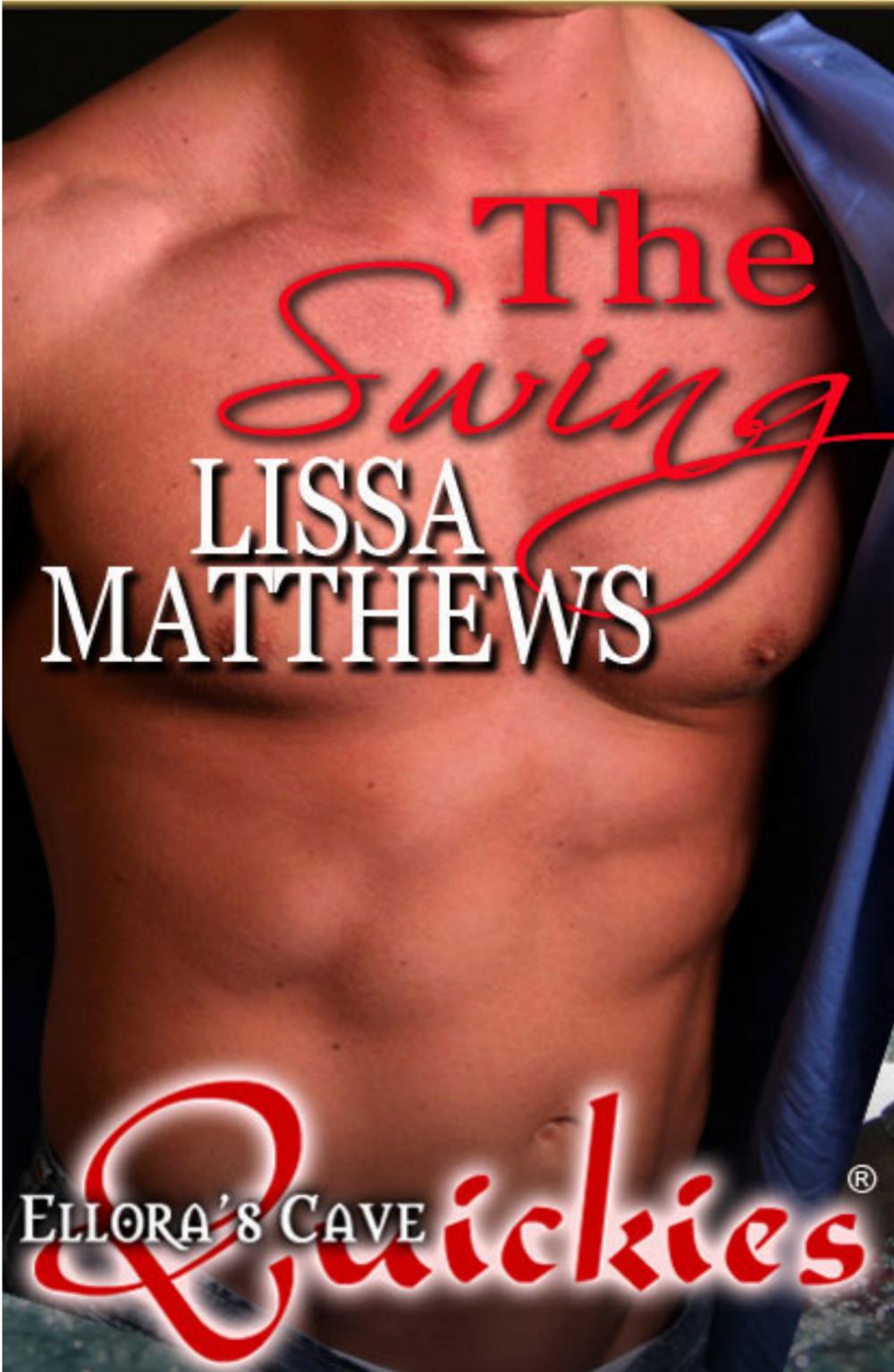


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



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## **The Swing**

*Lissa Matthews*

Two years after his brother's death in Afghanistan, Jethro is doing well. His handmade porch swing business is booming, his hip injury has healed and he's still in love with Caitlyn. He knows he should resist her, but can't, and pulls her into his darkly sensual world of sex and spankings.

Caitlyn has grieved, created a life for herself and has finally come to terms with her need for Jethro, her dead husband's brother. With no small measure of hesitation, she takes a fateful step—daring him to turn her and their chance at happiness away.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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The Swing

ISBN 9781419928659

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Edited by Mary Moran

Cover art by Syneca

Electronic book publication June 2010

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# ***THE SWING***

**Lissa Matthews**

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## **Chapter One**

She got out of the car and walked up the dusty drive to the bottom step of his front porch. He'd known she would come eventually. She'd taken her own sweet time about it, however, and he couldn't say he was happy about having been kept waiting. He was tired of living with this need inside when there was an answer, a cure. Albeit a stubborn one.

"Hello, Jethro."

"Caitlyn."

She had the prettiest, softest voice and she was a better woman than a man like him deserved. Didn't mean he was willing to give up the chance to have her though. He was country, she was city and he was the last man on earth she should be with. He was her brother-in-law, she was his dead brother's wife. They couldn't do this, shouldn't do this. They couldn't be, shouldn't be together and there were a million reasons why, but he'd be damned if he'd turn her away. Neither of them could deny the feelings. Not when his whole family had known for years, not when his brother lay in the dirt in his arms, telling him it was okay that he love her. He needed more than the absolution of his twin, more than any church could ever give him, but he'd take her, take her body and live with her contempt after.

"You said if I ever came back through this way, I should stop by."

She must have been visiting his parents or sister. There was no other reason for her to be in this neck of the woods. "Yes, I did." He'd said it out of courtesy, fully expecting she wouldn't, always hoping, knowing deep down she would.

She took one step up then another until she was standing just to the side of him, looking down as he swung back and forth slowly in the double porch swing. Her petite, full-figured body was covered in a pretty yellow and white knee-length sundress. Her

feet were clad in a pair of yellow strappy sandals and her toes were painted a bright shade of purple.

Jethro liked looking at her. Always had. She had the deepest green eyes he'd ever seen and the truest strawberry blonde hair that hung down her back in one long sheet unless she had it pulled up in a ponytail like she did today. She had an all-knowing look about her, even though she was soft-spoken and hesitant in her approach toward him.

"Did I come at a bad time?"

"Nope." He raised his gaze to her chest, to the little nipples poking through the thin cotton of her dress. "You wearing a bra under that thing?"

"Sort of. The dress has the wires and cups sewn in because it's backless."

She was every fantasy he'd had for the last ten years. "Uh-huh. Panties?"

She blushed so pretty. "Yes."

"Take 'em off."

"What?"

"You heard me. Take 'em off."

"Jethro, I..."

"What are you doing out here, Caitlyn? I told you what would happen if you came back. I told you I'd fuck you and that if you showed up, I would take it to mean that's what you want too. I told you to come by if you wanted it, otherwise to stay the hell away. You're here, so take off the panties. I won't say it again."

Awareness dawned. "But... Out here?"

He nodded. "Out here. Not as if anyone's around but us."

She didn't move right away and Jethro was content to wait until she was ready. He wasn't in any hurry at the moment. He would be once he got inside her for the first time, but not yet.

She finally pulled the skirt of her dress up her thighs until she could reach under and tug her panties down. He saw them as they slid down her over her knees and landed at her feet, a bright yellow piece of lace pooled on top of her sandals. She stepped out of them and looked expectantly at him again.

"Good girl, Caitlyn." He stopped swinging and focused on her face as he lifted his hips off the wooden bench and unfastened his jeans. He liked how her eyes widened when he pulled his cock out, all hard and angry purplish-red. He shucked his t-shirt and tossed it at her feet in the direction of her panties. "Climb on."

"Just like that?"

She was stalling. He wasn't going to give her the option of walking away, of giving her an out, of making it easy for her. "Yes."

"Will it hold us both?" She looked skeptical, as though she wasn't sure it would. He fought the urge to smile. Of course it would hold them. He'd built it, hung it, sat on it almost every night jacking off while thinking of her.

