.

“That went fairly well,” Marcus said once they were down the hall.

“Yeah, I think she realizes she has nowhere to go and needs us. That may be the only reason she is allowing us to take her home,” Randall warned him.

“I don’t care what the reason is. She’ll be with us under our roof. We can work on her there.”

Randall smiled. That was Marcus, forever the optimist. He checked them in once again. It was decided that Marcus would make the trip back to the ranch to gather up some clothes for her to wear home from the hospital. Randall would remain behind. He wanted to be there in case they asked to see him or she did.

After Marcus left, Randall played their conversation back in his head looking for any sign of weakness he could exploit. He wasn’t proud of it, but all was fair in love and war, and they were a little bit in both.

* * * *

As soon as the men left, Darla broke down and cried. She had something to blame her weeping on now, the baby. She pulled the covers back a little bit and rolled her gown up in order to see her tummy. There was nothing there to prove she was pregnant, but sometimes she got those fluttering feelings in her stomach. She placed a hand over her abdomen and imagined her baby growing there in her womb. The wonder of it wasn’t lost on her. The truth was she was secretly happy she was pregnant with their baby.

They should have been open with her from the beginning about checking into her past. Shoulda, woulda, coulda, it was in the past now. She had to worry about the future and make plans in case they couldn’t work things out.

She drew in a deep breath. Fear began to seep inside her. Fear that she would lose the baby. Fear that the baby wouldn’t be normal. Fear the brothers didn’t really love her. Saying the words didn’t make it so. She’d learned that from her ex. She didn’t have to be told twice. It was why she wasn’t sure she could trust Randall and Marcus. They had said the words way too soon as far as she was concerned. You don’t just fall in love at first sight. That was a fairy tale told to young,

impressionable teenagers. Realistically, you couldn't fall in love in the snap of the fingers.

Love took time to grow and mature. It was one of the reasons there was an engagement period before couples got married. They got to know about each other and discover their partner's likes and dislikes. The fact that she pretty much knew theirs since she had cooked and cleaned for them didn't go far since they didn't know about her.

Sure, they knew all her sensitive places and how to make her scream, but not what made her laugh and what made her cry. That was the kind of relationship she wanted. Could she have it with them? Only time would tell. For now, she would bide her time and watch them closely to see how they really felt about her. She was convinced they were in love with the idea of being in love.

Darla leaned back in the bed and rested her eyes for a minute. About the time she was drifting off, the phone rang. She almost let it ring since she didn't know anyone there who would call her at the hospital. The ringing grated on her nerves, and she answered it on the fourth one.

"Hello?"

"Darla? Hi, honey." It was Ann Sanders, Randall and Marcus's mom.

"Hey, Ms. Sanders. How are you doing?"

"Doing fine. What about you? When are they letting you go?" Ann asked.

"Actually, they are talking about letting me leave this afternoon. I'm going to hold them to it, too." She waited for her to say something about Marcus or Randall, but she didn't.

"Do you need a ride? I'll be glad to come pick you up. You can even stay at our house if you think you'll be more comfortable there."

Darla felt tears clogging her throat. Ann was being so nice to her despite that she was causing her boys trouble. She swallowed around the tears before she could speak.

“Thank you so much, but Randall and Marcus are picking me up.”

“Oh, that’s great. I sure hope you are able to work things out, Darla. We only want what’s best for you and the baby,” she said.

“Me, too, Ann. No matter how things turn out between us, I will always let you see the baby since you will be the only grandparents he will have,” Darla told her.

There was silence on the other end of the phone. For a minute, she thought Ann must have hung up. Then the other woman spoke.

“Thank you, Darla. You don’t know how happy that makes me.” Ann’s smile was evident in her voice now.

“Maybe once you’ve healed up some, you can come to the house and we can visit some.”

“I’d like that,” Darla said. And she would. She genuinely liked her. She was not only friendly, but understanding as well. She seemed to have the patience of Job.

They talked for a few more minutes and then hung up. Darla felt better for her talk with Ann. The other woman hadn’t tried to get her to forgive her sons or change her mind about them.

