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Rings
1
Gideon's

Trio

EVE ADAMS

Gideon's Ring 1

Trio

As the general manager of a ménage retreat ranch, it's Barrett Gideon's job to make sure everyone leaves the ranch with a smile. When sexy Sarah Emerson visits the ranch looking for a weekend partner or two, Barrett pins Sarah and invites his cousin, Chris, to complete the TRIO. Together they take Sarah to new heights, fully intending to leave her at the end of the weekend as they do every guest. But the boys didn't count on Sarah attaching herself to their souls, just as much as Sarah didn't plan to fall in love with the surly duo.

When a thief sets his sights on the ranch, the Gideons are too late to stop him. Sarah asks her big brother for help getting the Gideons their money back. Norris Emerson and Amber Dalton return from Riding Cowboys to help Sarah and the Gideon's pull off the ultimate con.

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MENAGE EVERLASTING



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DEDICATION

To my readers, this book is for you. I hope you enjoy the story.

TRIO

Gideon's Ring 1

EVE ADAMS

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Chapter 1

“I’m telling you, I’ve a good feeling about it this time.”

Barrett Gideon listened to the next brother in line, Wyatt, ramble on about the list of guests for the weekend. The names on the guest list didn’t mean anything to Barrett, just as long as they were at capacity, which hadn’t happened in almost six months.

The Gideon Ranch & Lodge never used to struggle. The GR&L always booked out months, and sometimes years, in advance. The economy had taken its toll on the ranch, and on the Gideons. Spending an extravagant weekend at a couple’s ranch was a luxury, and one of the first things that got scratched off the list of things to do when a person had to tighten his purse strings.

“Strickler will be here this weekend,” Wyatt stated and then waited as he looked at the oldest Gideon. When Barrett didn’t give him the reaction he apparently wanted, Wyatt hardened his jaw.

“You mean the worthless man we used to give all of our money to and get nothing in return?”

“Barrett, he’s our PR rep.”

“I told you to fire him.”

“Technically you told Michael to fire him.”

Barrett stiffened and looked at him. “He’s not allowed here when

guests are here, Wyatt. You know the rules, and so does he.”

Wyatt shrugged in return. “He’s been with us since before GG died. He knows what goes on here.”

“He never signed the NDA.”

“Who cares about some nondisclosure agreement?”

Barrett gritted his teeth. “Our guests.”

“He’s practically family. What do you expect?”

“I expect you to do what I say.” Not that any of the other Gideon brothers listened to each other. It was no wonder the ranch had fallen into disarray since Grandpa Gideon’s death two years ago. Now that man knew how to run a ranch. Not only did GG have over five hundred head of strong cattle each and every year, he made sure the Gideon family never wanted for anything.

And look at where they were now—selling weekends to couples looking for a little adventure to spice up their lackluster love life.

He tried not to think about how boring his own love life had become. Sure, he participated in the weekend *ménages* when in the mood, but his thoughts always drifted to her.

Gail Sawyer. The woman he’d been off and on with since college. He’d thought they were off again until he got her call out of the blue. She said she had something to share with him. Maybe she’d thought about his offer. Maybe she’d let him collar her and claim her as his sub, as he’d wanted to do ever since first sinking between her silky thighs. Barrett hurried to finish the fence and clean up before Gail showed up. Her visits had been less and less frequent these past few months. His dick twitched in excitement. She’d look damn good with a leather collar around her slender neck, his sapphire dangling from the center.

And she’d be loyal to him and only him. Finally.

“Strickler is our link to the outside world, Barrett.”

His brother’s futile attempt at convincing him to keep their waste of a PR rep pulled his attention back in. He’d have plenty of time to think about Gail when he saw her.

“And we’ve yet to really see a return on our investment.” Barrett grunted as he tightened barbed wire. “Get rid of him.”

“We need him. He’s found a way to get us five stars.” He narrowed his eyes as his brother went back to fixing the fence so the horses wouldn’t get loose again. There was a hell of a storm moving into southwest Montana, and he really didn’t feel like chasing down horses in the snow.

It took all four brothers two full days to round them all up last time. Matt actually stuck around instead of disappearing to fuck whatever he could whenever he could. Michael, Matt’s twin and the youngest of the Gideons, took the opportunity to corner Barrett and discuss their profits and losses, as if he didn’t already know the ranch was in a shitload of financial trouble. Wyatt rambled on and on about some bullshit charity-of-the-week event that would cost them a fortune and bring them nothing in return.

Barrett ignored them all, much as he’d tried to do since GG died. He didn’t know how the old man dealt with running the ranch and raising four boys at his age. He had the patience of a saint—something Barrett did not inherit.

Now this new thing with Wyatt always trying to find an angle to get GR&L back on top really took its toll. Barrett didn’t know how much more he could take.