"Yes. Climb on." He held out his hand to her, and when she took it, he tugged her down over his thighs. The skirt of her dress rode up her legs and he liked the sight of the creamy-white skin against the dark blue denim of his jeans.

With his hand on her lower back and his fingers just brushing the top of her ass, he pulled her close, closer still until she could slide down on his cock. Her pussy was wet, easing the penetration into her body.

"Didn't know you'd be so tight."

"It's been a long, long time." Her hands gripped his shoulders as she tested the length and breadth of him, lifting up then dropping back down. "Didn't know you'd be so big."

Jethro laughed and nipped her shoulder. "Don't know why not. I'm a big man."

He took her mouth in a hard kiss, tasting, not for the first time, the sweet temptation of the big city girl she'd tried to become. She kept him up at night, thoughts

of her keeping his mind charged and his dick hard. He bit her tongue and tried to swallow her whole. And then...he started them swinging.

Just a small motion, front then back...front then back, the straightening and bending of his legs sending his cock deeper inside her. Her small nails dug into his skin and she wobbled slightly. "That's my girl. Hold on for the ride."

"Feels so good."

He kissed her neck and held her tighter, using his teeth to mark her. "Yes it does," he said, licking at the redness left from the sucking of his mouth.

She moaned into his hair, moaned into his shoulder, moaned against his lips when he picked up speed in the swing. His boots came up off the floor when they swung forward and pushed her into him. When they swung backward, her head dropped back and her dress pulled tight over her tits.

The swing hadn't been built for this purpose, but after this afternoon, he wouldn't be able to look at it any other way. It was always going to be theirs now. Whether she came back or not, the swing was theirs, sacred.

He pulled her hair from the ponytail and sifted his fingers through the strands. It fell down her back in a fall of red, and when she arched, dropping her head back farther, the ends brushed his thighs. If he were naked, it would be an amazing erotic touch.

The dress was, as she'd said, backless and his fingertips drew circles on her skin. Her nipples stood out against the thin material and he slipped his hands under the straps, gently tugging them down her over her shoulders, exposing just the upper swells. It wasn't enough, but at the same time it was very sexy seeing her like that.

She was the one woman he shouldn't want and the one woman he was bound and determined to have.

He buried his face in her chest, licked at the salt and sweat in the valley between her breasts. Her arms wrapped around his shoulders and she rocked her pelvis in tight,

short motions. She fucked herself on him as he held her against his body, as he used the movement of the swing to propel them back and forth.

"We shouldn't be doing this."

"But we are."

"I won't come back."

"Okay."

"Damn you, Jethro."

"Yes, Caitlyn. I know."

He felt her tears on his neck and her body shuddered in orgasm. Her muscles pulled and pulsed over his cock and he still rocked them, still screwed her until his own come shot into her, matching her throb for throb. And that's what this was. A screwing, a fucking. It wasn't soft and sweet. It wasn't tender, even though he had the most tender feelings toward her. He couldn't stop wanting her. No matter how many times he saw her, talked to her, fought with her, he couldn't stop wanting her.

She was right in damning him. He was damned the moment they met. He was damned when she walked down the aisle to marry his brother. He was damned the day his brother was put in the ground. He'd been damned for years and would remain so. He coveted his brother's wife, the one woman in the world he shouldn't want but couldn't live without having.

He held her for a long time until her breathing calmed and she lifted her head.

"We can't be together."

She was wrong. "I know."

"And I mean it, this can't happen again. This *won't* happen again."

"I know."

"Stop being so fucking agreeable." She pushed against his chest and scrambled off his lap. She righted her dress and backed away.

He knew the come would slide down her thighs. He'd used no protection and she'd asked for none. They both knew he couldn't get her pregnant. "What do you want me to be? Angry? Sad? What, Caitlyn? What do you want me to be?"

"I want you to feel the same turmoil that I do, Jethro. I want you to hurt as much as I do."

"How do you know I don't?"

"Because you...you're so distant, so callous, so in control."

He stopped the swing and stood. His leg pained him today and had for the last week. It always did around this time of year more so than at other times. It was the second anniversary of the day he'd pulled Marcus out of the upside-down Humvee. It was the day his brother died from war wounds. It was the day he let himself hope Caitlyn could finally belong to him. He hated himself sometimes for wanting her so much, but more than he hated himself, he loved her.

He took one step then another and another until he had her backed up against a post on the porch. "He was my twin. He was every other thought in my head. He was the one person I loved more than anything in this life besides you. He was the last of my family. He was your husband."

Jethro kissed the corner of her quivering mouth and licked softly at the tear streaming down her cheek. "I do feel pain, every day. I have the physical scars to prove it. I have the nightmares that wake me up in the middle of the night. I have... Caitlyn, I have the broken heart beating inside my chest. I do feel pain. I do hurt. And fucking you today on that swing I made for us to share was the best and worst mistake."

He pulled her bottom lip in between his teeth and tugged, sucked. He took her mouth in a scorching, searing kiss as he held her captive between his body and the wood at her back. He could drown in her taste, and one day he'd have his face buried between her thighs, drowning in her creamy, hot cunt.

"I have to leave."

“Yes, you do. You have to keep running away from this. You have to keep being the strong one, the one able to resist.”

“You bastard. Be a man. Don’t let me go.”

She was crying harder now, beating on his chest with her fists, and he let her. He let her take it all out on him because he didn’t know what else to do. This time he was the one held captive. She had him pinned against the front wall of the house, her mouth devouring his, her tongue so, so deep in his mouth. The moment he started to wrap his arms around her though, she broke free and ran out to her car.

She drove off, spinning her tires. He watched after her until the dust settled then fastened his jeans back. He started to sit on the swing again, but instead went inside the cool, dark house.

Unless he had her, nothing would make much sense. She didn’t seem to understand that he didn’t let her go as she accused him of doing. She chose to leave. She chose to run just as he’d told her she had to keep doing.

Nothing would bring Marc back. Nothing would stop Jethro from loving his brother’s widow. Nothing would ever feel right without her now that he’d had her.

He glared at the dozen or so beer bottles inside the fridge then slammed the door. It wasn’t alcohol he wanted to drink. He wanted to drink from Caitlyn, from her mouth, from her cunt. Instead of beer, instead of Caitlyn, he went back outside, this time out the back door toward to woodshed. He’d work himself into exhaustion, just as he’d done nearly every day for the last year and a half. Between the sex and the woodworking, maybe he could sleep one full night without seeing things he couldn’t have anymore.

It was then he remembered the small scrap of yellow lace still lying in the same place she’d nudged them to when she took them off. Shit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Caitlyn let the tears fall without even trying to wipe them away. It was a hard day for everyone and she'd just made it harder on herself and on Jethro by going to see him. She'd known exactly what she was doing though. She'd known what going by his house meant, but damn if she could stop herself. She had to see him, the man who looked so much like her dead husband, but at the same time looked so different that she sometimes couldn't see any resemblance at all.

Marc had been gone for two years. She'd been in love with him and with his brother for ten years. Love at first sight. Both of them. Marc for his light, for his humor, for his ready smile and mischievous eyes, Jethro for his darkness, his brooding, his wicked and intense stares that stripped her bare in a room of crowded people. She'd fallen for both and she'd lost one, her husband. If she wasn't careful, she was going to lose the other one.

That thought just made her cry harder. She and Jethro had been through so much together in the past twenty-four months, though the last eight or so had been hell. They were growing apart in more than just the miles that separated them. He rarely answered her calls anymore, he and his parents were no longer on speaking terms, and she knew he suffered too.

Six months after his death, she'd moved from the home she shared with Marc into an apartment in the city where memories weren't haunting her around every corner. She'd started a small business of her own to keep her mind and hands busy, which had grown into a wonderful and profitable little cottage company. And she'd kept up with her friends, or rather, they kept up with her. They wouldn't let her wallow for long, and if she was out of touch for more than a couple of days, they were knocking on the door. Blessed as she was when Marc was alive, she was blessed still after his death and it was time to make another change.

The closer she got to the downtown skyline, the more she wanted to turn and head away from it, back toward Jethro and his small house in the country. She could make it on her own, but she didn't want to be alone anymore. She'd tried to deny the feelings

she'd had for so long for him. She'd tried to accept those same feelings and work her way through them, tried to let them go, but she couldn't. Her heart wasn't in that. Her heart was all tied up and wound around Jethro.