For the first time in a long time, she didn’t have to go to work at a certain time. She didn’t have a dress code, and she had nowhere to be. She smiled to herself and decided on a shower. She would have to keep her shoulder and head dry. The logistics on doing that eluded her.

A nurse came in a few minutes later, and she explained what she wanted to do. The nurse knew what to do, and she got her shower and dressed in a fresh gown when the doctor came by. He tried to talk her into staying just one more day, but Darla insisted she wanted out. She’d do whatever he said to do if he would let her leave that afternoon.

Less than ten minutes after the doctor left, Marcus walked in the room with a small bag that proved to contain some of her things.

“Where’s Randall?” she asked.

“Parking the truck. It’s hard to find a spot for a rig like we have.” He smiled and gave her a sweet kiss before flopping down on the chair.

“I’m going to change clothes. The nurse should be in any minute now for me to sign my discharge paperwork.”

Marcus smiled. “That’s great! You’ll be home before you know it.”

Darla couldn’t help but smile back. His smiles were always contagious.

She picked up the bag with her clothes and walked into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. She dug through the bag and realized they’d thought of everything. She had deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, her brush, and a hair clipper as well as several outfits to choose from. She was impressed. They obviously knew their way around a woman’s needs. She blushed. Needs brought back flashes of their night together. He and Randall knew all her secrets. They knew her needs and what she liked and didn’t like with sex. She quickly shoved aside those lusty thoughts and busied herself getting dressed to leave.

Just as she walked out of the bathroom, there was a knock on the door and the nurse walked in.

“I see you’re already dressed to leave. Surely we’ve been good to you,” she said with a smile.

“You’ve all been super. I just don’t like hospitals,” she told her.

Once the paperwork was filled out and explained, Darla was ready to walk out. The nurse shook her head.

“No you don’t. You don’t get to walk. You have to ride,” she said with a knowing smile.

Darla figured there was no use in arguing with the woman, so she capitulated and waited for the wheelchair.

Marcus had been quiet all during the exchange. Now he spoke up.

“You look real nice in that outfit,” he said. “It brings out the color of your eyes.”

She smiled. "Thank you."

He picked up her bag and opened the door for the nurse when she knocked. Darla sank into the wheelchair, suddenly glad to have the ride. She wasn't sure her legs would have supported her all the way to the truck. Getting dressed had taken a toll on her. Marcus followed the nurse while talking on his phone.

"We're on our way out now. You might want to pull the truck around to the outpatient entrance," he told Randall.

Whatever Randall had replied was short since Marcus flipped the phone closed and replaced it in its holder at his waist.

"Who's been taking care of the ranch all this time? It seems like every time I woke up, one or both of you were there."

"We took turns, and Jim helped Randall out while he was here," he told her.

"Looks like your brother is here and ready to go," the nurse pointed out.

Darla looked up and sure enough, the big rig was parked at the entrance along with a bundle of balloons and a bouquet of flowers. Tears filled her eyes, but she managed to keep from letting them fall. How would she ever be able to leave them after all they'd done for her? Somehow she had to find it in her heart to forgive them, but right now, it hurt too badly.

Chapter Eighteen

Marcus and Darla talked most of the way home. Randall listened but didn't join in. He had too much on his mind. Between the ranch, the weather, and Darla, he was stretched mighty thin. The thing was she was his priority. Taking care of her and figuring out how to get her to stay with them took precedence over everything else. His love for her knew no boundaries. Somehow he had to convince her that he and Marcus truly, deeply loved her.

As they neared home, Randall noticed that Darla had grown quiet and appeared tired. This was her first outing since the accident, and the trip had taken well over an hour. It was no wonder she was asleep on her feet. He grinned. It was actually her sweet ass. Her head rested on Marcus's shoulder. They looked good together.

Marcus raised his eyes and met Randall's. They were in perfect agreement. Darla would accept them and complete their family. The baby was an added bonus—provided she didn't lose it. There was still a chance she would miscarry. More than asking that the baby be healthy, Randall didn't overload the good Lord with petty requests. He saved up his prayers for the really big things that mattered. Darla and the baby mattered.