Not for the first time, he missed his favorite cousin. Chris Gideon had swept in more than once and saved the Gideon brothers’ collective ass when they’d gotten in over their head. A few years older and worlds wiser than Barrett, Chris kept a watchful eye on his younger cousins.

Barrett could definitely use his wisdom now.

“We can’t get rid of him,” Wyatt pointed out as he grabbed part of the fence and held it up for Barrett to wire into place.

“And why is that?” Barrett grunted as he made the final tie on the post. That should hold the horses until GR&L could afford to replace the fence. He smacked his leather-gloved hands together to knock the

dirt off and turned to walk back to the ranch house, knowing Wyatt would be on his booted heels to try and talk him into keeping the ranch's useless PR rep.

"If you were listening, you'd know."

Barrett stopped, and Wyatt almost ran into him. "Tell me again. Maybe this time I will."

"With a five-star rating, we'll be in all of the big magazines. Billboards will boast about the ranch as drivers run along Interstate 90. The GR&L could be the biggest thing in all of Montana, according to Strickler." Wyatt, as the self-appointed public relations director at GR&L, always bought into Strickler's bullshit.

But Barrett knew better. Strickler was just another pompous asshole who promised the stars and delivered nothing but hot air. The ranch couldn't afford the inept agent. Without another word Barrett started back toward the house.

Wyatt hurried after him. "Barrett? Are you even listening to me?"

"Not really."

"Goddamn it. Why did we ever agree to make you the general manager after GG died?"

Barrett stopped and swung around to stare down his brother. Wyatt halted. "Because the GM is the one who has the level head. It's my job to keep this ranch going. Besides, I'm the oldest, and that's what GG would have wanted."

"It's all of our responsibility to make sure the couple's ranch doesn't fold. That's what GG cared about—keeping the GR&L afloat."

"We are a *real* ranch first, Wyatt."

"And it's the *couple's* ranch that's keeping us from selling off our land. Would you just listen to me?"

"How can I not? You keep talking."

"Barrett, please." Wyatt pleaded with him. Swell. His little brother practically begged for his attention and looked ready to pass out if he didn't listen to him. No wonder Barrett's hairline had started to recede

before any of his brothers'. Then again, the twins were only in their mid-twenties. They still had a few years under their belts before they had to worry about losing their hair, or any of the other stresses of running a ranch.

Barrett, on the other hand, had just hit the thirty mark, and it freaked the shit out of him. Thirty years old and still single. Of course, never being able to see beyond his childhood sweetheart did put a damper on his current love life. The fact she visited him at GR&L on a regular basis, looking as sexy as ever, didn't help.

"So tell me about Strickler's plan." Barrett opened the backdoor into the mudroom and kicked off his boots. After hanging his hat and work shirt on the pegs made from deer antlers, he threw his gloves into the box they used to house them.

"Do you ever listen to anything I say?"

Barrett stopped and looked at his little brother. "When you say something interesting, I'll listen."

Wyatt narrowed his midnight-blue eyes at his brother. Barrett knew that look. He'd mastered that look, and it wouldn't work on him. All the Gideon boys shared similar traits—black hair, indigo-blue eyes, and a crooked smile. They had their dad's large stature and their mom's beautiful features. God rest each of their souls.

The Gideon blood ran thick in the family as well as the traits. Chris bore the same large stature as the Gideon generation before him, but he had inherited his mother's hazel eyes and butterscotch hair. Women flocked to him like bees to honey. Barrett always wondered what it would be like to have that kind of power over women.

He held his own with the opposite sex, but it was nothing compared to Chris. He should give him a call and see what had kept him away from the ranch for so long. Barrett hadn't seen him since GG's funeral two years ago.

"Why won't you take this seriously?"

Barrett sighed heavily, which seemed to be all he ever did

anymore. The stress of running the GR&L had definitely started to beat him down. Their quarterly earnings were pitiful, and if they didn't do something to turn it around, the ranch would be lucky to stay open another year. All Strickler did was come up with some way to spend money they didn't have and fail to return anything on their investment.

"Barrett, the price per pound just dropped again," Michael Gideon informed him as he marched into the great room, his glasses on and gaze intent on the iPad in his hands, as always. "This economy is wreaking havoc. We can't afford to take the cattle to market if the price keeps dropping like this. We lost our asses last year."

Wyatt brought up his finger. "We could let the Sierra Club come in here—"

"No fucking way," Barrett barked. "I'm not letting some tree-hugging environmentalist group onto this ranch. We'll think of something."

"We need Strickler," Wyatt said, not knowing when to shut up.

"I thought we got rid of him." Matthew Gideon took a swig of his water bottle as he walked into the room. Barrett groaned and pushed his way through his brothers out of the great room, and off to the right into the large kitchen for a beer. Fuck the beer. He'd need something stronger to get through this conversation. He grabbed the whiskey out of the liquor cabinet.

"We can't," Wyatt said.

"And why is that?" Matt asked.