It wasn't until she pulled into the underground parking garage of her building that she realized the tears had stopped falling and what was left had dried on her cheeks. Jethro's come had dried on the insides of her thighs and her pussy was still pulsing, still feeling his length inside her.

She wanted him again. Now. And her panties were still on his front porch.

## **Chapter Two**

"You've been moping around here for days, Cait. What's wrong?"

Margaret, Caitlyn's best friend from the womb, or so it seemed, set a mug of hot coffee in front of her. The strong aroma hit her senses, jarring her out of part of her melancholy. "Marc has been gone two years and I fucked his brother on the anniversary, that's what's wrong."

"You're still hung up on that? You went to see him though. I thought you were over thinking that way."

Yeah, not so much. "No."

"Hmm. Was he good?" Margaret's voice had dropped to a conspiratorial whisper and Caitlyn mustered up a smile.

She could lie and say he was awful, but she wouldn't. There was no way to make it believable. "He was." She could still feel him inside her, flooding her sex with his. "I've called him at least half a dozen times a day since then to apologize for saying harsh things, for running away, but he's not answering and he's not returning my messages. I think I hurt him."

Margaret took her hand and squeezed. "Then you should go back out there. He can't very well ignore you if you're dogging his every step. Besides, Marc wouldn't want you to be miserable."

"Even if what made me happy was his own twin?"

"Yes. He wouldn't want you to torture yourself like this, I know that. More importantly, you know that."

"I loved them both, but I think I loved Jethro more." She buried her face in the throw pillow she'd been hugging to her chest, groaning at the admission. Maybe she'd just loved them in different ways because they were such different men.

"I think we've all known that. They were brothers, but when you and Jethro looked at each other, the air sizzled and crackled. It was like lightning could strike at any moment. It was instantaneous and sharp. With Marc it was soft and sweet and sexy. It's just flat-out naughty and hot when you look at Jethro."

She smiled still, but the tears she'd been trying to keep from falling dropped onto her knees. She hadn't cried over Marc in months, but she cried regularly over Jethro. She had loved Marc, but Margaret was right in confirming what Caitlyn knew to be true. She'd loved Jethro on sight and it was always electric.

"People will whisper."

"Who cares? Let them whisper. Let them talk. All that matters is you and Jethro making peace with these feelings between you. Guilt over Marcus isn't going to bring him back and isn't going to change how the two of you feel about each other. Why are you fighting it so hard?"

"I don't know. I am not scared of anything, but...Jethro told me I needed to keep running away from him. What if he means it?"

"Sounds like he's just trying to protect you. Caitlyn, you're wasting *your* life grieving for something you've never given yourself a chance to have."

She hated when Margaret was right and she was nearly always right. She wasn't up to admitting it verbally, so instead she nodded.

"Good. Now I have to get to work. Not all of us are well-to-do as you."

Caitlyn laughed and saw Margaret to the door. She was hardly well-to-do, but she had received benefits from the Army and the life insurance policy Marc had on himself had been more than substantial. She knew another, separate smaller policy had been taken out by Marc and the beneficiary was Jethro. She didn't know what he'd done with

the money. Though smaller in amount, it was still fairly large. The policies had been taken out not long after she and Marc married.

Nearly ten years later, Marc had been killed in action and Jethro honorably discharged for injuries sustained during war. And her love hadn't diminished, not for Marc, and not for Jethro. He had written to her here and there while they'd been deployed. She hadn't really been surprised about the letters, but at the same time she had been. She cherished both sets of letters...Marc's and Jethro's. What had been funny about it though, was Marc talked about Jethro and Jethro talked about Marc. Being in the middle of the two of them, knowing she was loved by both had been something she'd never expected. They were the same but they were different and the feelings shared were different.

She could still remember the day Jethro knocked on her door to tell her about the blast that had killed her husband and taken a chunk out of his own leg. Marc told Jethro to take care of her, to watch out for her, keep loving her, and that had broken her heart, that even he'd realized it was Jethro who held her soul.

Not long after that, the dreams had started. Dark, wicked, sexual dreams of her and Jethro. While he had nightmares of war, she was having erotic fantasies that woke her in the midst of orgasms with his name on her lips. Some nights she never went back to sleep, so she'd get up and write about the dreams.

She had even sold a few of the short stories, using the money she made to purchase items to send in care packages to Marc and Jethro's unit. She'd also taken up baking as a hobby and would take the cakes and brownies she made to other widows and wives. Then there were the sewing classes she took. Learning to make clothes that fit her, flattered her. She fell in love with sundresses and bright fabrics and she'd taken to making them a lot, filling her closet with all different colors, hoping the light would come back one day. It all kept her busy and she'd needed that. Life as she'd known it was gone and even though it had been two years, until she'd seen Jethro last week, fucked him on the front porch swing, she'd been walking around in a fog.

She hadn't gone out there for sex but he'd looked so good, so hot. He was her wet dream, her every naughty thought. He'd let his hair grow out, gotten a few tats and hadn't shaved when she saw him. When he said climb on, she'd been helpless against him, against the hunger that gnawed at her, clawed at her. Wanting him consumed her and her cool, calm persona had come crumbling down while he was buried so deep inside her.

Without thinking about it, she picked up her phone and dialed his number. On the fifth ring she started to hang up, but...

"Hello, Caitlyn."

"You answered."

"You keep calling. I can only resist for so long."

"I... I want to see you."

"We talked about this."

"I don't care anymore, Jethro. I need you and you need me. You love me, dammit." And he did. She knew it, always knew it. Even with the double-digit miles between them from county line to big city lights, she knew it, could feel it.

"Doesn't change anything."

She flopped back on the couch. "It changes everything."

"How?"

"We can try."

"You feel guilty about loving me, Caitlyn. We can't try when you feel bad about it."

"I know, but I can't stay away from you anymore either. Please, Jethro."

She hated that she was on the verge of tears again. She couldn't handle rejection from him. Not now. Not when she'd really listened and thought about Margaret's arguments. Marg hadn't said anything Caitlyn didn't already know, but having it spoken out loud was always like a bucket of ice water being thrown.

"I don't want only part of you. I won't be second best again. I did it for Marc because he was my brother and he loved you. I won't do it for anyone or any other reason ever again. Even him."

"I know."

"Have you been dreaming again?"

She was shocked. "Yes. How do you know?"

"The nights I stayed with you after I got out of the hospital for the infection. You were dreaming, moaning, calling out my name. It took me a few times to realize you were dreaming, not actually calling me."

"Oh." She was so embarrassed. Even though he couldn't see her at that moment, she turned her head toward the back cushions and buried her face.

"Come to me, Caitlyn. But make damn sure this is what you want. I won't let you walk away again. I won't let you rip my heart out and stomp it all to hell. I love you, but I won't let you break me for a third time."

And she knew she had. She deserved the warnings and she would do well to heed them. If she went to him, she had to be prepared to stay. It wouldn't be fair to either of them otherwise. "I understand."

"Then I'll be waiting."

\* \* \* \* \*

He disconnected the line and rubbed at the two aches, first the leg and hip that had been surgically restructured more times than he cared to think about. Then his cock. It was as near a constant ache as his injured leg. Every time he thought about her, every time he tried not to think about her, every time he slept, showered, ate... It all led to her.

When he was building the swing that hung on his porch, after he got back from the VA, it was his way of dealing with the death of Marc. It gave him something to focus on, kept him sane, kept him from losing every bit of what little desire to live he had left.

He built the swing with little use of power tools, shaping the wood by hand, sanding, carving the designs on the back. It gave him his life back. He'd even managed to turn it into a small business. He now made swings for others, donating half of what he made to a fund he set up for the families and wives like Caitlyn who lost their men to war. It wasn't much, but he was trying to do something good, trying to pay back, trying to make some fucking sense of it all. His woodworking and Caitlyn were the only things in his life that made any sense and that was fine by him.