Marcus caught his attention as he pulled to a stop in the drive under the covered garage.

"I'll carry her in if you can start unloading," Marcus offered.

Randall laughed. "You think you're sneaky, don't you, little brother?"

Marcus shrugged, relinquishing his hold on the sleeping woman in his arms. Randall could tell it cost him to let her go. That one woman

could bring them to their knees seemed impossible to imagine. Still, history was full of men who'd fallen thanks to their love or lust for a woman. Look at Sampson and Delilah.

Randall followed Marcus inside, carrying their woman in his arms. He took the stairs without a problem, but negotiating the bed proved to be troublesome. She was sleeping so peacefully that he hated to wake her up. Still, she needed to get undressed and into bed. It had been a long day for her. She was still recovering from her accident. He suspected she shouldn't be out of the hospital yet anyway.

"Marcus, help me undress her."

Marcus and Randall each took a boot and removed it, letting it plop to the floor. Darla didn't move. Secondly, Randall unbuckled the belt and unzipped the pants before calling it quits and declaring her as comfortable as he could manage. He watched his brother patiently remove the jeans, then the socks and lastly, her shirt and bra.

The minute her breasts were loose, Randall groaned and tried to take a step backward, only to realize he'd stepped closer to her instead of backing away. Things could head south fast, Randall knew, if he didn't exert some manner of control. He pulled her more firmly against him and walked over to the bed. He gently laid her on the double mattress. Larger than a regular king-size bed, it sported four pillows and the softest sheets he'd ever slept on. This was where they'd spent hours exploring each other. Actually, they'd hogged the time and explored her more than she'd gotten to them. He would have to remedy that once she was healed and feeling better.

Marcus walked out of the bathroom and nodded at Randall.

"It's all ready," he said.

Randall smiled and picked her up and carried her to the bathroom where a bath had been drawn, complete with bath salts and her favorite milled soap. She stirred in his arms.

"What are you doing with me?" she asked, her voice slurred with sleep.

“Giving you a bath. You’re sore from the wreck and soaking in the tub will help with the soreness.”

Marcus called from the bedroom. “Remember not to get those wounds wet.”

Randall smiled to himself. Mother hen, he thought.

“I’m on it,” he called out.

“I just had a shower.” She was a little more awake now.

“Like I said, a soak in the tub will work wonders on the soreness. Don’t argue with me, Darla.”

“Fine, fine. I’ll soak in the tub and get all wrinkly,” she fussed.

Randall lifted her once again only to carefully lay her in the tub, making sure the water didn’t touch the bandage on her shoulder.

“If I leave you alone, are you going to be able to stay awake, or do you need me to sit with you?” he asked.

“I can stay awake,” she told him. “I’m not a child.”

“I’ll be back in a few minutes.” He closed the door behind him to keep the warmth in the room.

Marcus had the bed turned back and ready for her.

“It didn’t sound like she was none too pleased to take a nice bath. I thought all women loved to soak in the tub.”

“She’s just bitchy because of the baby hormones, and because she’s probably in pain and won’t say anything,” Randall told him.

“Damn, what can she have for pain that won’t hurt the baby?” he asked.

“Tylenol is all they put on her paperwork. If it is severe, we have to take her back for them to monitor her.”

“We need to get a pregnancy book so we can take care of her,” Marcus said.

“Good idea. We can order one off the Internet. See what you can find.”

Marcus nodded and left the room.

Randall pulled out her sleep shirt and some underwear and laid them on the bed. Then he checked the time and figured she had been

in long enough now. When he opened the door, he cursed. Her eyes were closed, and she made that cute snoring sound. The one good thing was that she hadn't slid into the water and gotten her bandage wet.

"Okay, sleepyhead. Let's get you out of there. I think your prediction is right. You look all wrinkly."

"Told you so," she managed to say around a yawn.

"So you did. Okay, up you go." He helped her stand up then step out of the tub.

Randall took a towel off the warming bar and began drying her off. She didn't protest, but she growled when he paid extra attention to her breast and her pussy. He couldn't help himself. Her breasts were so delightful. He wanted to run his tongue all around the nipple then suck it in his mouth to tease it with his tongue. Randall groaned and adjusted his dick trying to relieve some of the pressure.