His family had all but disowned him after he returned from the war. Marc was the favorite son. Marc had the wife, had all the promise, but when he'd followed Jethro into the Army after the attack on the twin towers, Jethro had been on the outs with everyone. Except Caitlyn. She hadn't hated him and that got him through more than she would ever realize, even Marc's death.

Her pain over losing Marc, her pain over Jethro's injuries, her pain from being torn between the brothers... Even if he'd died instead of Marc, she'd have hurt just as much, maybe more. What they shared, Jethro and Caitlyn, was something that couldn't be hidden, no matter how hard they tried. She'd chosen Marc and that had been enough. There was never bitterness or jealousy and it didn't change the close relationship he had with Marc. But his brother was gone now...

Jethro hadn't meant to fuck Caitlyn on the swing that day, but when she showed up like that, out of the blue and in that pretty sundress, looking every inch like summer itself, he hadn't be able to keep from doing it. And it felt right, if that was even a good word to use. Fucking her on that swing had felt right. It was homage to life, it was finally taking, tasting, letting go. He could breathe again.

He didn't know if she'd come back, if she meant what she'd said about being ready to try. He just knew he had to keep hoping and keep moving through the days.

He picked up a sandpaper block and set to work on the slats that would form the bench of another swing. Moving with the grain of the wood, he sanded in long, even strokes, forward and back. Woodworking had been something he and Marc loved

doing since they took that woodshop class in high school. Both worked in construction after, learning how to build more, assemble, learning the tools of the trade. It was hard work, but the honesty of it made them both happy. They'd even talked about opening their own business, but then 9/11 happened and everything changed.

Jethro leaned down and blew at the dust collecting on the wood then ran his hand over it. Smooth. It was so smooth. He moved a little so he could get to the other end of the slat when he heard his name from behind. He turned and couldn't keep the shock from his voice or likely even his face.

"Clarissa?"

"Hi."

What the hell was his sister doing there? "Hi."

"Surprised to see me, huh?"

"You could say that. What are you doing here?"

She stepped into the workshop, slowly looking around. "I wanted to talk to you, see you. How are you, Jethro?"

"I'm doing okay."

"Good." She didn't say anything else for a while and the silence was becoming uncomfortable, even for him. But then she spoke again, her voice soft and hesitant. "I was looking through some pictures of Marc the other day after Cait had come to see me. We had lunch and sat and talked for a little while."

She walked, starting on the left side next to the work surfaces against the outer wall. Every now and again she would touch something, run her fingers through sawdust. He wanted to urge her along in what she was saying, but didn't. He just let her take her time, figure out what she needed to say next. One of the things he'd learned after he got out of the hospital was that he needed to learn to be more patient with people. There really only was one life everyone got and while he might not be happy at times with being alive, he was glad he woke up every morning.

"Do you know there are no pictures of you, Marc and Caitlyn together except for those taken at their wedding? I hadn't realized that before."

He hadn't realized it either and he didn't know what to say. Saying he was sorry wouldn't do anyone any good and he wasn't sure what he had to be sorry about.

"Do you still love her?"

And there it was. No one had ever come right out and asked it, but he'd always wondered if they knew. "Yes." He wouldn't deny it. Not now.

"Does she love you?"

Clarissa was standing close now. When they were kids, he and Marc called her Risi, but when she turned thirteen, she'd declared herself too old for nicknames and had demanded they call her Clarissa. He smiled at the memory of a knobby-kneed, know-it-all girl standing there, hands on her hips, facing down her older brothers with all the fury that teenagers possess.

She'd turned into a beautiful girl, with long dark hair and bright hazel eyes. She'd stayed rail thin and wore a diamond that probably weighed more than she did on her left hand. Jethro felt a pang of guilt and a bit of sadness. He hadn't even known she was seeing anyone, let alone engaged. They'd barely spoken in two years.

And it seemed such a waste. When his parents stopped talking to him, blaming him, being angry at him, he'd somewhat understood because he was angry and blamed himself too, but he had hoped Clarissa would still be there for him. After awhile though, he'd given up that she would come around. She and Marc were the angels, the light in their parents' eyes. The first and only time in his life that Jethro had conformed and followed orders was when he'd entered the military. His family had been proud, had hoped the Army would help him find whatever it was that kept him so restless and at odds with most people, but then Marc enlisted too and all bets were off. Their parents were pissed as hell, thinking that Jethro was influencing his twin when in fact he'd tried to do everything he could to dissuade Marc.

Clarissa had been the only one to support the decision after that, but once Marc died and their parents blamed Jethro...well, he shouldn't have expected she would defy their wishes that he was no longer welcome with them.

She was here now though and he was glad to see her, realized how much he'd missed her, how much he'd missed his family.

"Yes, she does."

Clarissa nodded. "Then why aren't y'all together?"

"It's been hard on her."

"It's been hard on everyone, Jethro, including you. Probably harder on you than on any of the rest of us, but... If she loves you and you love her..."

"She loved Marc too."

"And Marc was the better man and he'd want her to be happy. He was always the more gracious of the two of you, sharing his toys and things. You were always more stingy."

He might have taken offense had a small smile not been playing around her mouth. Marc might have been the more generous, but Jethro was always the one she'd come to when she needed a shoulder to cry on or a boy taken in hand. "I know he would and so do I. She just has to make it through this last little barrier."

"I know you think we all hate you, but we don't. Mom and Dad don't. They're just angry that Marc is gone, not that you're still alive. You know them, they've always been tough with change and loss and acceptance. They don't like either. They'll come back around."

"Even if Caitlyn and I get together?"

"Yes. They saw it too, Jethro. All those years ago in the wedding pictures. The camera captured you so well, the way you looked at her. Even Marc didn't look at her in quite the same way. It was so naked, so raw the love for her on your face. She's lucky to have had the two of you to love her."

Speaking of love... And getting the focus off him... "Who is he? The one who gave you that rock?"

Clarissa smiled from ear to ear. "Well, do you remember Freddie Foureyes?"

## Chapter Three

The area around the grave marker was pristine with fresh flowers and a new American flag. There were no weeds, no dead grass, nothing that would mar the vision of the stone. By all accounts, he should be the one in the ground, not Marc. And would have been had Marc not insisted on riding shotgun in the first Humvee. It was Jethro's spot, always Jethro's spot, but at the last minute Marc hopped in and grinned. Most couldn't tell the brothers apart in full uniform, so no one thought to question it. He should have though and that thought still haunted him.

"Did you fucking know something was going to happen that day? Did you fucking have some ESP thing going on and knew you wouldn't come out of it alive?"

There was no one to answer. There was no sound at all save for the leaves in the wind and a few birds. The sun was out, the weather was mild, and he was visiting the grave for the first time since the funeral. It was so quiet out there among the dead, the breeze gently blowing, the sun warming the ground.

If a cemetery ever fit anyone, the small churchyard cemetery adjacent to the church they grew up going to until Jethro decided the path leading to the pearly gates wasn't for him, fit Marc. Marc wouldn't have wanted the pomp and circumstance of a full military funeral at a National Cemetery. He would have wanted exactly what he'd had, the people who knew him best gathered around, remembering his smile, his laugh, his pranks, his unselfish goodness.

How twins could be so completely different yet born only moments apart baffled Jethro, but different they'd been.

"I told her if she came back, I wouldn't let her leave again. I love her and I know I can live without her, but if she comes back out to the house she's mine and I'm keeping

her. And you always knew how I felt about her. I didn't even have to tell you, it was that strange twin bond thing."

He didn't know what he'd been waiting for. Maybe he just needed to say it out loud, to tell Marc in no uncertain terms what he planned to do. He wasn't looking for absolution or approval. He knew Marc would know, that Marc had expected Jethro and Caitlyn to be together after he died. But here, in this place, his brother's final resting place, Jethro needed to tell him. He needed it to come from him instead of the memory of Marc's words of "It's okay. I know you love her and will make her happy." He needed to say it. Marc died after those words, a small smile on his face, his body limp, with peace etching itself across his face.

They'd had to pry Marc out of the Jethro's arms there on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere Afghanistan, just as they'd had to pry Caitlyn away from them both when they landed at Andrews Air Force Base.

He knelt on the ground, plucking at grass blades. "I'll take care of her, Marc. If she comes to me, I'll take care of her. I swear I will."

He stayed there for long minutes. He told Marc about the swings, about the family, about the war that was still going on. He told Marc of the small house he owned on the outside of town, away from everyone and everything, that he'd become a hermit, but that Clarissa had come to visit him, talk with him, that she was getting married. He told Marc he loved him when he didn't know what else to say. It was time to get back to work, time to get back to the business of living. Marc would understand and wouldn't want but the best for them all.

Standing from such a position was always hard on him now with the injuries to his hip and thigh. The limp was always more pronounced when he'd been in one position too long. The low-slung seat in the Mustang didn't help either, but he'd been driving the muscle car ever since he could drive, upgrading every few years, and he didn't figure that would change anytime soon.

Breaking Benjamin blasted from the speakers when he turned the key in the ignition and he had to laugh. Benjamin screaming into the mic could wake the dead.

And suddenly, having talked to Marc, having been there to connect with him when he'd been avoiding it for so long, lifted a weight. He felt lighter, able to breathe, and as if there were possibilities awaiting him that he'd been closed off to since returning to the States.

The drive back to his house was made with the windows down, the stereo at max volume and a smile on his face. The smile turned into a full-fledged grin when he pulled into the dirt drive and saw Caitlyn there, swinging on his front porch swing. A small bag sat beside the front door and her gaze was part fear, part uncertainty, part hunger when he walked up the porch steps.

"I could hear you coming a mile away."

"Guess it's a good thing I live in the middle of nowhere then."

He joined her on the swing and waited for her to say something else, anything else. He was horny as hell seeing her there, knowing what it meant. And this horny was the fun, randy, let's-rut-like-animals kind. He hadn't experienced it in so many years, not since before the war, before Caitlyn married Marc, not since...

She was wearing another of those sundresses she fancied. This one was green with big white and blue flowers. Her feet were bare and it was then he noticed her sandals sitting on top of her bag by the door. He also noticed the ring on her left hand was gone. He expected to feel regret, sadness, something, but he didn't and those things hadn't been reflected in her eyes when she looked up at him.

She took his hand, slid her fingers between his and held on tight. "I'm ready," she said softly.

It was a solemn promise, one he'd been waiting to hear. "I know. So am I."

Jethro turned his head and saw the smile just beginning to tug the corners of her mouth up. "How do we do this?"

He arched an eyebrow. It was like being on a first date, and yet it was like comfort and home all at the same time. "We seem to both know how to do it, or have you forgotten since the other day?"

"I don't mean that."

She was drawing invisible designs on the back of his hand. Her touch so soft, so tentative, so arousing. She was the tenderness he needed because he was all rough and hard around the edges.

"We take it one day at a time. The only thing that matters is you and me. Nothing else."

"You're right. I know you're right." She was silent again, nibbling on her bottom lip as he wanted to be doing. She pointed her foot in the direction of her bag. "I only brought a few things with me. I didn't know... It might not work out, Jethro."

"We'll get the rest of your stuff little by little if need be. It'll take time for us to make it work, but it will work."

"How do you know?"

"I love you. You're the only woman I've ever loved. It has to work because I'm not letting you go again. I told you that on the phone."

She nodded. "Then I guess we should get to it."

He didn't move at her declaration. He just squeezed her hand before lifting it to his lips and pressing a gentle, lingering kiss to her palm. He'd suffered in his own ways, just as she had through the two years and even before that, during the years she'd been married to Marc. He never showed it, never brought it up, but she knew because she'd gone through the same thing and it had been so completely unfair to all of them.

Over the last week, she had thought long and hard about this decision, had cried herself to sleep and cried herself awake. She'd talked to Marc, read his letters, wrote him a long one then burned it, letting the pain and sorrow go. She would never forget

him or how much he'd loved her, and though Jethro was his twin, there was enough distinction in the eyes, in the longer hair, in the scruffiness, that Jethro was all she'd see any time she looked at him. She wouldn't see Marc and she'd cried over that too.

She'd taken a trip out to the cemetery, curled up on the ground and let her tears sink into the grass. And she's spilled everything. Little by little, the chains around her heart loosened as she confessed her love for him and for Jethro. She talked to Marc about the past, their life together – backyard BBQs, family holidays, their wedding night when they didn't even make it through the sex because they were so tired. She'd laughed at that memory and she knew Marc was laughing about it too. They were in love with one another and she knew he'd never doubted it. When she was with him, he was all she saw, all she thought of.

She wasn't with him anymore though. She left the fresh flowers and put a new flag in the stand. She was proud of him, loved him still, would always, but it was time.

Somewhere during the last week, she felt the peace steal into her heart, the ache ease, the decision made. She was going to Jethro and Marc was okay with it. She didn't know how she knew, but the how didn't matter as much as the overwhelming feeling of it being time to live again, time to explore and experience everything Jethro could show her.

"Do you like my dress?" She crawled over him and straddled his thighs. He was already hard.

"Love it. You wearing anything under it?"

"Nope."

He grinned. "Prove it."

She loved his no-nonsense, straight-to-the-point, frank way of speaking. No matter what he was talking about, he didn't beat around the bush, he didn't sugar-coat anything. He said what he meant and meant what he said. Always.

"Hold on to me." She lifted the skirt of her dress, tightened her legs against him and leaned back just enough to give him a view of her bare, naked pussy. His hands at her

back supported her weight and she gazed at him as he stared down between her thighs. "Proof enough?"

"No." He lifted his gaze to her face and brought her up. His lips kissed the hell out of her, his tongue ravished her mouth and she lost herself in his taste, the rasp of his stubble, the heat of his arms around her. "Take it off. I want you with nothing on."

"What if someone drives up?"

"Then they'll get a very naughty show and will know better the next time. Take it off, Caitlyn."

His fingers were already pulling at the fastenings of his jeans, his feet were swinging them back and forth, and she was so wet there was sure to be a puddle on the wooden floor of the porch under the swing.

"You'll have to unzip it."

"Tease. Up then and turn around."

She slid off his lap and turned, presenting her back to him. His fingers scraped down her back to the zipper at the base of her spine. Slowly, the teeth gave way until the fabric parted and with a light shimmy, the straps slid down her arms and the dress fell to the floor.

His hands grabbed her ass, squeezed then lightly slapped. When she didn't protest, he did it again, harder this time. She'd never been spanked, didn't think she was kinky in the slightest, but... "Do you like to spank?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes. Very few of my lovers walked away without a bright red bottom."

"Am I just another lover?" She knew she wasn't. She knew this was different. She knew even asking it would earn her more than a bright red bottom and she wanted it. She wanted to know everything he liked, needed, hungered for. No matter what it might be, she wanted it.

He let out a low whistle. "Damn, Caitlyn. That was cold." He wedged a hand between her legs and smacked each inner thigh. "Spread 'em. Bend over and grab your ankles."

With a small smile and not a little bit of nervousness, she did it without question. For what could have been a minute or ten he just let her hang there, her long hair brushing against the porch. His booted feet dragged on the wood as he stood up behind her.

"You shouldn't say things like that, not when you know they're bullshit comments."

"I just wanted to see what you'd say."

"It's not what I say that's gonna make a difference. You know the truth of my feelings for you. It's what I'm gonna do that you should worry about."

And he spanked her. Hit her right ass cheek hard enough to sting. Her left cheek was next and he hit it just as hard. He alternated between the two and the thought that her left one was more sensitive to the pain than the right one didn't escape her.

The backs of her thighs didn't escape the punishment either. He made sure they were given equal treatment. More than once she had to bite back tears and more than once she hoped it wouldn't take long for the burning and tingling to disappear. She wanted to explore this, liked it, wanted to know what else was hidden inside him.

Between each of the spankings, before he would move to another area of her backside, he'd rub the bite away with his workman's hands. It felt so good, she couldn't get enough, almost asked if he'd just keep rubbing, massaging the now-tender skin, but then he pressed up against her, his cock leaking stickiness on her lower back, and she forgot everything else.

The denim of his jeans was a wicked, raw sensation against her skin. "You okay, Caitlyn?" he whispered, warm and sweet.

"Yes."