"I suppose you're putting me to bed," she grouched.

"Soon as we get your T-shirt on, baby."

He carried her into the bedroom and helped her slip into the shirt and panties. She was a little bit incapacitated, though she wouldn't admit it and ask for help. So, he helped her without asking.

Darla finally stopped fighting him and relaxed. He suspected part of it was that she was tired and part of it was she realized she couldn't fight and win with him. He tried to hide his smile, but she noticed and glared at him.

"You know, you're not winning any brownie points with me."

"I didn't expect I was," he said as he covered her up in the bed.

"I'm just going to rest my eyes for awhile. Then I'll be up and fix dinner tonight."

He started to tell her she wasn't going to be fixing dinner, or breakfast, for that matter, until her shoulder healed, but she'd already closed her eyes and drifted away.

Randall eased away from the bed and turned to find Marcus watching him from the doorway.

“What?” he asked.

Marcus shrugged. “Just wishing, is all.”

“Wishing what?” Randall asked.

“That she loved us enough to forgive us.”

* * * *

Darla woke disoriented to a dark room. What time was it? The fact that the room was dark meant it was around dinner time. She should have been up cooking it already. Reaching for the bedside lamp, she winced. She had forgotten about her shoulder. It definitely didn't like being stretched out.

With the light on, she could see that the alarm clock had been turned around so she wouldn't be able to see the time. They were sneaky little devils she decided. When she looked at the time she huffed out a breath. It was past time for dinner—nearly nine o'clock at night. They'd let her sleep the day away. It didn't matter that she probably needed to. It was the principle of the matter. She had a job to do. Without the job, she had no reason to remain. Deep down, she wanted to be there to see if they could work things out.

The trip to the bathroom wore her out, but she made it on her own. Spending so much time in bed made her weak. She needed to be up doing something, or she'd never be able to get out of the bed. After tending to her needs, Darla dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt. They were soft and a little large on her. Perfect for her sore shoulder and muscles.

The trip down the stairs proved to be an ordeal in patience and balance. She held onto the banister for dear life as she maneuvered down the stairs. When she entered the living room, two sets of eyes widened. Marcus jumped to his feet and raced to pick her up with Randall right behind him.

“You shouldn't be out of bed, baby,” Marcus scolded in a soft voice.

"I can't stay in bed, or I'll get weaker," she informed him.

"At least let us help you up and down the stairs. It could be dangerous while you're weak and taking that medicine for nausea." Randall followed them back to the couch.

Marcus settled her onto the center of the couch, then sat beside her.

"I need to stop taking the medicine now anyway. I'm not getting sick in the mornings anymore." She rushed on when Randall started to speak. "If I start back, I can still take the medication."

"We'll see," Randall said.

Marcus squeezed her against him careful of her shoulder. She was tired of being treated like an invalid. It had its advantages, but the drawbacks by far outnumbered them. She changed the subject.

"What did you two have for dinner tonight?" she asked.

"Ham sandwiches," Marcus supplied.

"See, you're already back to your old ways. You should have woken me up so I could have fixed dinner. That is my job, you know.

"Until you are one hundred percent again, you're not doing anything but recovering," Randall insisted.

"Then you don't really need me after all." She swallowed hard and started to pull out of Marcus's arms.

"The hell we don't," Marcus said.

Randall echoed this with a thundering voice.

"You mean everything to us. We need you more than we need anything or anyone else in our lives." Randall sat on the edge of the couch and took her hands in his. "Don't leave us, baby."

"How am I supposed to trust you when you lied to me? If you lie about one thing, you'll lie about another."

"We admit we shouldn't have done what we did. There is no excuse, but don't condemn us for making one mistake. Part of any relationship is making mistakes. We are all going to make them. You included," he pointed out.

She drew in a shaky breath and decided they deserved to know why she wasn't sure if she could forgive them.