“Good. Let go of your ankles and let me lead you.” He gripped her waist and pulled her back toward the swing. He sat and slid his legs between hers then lowered her onto his lap again. “Spread your legs over my thighs, open yourself up for me.”

One leg over each of his and her back against his chest, the crown of his cock teasing her clit.

“Lift up and slide down. Take me, Caitlyn.” His hands shifted from her waist to her breasts. The nipples were treated to tenderness and to pinching pain. “I love that you don’t wear bras or panties. You have the most perfect tits, the hottest, tightest cunt. I want them always available to me. Understand?”

“I can’t wear dresses all year long.”

“I guess you better figure out a way to. I don’t want to have to fiddle with jeans and pants. I want to be able to put my hand up your skirt and my fingers inside you anytime I want.”

His deep Southern drawl skittered over her senses, and when she took him inside as he’d told her to do, letting him fill her up, stretch her, she moaned and would have agreed to going without clothes at all if that’s what he wanted. She’d only had him inside her one other time, but God...

He started the swing moving back and forth, and it moved his cock through every inch of her pussy. His hands never stopped playing with her breasts. His breath fanned over her shoulder and neck when he spoke. “So tight and hot, Caitlyn. Make yourself come on my dick. Play with yourself for me.”

Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. She wanted to come on him. She wanted to come while he was inside her. She wanted to scream his name out in the wide, open space of his property.

He tormented her nipples and she purposely let her hand fall on her clit, her fingers plucking at it, torturing it with teasing touches and hard, fast rubs. As he moved inside her with the motion of the swing, she writhed against him.

He lifted his hands from her breasts at the same moment a breeze blew through the porch, from one end to the other. It touched her, caressed her, making her nipples pebble and harden. It drifted over her heated pussy and she shivered.

Feeling followed sensation, followed lust, and she fucked him, rubbing her back over his chest, lifting with her knees and upper thighs, riding him with her entire body.

"That's it. That's just what I want, Caitlyn. Give everything to me."

Her mouth was dry, her tongue, her lips, and all she could do was moan and whimper her compliance. Outside in the summer air, here in this new place she would call home, where she would make a life with him, she fucked him and herself into an orgasm. His fingers gripped her breasts again, this time clasping hard and tight. The more pressure he exerted on them, the longer the orgasm lasted until finally she sagged against him, spent.

He let up and just wrapped his arms around her waist, holding her, picking up speed in the swing. "I can't wait to fuck you in every room in the house. I can't wait to fuck you on every empty piece of land out here. Next time, though, it's gonna be in our bed."

"Yes, Jethro."

He lifted her slightly and slipped out of her pussy. His come sprayed her belly, her sex, her thighs. "Look at it, Caitlyn," he breathed. "Look at my come on your body. Fuck, it's one of the sexiest sights I've ever seen."

He nipped her shoulder, laved it with his tongue then pressed his face into the side of her neck. His come was pretty on her, milky-white and thick. She touched it, rubbed it into her skin, mixed it with her own wetness until she couldn't distinguish between the two.

She looked up at him. "You with tattoos and hair to your shoulders is one of the sexiest sights I've ever seen. They fit you. I don't know that I would have said that before these last couple of years, but..."

"Glad you like them."

She turned in his lap until she was facing him again. Her fingers traced the black outline of a jagged broken heart that rested over his beating one. She knew there was probably a story behind each one, including the black dragon that wound its way from one biceps, around his shoulders to his other biceps. "None of them have color. Just black."

"No."

She traced the dragon's tail. The detail of its scales was so intricate, so delicate. It must have taken so long for the artist to do. "Why not?"

"It's just how I felt at the time. Black. No light, no color."

And that broke *her* heart to hear, though she understood completely what he meant. Until she'd come to him a couple weeks ago, everything had been that way with her too. Black and white, gray sometimes, but there was no other color, no brightness in anything. The days in between were the same way...nothing. With him though...she was beginning to see brilliance again.

He moved her off his lap gently and she stood on shaky legs. With his arm around her back, she walked with his assistance to the door where he picked up her shoes and bag then opened the screen for her. "We both need a shower, and then I need to show you around."

## **Chapter Four**

Jethro kissed the handprints the spanking had left on her ass. They were beautiful and pride filled him. He'd just learned how much he loved marking her. He wanted to mark her in other ways too. He wanted to have his name tattooed on her inner thigh, high up, very close to her pussy lips. He wanted her clit hood pierced. He wanted his belt, his whip, his paddle marking her behind. He wanted to turn this beautiful woman he'd loved for more than a decade into an even more beautiful woman...owned, treasured and precious.

He loved her with in such an obsessive way that more than once he thought it would consume him. He knew once he got a hold of her, he'd never give her up. He wanted everyone to know she belonged to him, belonged with him, and because she'd come to him earlier in the day, offered herself to him, gave herself to him, he knew that she knew it too.

"How bad does it hurt?"

"It doesn't hurt. It just stings a little."

"It's hot. To the touch, to the eye. It looks good on you." And it did. He couldn't stop looking at her ass. He wanted inside it, deep inside it. "Ever had your ass fucked?"

"Yes."

Damn. He wouldn't be the first, but he'd be the last. "Like it?"

"Yes."

"Good. Up on your knees. Let's play."

"More?"

"Complaining?"

She pulled her knees under her and it thrust her ass up at him. He licked the reddened skin, feeling its heat against his tongue. "No."

"I've had to wait too fucking long for this, for you." Jethro parted her cheeks and dragged a finger over her hole, smiling against her heated flesh when she moaned. When he touched the tip of his tongue to it, she clenched then relaxed, dropping her head down to the mattress. He wedged his head between her thighs and devoured her pussy.

He pressed his face into her wetness, his lips pulling at her clit. He didn't let up. He wanted to taste the orgasm, wanted the cream. Every fold was licked and lapped at and then he slid his tongue deep inside her, using his finger to tap and tease her clit.

She was so wet he couldn't get it all before it started coating his chin. She gave as much as he did in this, was the perfect match for him.

"I'm gonna come again, Jethro."

He doubled his efforts, going deeper, harder into her cunt until he pulled the scream he wanted from her. She cried his name into the bedding, rode his tongue, fucked back into his face. When he felt the tremors in her thighs, he pulled away, rimmed her hole again then let her collapse.

She sprawled on her stomach and he wrapped a blanket around her. He bent to kiss her cheek but she turned her head and pulled his mouth to hers, drinking in her taste from his lips. "Thought you were going to fuck my ass."

"I will, but you're tired and I want you wide awake for it."

"Okay." She yawned and he smiled. "I'm sleepy."

"I know. Rest for a bit."

She nodded and snuggled in. She was asleep within seconds.

\* \* \* \* \*

Grilled ham and cheese sandwiches sizzled on the griddle while Jethro twisted the tops off the beers. It wasn't much, but it would be enough. He could make great

sandwiches out of whatever they had on hand, and lucky for him, he loved grilled cheese.

He took a swallow of beer and flipped the sandwiches. Caitlyn had been asleep for a couple of hours. He'd gone in to check on her a few times only to find she hadn't moved from the position he'd left her in.

He'd fucked her twice, made her come three times and he knew neither of them had had so much sex in one day in years. As he'd told her though, he'd waited too damn long to have her and he wasn't anywhere near sated. They hadn't come close to scratching the surface.

"I didn't mean to sleep so long."

Jethro turned around and tried not gape and lose his cool. She was standing naked in the doorway of his...of their kitchen. "It's fine. You didn't miss anything."

"Okay." She sat down at the kitchen table, casual and composed, and reached for the beer he'd opened for her. "Mine?"

"Yep. You're naked."

"You said you wanted me available."

He was momentarily tongue-tied. "So I did. Thank you. Sore?"

She lifted the bottle to her lips and smiled at him with her eyes as she drank of the amber-colored liquid. He nearly came in his jeans watching the way her throat worked to swallow.

"Not too much."

"Good." He turned away and stacked the sandwiches on a plate, busying himself until he could calm his racing blood.

"Would you like me to put something on?"

He put the plate on the table. "Nope." But she was grinning up at him as though she knew exactly how hard he was, how close to the edge.

"Are you sure?"

“What? Think I can’t resist you?” He sat across from her and grabbed a sandwich. If he filled his mouth with food, he’d be less likely to bend her over the table and fill her with him. When she said she was ready earlier, he hadn’t thought she meant that she was ready to tear him apart with her coy smile and her sparkling eyes and her beautiful naked body.

“I know you can’t.”

He didn’t respond, didn’t rise to the bait, just watched her while he ate. She shrugged and took a sandwich, pulling it apart with her fingers, fingers he imagined stroking his skin, sliding through her own wetness, fucking herself for his pleasure. He kept watching as she chewed and again nearly lost his hard-won control, imagining her mouth wrapped around his dick. He wanted to feel the edges of her teeth, the slickness of her tongue, the sucking of her cheeks.

“Oh my God, Jethro, this is so good.”

He nodded, still unable to talk to her without wanting to pull her across the table for a fuck.

“I mean gourmet good. What’s in it?”

She devoured the concoction of crispy bread, melty cheese and smoked ham. He was glad she liked it. Unless she could cook, which he didn’t know if she could or not, they’d be eating a lot of these kinds of things.

He washed the last of his sandwich down with the last of his beer and debated another of each. “Parmesan and garlic.”

“Really? How did you learn to make this?”

“Before we left for Afghanistan, that trip Marc and I took to New York... There was this grilled cheese place. You could get all kinds of things put on them and I got to talking to the owner. He gave me a few tricks, like the bread and the cheeses. I was glad he did, ’cause when I got back, I needed to eat. It was the only thing I could make other than SpaghettiOs and soup.”

"I can cook. I'm pretty good too."

"I'll let you show me tomorrow."

"Deal. What about tonight? What are we going to do?"

She'd pushed her plate away, finished off her beer and was sitting back in her chair, giving him a wonderful view of her chest. Damn but the woman had a nice set. "Sex."

"Is that all you think about?"

"When it comes to you, pretty much."

Her eyes darkened and she started to close up on him. Her body tensed and she stopped looking at him, her lips tightly closed. Interesting.

"I didn't come out here, give myself to you, bare everything to you just so you could have a fuck buddy, Jethro."

"I never said you did."

"But that's all you want, isn't it? Just someone to screw?"

He was out of his chair in a flash with her out of hers and pinned against the wall. "I will only say this one more time, Caitlyn, so you had best listen and listen good. I love you. You know I love you. I haven't waited all this fucking time for you to grieve and get over Marc's death just so I can have someone to screw." Wide green eyes stared back at him. There wasn't a tear in sight and he was glad of that. "He was my brother and I loved him, and every day I feel like a part of me is missing. There's this eerie feeling sometimes that he's still here, that that twin connection didn't die with him. But I have loved you since the day I first saw you and now that you're here you're not leaving. You agreed to that. You knew what you were saying yes to. And you know there's more to this than me fucking you."

She didn't think it was possible, but Jethro was even hotter, more beautiful when he was angry. And she knew it wasn't a true anger, he was just frustrated. She didn't blame him either. Vulnerable didn't even begin to describe her state of mind, her state

of heart at the moment. He flayed her raw with just a look. He set her nerves on edge with just a thought of him passing through her head. Jethro was sin on two legs and he loved *her*. Whereas Marc had been the lightness, the fun, the excitement, Jethro was the dark, the intense, the erotic fantasy. They, she and Jethro, were the complete opposites and the exact perfect pair.

"I'd have lived out my life married to him but fate had other plans, or maybe Marc had other plans. I don't know. I just know that I can't stay away and I can't not want you. It's just...it's just that I'm not used to such sharp, piercing need."

"Feeling it? Or being on the receiving end of it?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Get used to it."

Caitlyn touched his face, traced his lips with the tips of her fingers, felt a shiver take over at the feel of his hot breath. He'd always been a man of few words and sometimes it drove her nuts that he wouldn't give more than one- or two-word answers at the most, but his eyes and his body language spoke volumes.

He carried himself with an air of confidence and a swagger of arrogance. He knew what he wanted and only one thing had ever been denied him – his brother to live.

Caitlyn meant what she'd said, that she would have spent the rest of her life married to Marc, but that plan was gone. It may seem as though it made Jethro her second choice, the runner-up prize. He wasn't though. Had she met him first, it would have been him. And he knew that.

What was left now was for them to try to make it work, find their way together. He was hard. Sexually, emotionally, mentally hard. He'd seen hell and she didn't pretend to imagine what happened to him. He'd had nightmares when he stayed with her after the hospital, and she was the one he'd clung to when he cried, when he'd screamed out for Marc.

"Your parents have a swing on their back porch just like yours on the front. You made it for them?"

"Yes. The entire family got one. I made the one out front for us, you and me."

"I'm here now. Let's go use it."

He smiled only a little, but it changed his face from pitch blackness to some semblance of human and light. "We have used it."

She answered with a smile of her own. "Not the way it was intended. Come swing with me, Jethro." When he loosened his grip on her hips, she walked out of the kitchen and out the front screen door.

"You're still naked," he called after her.

"So what? If anyone comes by, they'll get a very naughty show and will know better the next time," she tossed his words from earlier back to him and was rewarded with a deep chuckle. It warmed her to hear it, to know it was genuine and something she'd given him.

And she *was* still naked. It was different being naked with Jethro. She hadn't had a lover since the last time Marc had been home on leave before he died, but walking around the house naked hadn't been something she did with him. With Jethro though, the smoldering way he looked at her, as if he were gonna eat her alive, made it hard to resist the lure of complete freedom, even from clothes.

She stood beside the swing, waiting for him. "Something wrong?"

"No."

"Why are you just standing there?"

"I was waiting for you. Sit." He seemed a little hesitant but finally sat. "In the middle." He scooted over and she sat across his thighs, pulling her legs up on the swing to the side of him. This way she was able to wrap her arms around his neck and snuggle into him. He pulled her close and pressed a tender kiss to her head.

For a long time they just sat there but he finally started the swing moving back and forth in a slow, lazy motion.

"You don't have any doubts about this, do you, Jethro?"

"Not a one. I never have."

"Why did you tell me to leave, to keep running?"

"Because you were torn and I couldn't make the decision for you. I wasn't going to ask you to stay if you weren't sure. I wasn't willing to be resented for forcing the choice on you."

His fingers kneaded the last few remaining knots in her shoulder, her neck. He rubbed the heel of his hand up and down her spine and kissed the top of her head again. Caitlyn knew there would be obstacles to face, that things wouldn't be easy for them. "Your family will never forgive me."

"Welcome to club, darlin'."

"Them blaming you isn't right."

"No, it's not, but they need to blame someone. I get that. Maybe they'll come around one day." His talk with Clarissa gave him hope of that.

"It still isn't right." She felt the need to take care of and protect big, bad Jethro. He would deny he needed that from her, but she knew it to be true and it was enough.

His hold on her tightened and her nipple brushed against his chest, reminding her acutely of her nakedness. She wiggled in his lap and couldn't miss the bulge throbbing beneath her ass. "Why did you like spanking me?"

## Chapter Five

Talk about doing a one-eighty. "Why did you like it?"

"I don't know. I thought you were teasing, playing, but it actually hurt, stung and I realized it was for real."

"Yes. I don't play dominant games like that. I don't play kinky games. I've been to my fair share of dungeons and play parties and I don't get into shit like that. What I do, I do because it's what I want and what my lovers want."

"But why do you like it?"

"I don't know. I always have. From the first girlfriends I had. I liked the kink, the hard stuff. Marc liked the sweet things, the romance, the passion. I like the intensity, the dirty. That's why it was so odd when we both fell in love with you. He tried to convince me that you were his type and I told him more than once that I disagreed."

"Seems you were both right and both wrong."

"Seems like. So, why did you like it?" She buried her head in his chest and shook it. She wasn't going to be able to hide from him like that. Ever. He fisted his hand in her hair and pulled her head up, making her look him in the eye. "Tell me."

When she realized she couldn't get away from him, her eyes took on that determined air they'd had in the kitchen and she stared straight into his. That's the way he preferred everything. Straight up and head-on. "Because it was you. Because you're so hot and dark. I was teasing with you, but when you directed me, told me what to do and then started spanking me... I couldn't keep from liking it."