"I was engaged to be married to who I thought at the time was a wonderful man," she began. "He failed to tell me that he was already married to a woman in another town and had two children with her. When I found out and called him on it, he swore they were getting a divorce. I thought I was in love with him and believed him at first. Then his wife showed up at my apartment one day to inform me that he had done it in the past and would in the future." She stopped to swallow.

"She said she had no plans to divorce him because of the children. She was afraid he wouldn't pay child support if they were divorced. She had threatened to take him for everything he had if he tried to divorce her. She had proof of his infidelities, pictures that included me."

Darla couldn't look at them. She focused on the fire in the fireplace instead. The changing colors of the flames mesmerized her. She let it distract her for a few seconds.

"Darla. We aren't like him," Randall insisted. "Yes, we made a mistake. It was a serious one, but we did it because we love you and want you in our lives forever."

"Please forgive us and give us another chance," Marcus pleaded.

"I want to..." she began but stopped.

Did she really want to? Did she love them like she had loved her ex? Could she forget their lie and try again with them?

"What, baby?" Marcus encouraged her to continue.

"I want to try. I'm just so afraid of getting hurt again. You can understand that, can't you?" she asked.

"We know, Darla. Just give us a chance. That's all we're asking, just another chance to prove to you how much we love you."

Darla swallowed and nodded her head. She would do it. She'd give them another chance. She was carrying their baby, so they were irrevocably tied to each other regardless of it worked out or not. She

could afford to take one more chance on happiness. Because they did make her happy.

“She’s going to do it, Randall. She’s giving us another chance.” Marcus leaned in and kissed her long and deep.

Just as she got into his kiss, Randall pulled him out of the way and took control of her mouth. She asked herself how she could live without their kisses. They destroyed her and remade her all at the same time. Surely they could make it work. They really were nothing like her ex. They weren’t married, rarely left the ranch, and more than likely, she’d be with them when they were.

“What are you thinking so hard about?” Randall asked her.

“That I love you both and want us to be a family. I’m scared, though.”

“Give us some time. You’ll see. Everything will be fine,” Marcus added.

* * * *

Five months went by with everyone working hard to make things work. Darla felt like they were working too hard. Gone was the relaxed atmosphere of when she first came. Now, everything felt distorted. The men were over the top in everything they did for her. One of them was always close-by as if they were afraid she would leave again.

Finally, she’d had enough and sat them down one night after dinner to discuss it with them. She crossed her arms, let out a breath, and began.

“I want things to go back to how they were when I first got here.”

“What do you mean?” Randall asked.

“Things were easy. There wasn’t a cloud hanging over my head that said ‘be careful with me. I might break.’ Something has to give, or this isn’t going to work.”

“I guess we’re trying too hard,” Randall said.

Marcus sighed and leaned an arm on the mantel of the fireplace.

"I guess we don't know how to act to get you to trust us," he said.

"That's just it. I don't want you to act at all. I want you to be yourselves around me. I feel like we are all tiptoeing around each other. We might as well give up if this is how it's going to be from now on," Darla admitted.

"We want to make you happy, Darla. Were you happy before we lied to you?" Randall finally asked.

"Yes, very much so."

"Then no more trying to get it right. Marcus, we have to be ourselves. That's what I think she's saying."

"Exactly." Darla wrapped an arm around Randall's waist and hugged him.

Marcus walked over and pressed in behind her moving her hair aside so he could kiss her neck. Darla hummed her approval. She'd missed their impromptu lovemaking. Feeling Marcus pressed against her back, and her front all but plastered to Randall's, Darla could feel the beginnings of heat spreading throughout her body. It felt good, no, it felt great. She slipped her hands up Randall's chest to burrow between his skin and his shirt. She marveled all over again at how strong he was. The muscles in his shoulders rippled when her nails lightly scored them.

"Mmm, baby. You're asking for trouble." Randall's voice came out raspy.

"No, I'm not asking. I'm begging."

She unbuttoned the top two buttons on his shirt only to find he was wearing thermals. She growled in frustration. She would be so glad when winter was over with and they didn't wear so many damn clothes. Hands from behind her began unbuttoning and unzipping her jeans. Once they were loose at her waist, Marcus's hand snaked down her jeans and underwear to tease her pussy with his fingers.

Darla undulated trying to follow Marcus's fingers. He played all around her hungry cunt but didn't breach her pussy lips or touch that

little button that had her climbing the walls. She moaned in frustration. Marcus laughed before sinking his teeth into her shoulder and nipping her. He licked the tiny wound then wiggled his fingers near her clit. She would kill him if he didn't do something other than tease her.

Randall chose that moment to finish unbuttoning her shirt. He spread it off her shoulders. Marcus caught it and tied her hands behind her back with it. The thrill of being bound and at their mercy ramped up the thrill for her. Randall buried his face in the V of her breasts and kissed the top of each of them. Her bra was a front closure. He wasted no time disposing of that as well. It hung from her arms where they were tied behind her. She struggled to move her hands. She wanted something to hold on to, like maybe a big, thick cock. When Marcus leaned forward to lick the shell of her ear, she managed to get her hands on the bulge in his jeans and scratch her nails over the material covering his cock. Marcus groaned and backed away from her.

She missed the warmth at her back. She wondered what he was planning to do now.

It wasn't long before she found out. Hands gently pulled her jeans down as far as they would go with her boots still on. She heard Marcus curse and couldn't help the laughter that slipped out. Randall nipped one of her nipples, and she screeched in surprise. She'd been so centered on what Marcus was doing that she'd forgotten for an instant that Randall was there. She wouldn't forget again.

Balancing the two of them proved to be a major job, so she didn't try to keep up with them. Let the cards fall where they may. She was going to enjoy what they did to her and stop worrying about giving them equal time. There would be times when it would be just her and Randall like there would be times that there was just her and Marcus.

Suddenly, Marcus picked her up and laid her down on the couch mindful of her hands tied behind her. He and Randall each took a boot and pulled them off, tossing them toward the door. Marcus made quick work of her jeans and silky underwear, throwing them

somewhere in the vicinity of the kitchen. She would have a ball looking for all her clothes. It made her smile, and she knew they were on the right track now.

Now she was totally nude with the exception of the bra hanging off her shirt-bound hands. Randall knelt by the couch and began tormenting her breasts with his fingers. He pinched then licked. Sucked then twisted and sucked again. Soon she was moaning as her body began that long ride up to the top where her climax would send her over the side screaming.

Marcus spread her legs until he could fit between them with his head and shoulders. He draped one leg over the top of the sofa and the other one over his shoulder. Darla expected him to tease her much like Randall was doing. Instead, Marcus went right to her clit and began licking and sucking it until she was on a fast ride to the top.

Randall pulled away from her and unfastened his jeans. He pulled them down to his hips and let his cock free. It bobbed above her head, and she licked her lips in anticipation. She loved sucking their cocks. They were so different in size and taste. Just the thought of all that hard flesh between her lips drew a moan from her lips.

“Please, Randall.”

“What do you want, Darla?”

“I want your cock in my mouth.” She licked her lips again.

Marcus picked that moment to plunge two fingers inside her wet pussy. She screamed, and Randall fed her his dick. She swallowed around it and was rewarded with a groan from Randall when she did.

Between Marcus teasing her clit now and Randall’s cock filling her mouth, Darla was in heaven. She wanted it all. She wanted her men, and she wanted the baby. In that instant, she knew she could forgive them. They’d given her everything she’d ever wanted—a family and a home.

Randall pulled out of her mouth and leaned over until his balls were directly over her mouth. She reached out with her tongue and swiped it along the heavy sac.

“Suck them, Darla.” He lowered his balls to her mouth.

She sucked in one and rolled it with her tongue, then repeated it with the other ball. She went back and forth until he drew away and once again, fed his throbbing dick into her waiting mouth. She deep throated him and swallowed around the thick penis. He began fucking her mouth in earnest now. She knew he was close. She wanted him to come in her mouth.

Two fingers continued to pump in and out of her sopping pussy. Marcus ran the tip of his tongue all around her clit only he didn’t touch it now. Frustration filled her even as Randall began losing his rhythm. He wasn’t going to last much longer.

“Do you want my tongue on your clit, baby?” Marcus asked.