"Whenever you want to do it again, let me know. If there's anything else you wanna try, tell me. I'll do just about anything you want if it ends with my dick inside you."

"You're crude," she said, but she was laughing.

"And you love it."

"Yes, I do. What about bondage and chains and all that stuff? Are you into that?"

"Yeah, I can tie you up. I can use anything from handcuffs to rope to chains."

"Do you need it? That stuff?"

He shrugged. "I like it. I enjoy it. I think you'd like it too, especially given the way you took to the spanking, how wet it made you. It's not necessary yet. Like I said, though, whenever you want to be spanked again or try anything else, tell me."

"But you want to?"

"Caitlyn, yeah, I'd love to show you all about submission and domination. I don't think we're ready for that yet though. Not as intense as I like it. We're just getting started, just learning. Don't worry. I won't hold anything back just as I imagine you won't."

"You're getting harder." She rubbed herself against the painful erection inside his jeans as if to prove it to him.

"No shit. You're naked on my lap and talking about some of the things I hold near and dear to my sexual heart. Of course I'm getting harder."

"You gonna do anything about it?"

He gripped her hips and held her still. She was his sanity but she was going to drive him mad. "You've got a smart mouth on you, Caitlyn. Might have to consider washing it out with soap."

"Soap won't taste good."

Her voice had dropped to a whisper and her sweet breath fanned across his face. "No, I don't think it would. We might be able to find something else to use instead."

"You still didn't answer me."

"You're gonna need some punishment though. I can tell. You think you're gonna rule the roost, rule over me? You're sadly mistaken."

“You think you can dominate me, Jethro? Rule over me?”

“You think I can’t?”

He’d never teased and played word games with his lovers before and he hadn’t imagined he’d ever feel pleasure enough outside of sex to do it with Caitlyn either, but damn if he didn’t. She touched corners of what was left of his soul with her smiles and her laughter and her love. And he had no doubts about her love just as he knew she didn’t have any doubts about his. It was different than Marc’s, but it was no less true and long-lasting. He’d die loving her and only her.

Her eyes were bright and full of desire, full of mischief. She was trying to bait him, and though he’d been patient for the last two years, waiting for her to come to him, he found he was no longer feeling the need to sit back and go through that anymore. It was time to show the woman once and for all who the boss in their relationship was.

He kissed her hard and lifted her in his arms.

“What are we doing?”

He didn’t answer her, just walked across the porch with her wrapped around him. It wasn’t as easy to do in actuality as it had been in his mind when he envisioned it and it had nothing to do with her. It was all because his cock was so hard that putting one foot in front of the other took immense concentration.

He made it down the porch steps and out to his car. He laid her on the hood and she yelped. He hadn’t thought about the hood being cold. Oh well. “Spread ‘em.”

“You say that a lot.” But she did it.

“It’s become one of my favorite things. The woman I love with her legs spread open for me. Besides, I think you like that I tell you to do it because you obey willingly enough.” He let his cock out and gripped her ankles, using them to pull her toward him, and set them on his shoulders. He was tall enough that the position of her pussy like this was perfect. “Damn,” he murmured as he slid down deep.

The penetration was different than the other times, the angle sharper, tighter and she was fucking amazing under the stars. Her hair fanned out against the gleam of the high-gloss paint, the shine of the moon bright in her eyes. She seemed like some delicate dream at the same time she seemed like the most erotic fantasy he'd ever had. Hell, she *was* every erotic fantasy he'd ever had.

Jethro turned his head and kissed the arch of her foot then started fucking her in earnest. He held her hips and her toes gripped his hair. She was wet and hot, like a Southern summer night, all humid and clinging to his skin. She was here with him, naked with him, fucking with him under the night sky and everything he'd ever felt for her came barreling forth.

He thrust hard and fast, his hips popping forward. The bad one ached more than he cared for at the moment, but there was no way in hell he was going to stop until his come filled her.

"Wanna come, Caitlyn?"

"Oh yeah."

"Show me."

And she did. One hand on a tit, on a nipple, tugging and pinching. One finger of the other hand on her clit, pressing, rubbing. Her hips worked in time with his advances and she fucked his cock with every undulation. His balls slapped against her ass and drew up tight against his body, full and ready to spill into her.

Her hands switched positions, and before she could pinch her other nipple, he leaned down and sucked the finger that was wet with her juices into his mouth. He sucked hard, nipping at it, and she watched his mouth while she frigged her clit with the middle finger of her other hand.

She was damn hot like that, touching herself. It was his second favorite thing. Watching the woman he loved touch herself, making herself come on his dick, and dear God, that's what she was doing.

Her back arched, and for a second he stilled inside her, stopped sucking her finger. He stared down at her while she orgasmed, while her pussy pulsed and fluttered against his rock-hard shaft. Holy. Fuck.

Just as the spasms started to diminish, Jethro moved, flexed his cock inside her and lowered her legs around his waist. He leaned down over her, his arms braced on either side of her body, and he pounded into her unmercifully. He tore into her sex and then tore into her mouth with a kiss meant to say everything he would never be able to utter the words for. She answered him and he pressed his cock so far inside her cunt, deeper than he thought he could go, and let the release take him.

He jerked above her, his own body racked with jolts of painful pleasure. A groan was torn from his throat that didn't even sound like him.

His heartbeat echoed in his ears, and with the fog finally clearing, Caitlyn was grinning up at him. "What?" he asked, pulling her up as he slipped out of her soaked pussy.

"I still think you need to prove some more that you can be the master of me. I'm not convinced yet."

"Caitlyn..." He tried for an exasperated, warning tone but he just didn't have the energy for it. He was more than happy to prove that or anything else to her for the rest of their lives.

Her beautiful face turned serious in a split second. "You're gonna change me, Jethro."

There was no accusation in her tone, no regret, just contented acceptance. Still, it caused him to catch his breath in uncertainty as to what she meant. "No, baby, I don't want to change you. I want you just the way you are."

"But you will. Us, this, will change me. You're not Marc. You're not anything like who I thought I was supposed to be with, who I had planned to be with. You're not safe and the music you listen to I'm not sure is sane. You're the bad boy who good girls are warned against. You're the dark angel, the fallen one. And I don't know how it came to

be that I deserved to be loved so much by two very different men yet who shared the same DNA, the same looks, the same blood running through their veins.

“Being with you is unlike anything I ever imagined. It’s white-hot and extreme and it will change who I have always been or thought I was.”

For a just a brief moment the uncertainty he was feeling flashed through her brilliant, tell-everything-she-was-thinking-and-feeling eyes. He still wasn’t sure what she was saying but a vise clamp gripped his heart. “Are you changing your mind?”

He uttered the words that scared him to death, and if she said yes...

“No. I will never change my mind. I just needed you to know that I’m ready for this, for us, for the new life we can have together. I’m ready for the change that is coming, that is already here. I’m ready for you. But...”

He swallowed hard against the lump in his throat. There was a but... “But what?”

“But I’m starting to stick to the hood and it’s uncomfortable on my back.”

Jethro smiled, relief swamping him and nearly buckling his knees. It was the closest he’d ever come to thanking God for anything. “Then let’s go inside so you can start proving to me how much you want to submit to everything I want and need from you.” Two could play her little game.

He watched her eyes grow wide and the corner of her mouth tilt up in a smile. “I’ll submit willingly and without question if...” She slid off the hood of the Mustang.

“If what?”

“If you can catch me.” She patted the scar on his hip and took off at a run. The screen door slammed before he ever turned around.

She was gonna pay for that little stunt. And he looked forward to doling out the punishment. He swiped his finger through the come that had pooled on the car. Her first task would be to wash his car. Naked.

He looked up at the sky and could swear one of the stars winked at him. He shook his head and laughed, walking toward the house and the woman he had had to go

through hell to have. He'd spend his life proving he was worthy of her and the sacrifice it had taken for his happiness.

"Caitlyn..." he called out as he stepped into the house. Her laughter was heard coming from the direction of his...of their bedroom. He might need to introduce her to his belt tonight.

## About the Author

Lissa is a full-time and multi-published author living in North Carolina. For more information and news, visit her website or email her. She loves to hear from fans.

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