“Please. I want you to lick it for me. I’m so close, Marcus.”

He danced around her clit for what seemed like long minutes. Then he removed his fingers from her pussy and pulled her juices down to her back hole. He rimmed it with a finger before going back to fucking her with his tongue.

Randall danced as he plunged in and out of her waiting mouth.

“I’m going to come, Darla. Take it all, baby.” He began to spurt in her mouth.

She swallowed, struggling to get it all. Just as she swallowed, Marcus pinched her clit and pushed his thumb into her ass all at the same time. She exploded over the top of the mountain she’d been climbing and flew. She barely managed to swallow the cum Randall was giving her for the pleasure suffusing her body right then. It went on and on as Marcus fucked her ass with his thumb and pulled on her clit with his fingers.

Finally, she floated to the ground licking her lips and panting from the explosion Marcus had given her. She reached down for him, but he stood up and released her legs.

“Careful. I want you bent over the arm of the couch, baby. I’m going to fuck that hot pussy.”

Randall helped her roll off the couch and then stand up. Her arms were still tied behind her back. He untied them and helped her move them until she had the circulation going again. Then he positioned her over the arm of the couch with her ass in the air. She felt Marcus behind her running a finger through her pussy lips. Randall walked around to the front of the couch. He sat on the couch so that her body stretched over his lap. Her breasts hung down and bobbed when she moved.

“I think I’m going to enjoy playing with these tits while Marcus fucks you.”

“Please, squeeze them, Randall,” she pleaded. “I want to come again.”

“I’ll take good care of these nipples. Don’t you worry, baby.” Randall took one of her nipples in his fingers and pulled it until her breast grew taut.

The pain was so delicious. The slight sting registered deep in her womb. The spark ignited a flame that had the potential of becoming a forest fire given the right elements. She knew the two of them had what it took to send her screaming over the edge time and time again.

Marcus positioned his cock at her entrance. He rubbed the head of it up and down her slit, spreading her cream all over the tip of his cock. When she was pushing back against him, he swatted her ass.

“Be still.”

She whimpered. She needed him inside of her. Just when she didn’t think he was ever going to fill her, Marcus plunged in almost to the hilt sending her shooting over the top without any more teasing by them. He fucked her in earnest now. All the while, Randall plucked and pinched her nipples sending her right back up that long road. She was going to come again.

Marcus plunged inside of her over and over. His hands held her hips still as he tunneled in and out of her hot pussy. She could feel him all the way to her womb.

“I’m close. I’m going to come,” Marcus said.

“Fuck me harder, Marcus.”

He powered in and out of her over and over until she felt that piece of herself ready to explode around him.

Randall must have sensed that she was ready to come because he scooted down couch so that he could take her breasts into his mouth. He squeezed them together and sucked in both nipples at the same time. He nipped them and then laved them with his tongue. When he sucked them in again, she exploded.

Her climax triggered Marcus's, and he held himself deep within her as he shot cum against her cervix. He growled when she continued to milk him with her vaginal muscles.

“Whatever the fuck you're doing down there, don't stop. This feels amazing,” he told Randall.

Finally, they released her from the mind numbing orgasm that wouldn't quit. She collapsed over the arm. Marcus and Randall gently picked her up and laid her back on the couch. She grinned like a crazy person. Everything would be okay. She found she could forgive them as long as they could be themselves. She didn't want lap dogs. She wanted the two men who'd taken her to heaven and back. And it looked like they'd returned for good.

“I love you two guys,” she whispered still out of breath.

“We love you, too,” they both told her.

“I think we're going to be very happy together.”

She laughed when they whooped with joy and fought to each kiss her. This is what she wanted. Her men back and those wild Montana nights they gave her.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marla Monroe lives in the southern part of the United States. She writes sexy romance from the heart and often puts a twist of suspense in her books. She is a nurse and works in a busy hospital but finds plenty of time to follow her two passions, reading and writing. You can find her in a bookstore or a library at any given time when she is not at work or writing. Marla would love for you to visit her at her blog, thearlamonroe.blogspot.com and leave a comment, or visit her website www.marlamonroe.com

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