"You'll love this," Barrett stated as he threw back his whiskey.

Wyatt glared at Barrett before softening his look as he turned to the oldest twin. "He's found a way to guarantee a five-star rating or we get our money back."

"Back?" Michael picked up on the same word as Barrett. They exchanged glances before both turning to Wyatt.

"Strickler works on a commission," Barrett pointed out gruffly.

Wyatt nodded. "I know, I know. But this time he says—"

“What did you do?” Barrett cut him off, his second drink hovering right at his lips and a sinking feeling swirling around in his gut.

“It was the only way to guarantee the five-star rating.”

“How much, Wyatt?”

“We only had fifty in savings, so I liquidated our CDs.”

Michael dropped a curse. “Which ones?”

“All of them.”

Slowly, carefully, Barrett set down his drink before he threw it. Not only could they not afford to pay Strickler anything in advance, the man couldn’t be trusted any further than he could be tossed out on his ass, and he had definitely put on some weight since feeding off the Gideons.

“Tell him you made a mistake,” Barrett ordered Wyatt.

Wyatt’s mouth fell open. “You can’t do that.”

“I can and just did.”

“Barrett,” Matthew said easily, always the most relaxed of the bunch. In this instance it only pissed Barrett off more. “Think about this. If Strickler can get us a five-star rating, we could advertise that and bring in more guests. It could save the ranch.”

“If he could,” Barrett countered, “then why hasn’t he already done that?”

“With a five-star rating we could charge more.”

“We charge just fine,” Barrett barked, tired of this conversation. He didn’t want a five-star rating. The ranch was doing fine—just fucking fine. Ratings didn’t matter. Service mattered. Having the time of your life mattered.

At the GR&L, you were guaranteed a service that had you leaving the ranch with a smile.

It may be unconventional, what they offered at the ranch. Love. Often multi-partnered, always practiced freely, unbridled love. The Gideon brothers frequently enjoyed ménage relationships with their guests. Couples came from all over the country to spend the weekend at the GR&L for that specific purpose.

"I agree with Barrett," Chris Gideon stated as he waltzed into the room, that damned charismatic crooked grin on his face and a wicked twinkle in his eye.

"Chris?" Barrett had to blink to make sure it was him. "What the hell?"

He grinned at Barrett and tipped his black cowboy hat. "Hey, cuz. Heard you needed a hand."

Barrett darted a glare at each of his brothers, and of course, not one of them fessed up.

"It was Wyatt," Chris said.

Barrett glared at Wyatt, who simply shrugged and quickly looked down at his boots.

Goddamn it. He did not need his cousin coming in and saving the day this time. Barrett had complete control over everything.

"Throw him a bone, Barrett. He's only trying to help. Besides, I was in the neighborhood."

"He could have asked," Barrett growled, his gaze narrowing in on Wyatt.

"Give it a rest. You and I both know you'd never ask for help. You're too fucking stubborn. Must run in the blood."

Barrett laughed at Chris's comment and let it go. "So did Wyatt let you in on the bullshit he's trying to sell?"

Chris shook his head. "Nope. He reserved that honor for you."

Of course he did. Barrett looked at Michael, the only other Gideon who made sound decisions and didn't walk around with his head in the clouds. "What do you think?"

"I think it's a little late for us to back out now. The asshole has our money. We need to see this through. What choice do we have? We back out now, and we'll probably never see a dime."

Barrett grabbed his drink and stared at it. He didn't run a dictatorship. If three of the four Gideon brothers wanted to hear Strickler out, who was he to deny that? Besides, Chris hadn't already raised his hands up to stop it, which he'd have done by now if he

smelled anything foul.

Barrett glanced at Chris. "What do you think?"

"What's Wyatt up to now?" Chris relaxed against a nearby wall and scratched his whisker-covered chin. How did he always look like he'd forgotten to shave? And, goddamn it, how did he pull off that look so well? "This isn't another one of his schemes to get the GR&L's name out there, is it?"

"That's exactly what it is. He wants to have Strickler come in and make changes, all to get a five-star rating."

Chris shrugged his massive shoulders. "A five-star rating is a good thing. But with Strickler? Isn't he that prick you fired months ago? The bastard didn't even bother to attend GG's funeral."

"But he's our link," Wyatt explained, now pleading with another Gideon. "Chris, talk some sense into Barrett. This is a good thing."

"Don't pull me into this," Chris said and put his hands up. "Barrett is the GM and therefore has the final say. I don't even own an ounce of the dirt on this land. My word has about as much weight as all the cow shit in the fields."

Wyatt turned to Barrett and put his hands in front of him as if in prayer. "Please, Barrett. Just hear him out."

Barrett flicked a glance to Chris, who nodded once.

"Fine," Barrett agreed, albeit reluctantly. "But I talk to him first before he gets too far into his pitch. If I don't like what he has to say, his ass is finally out of here. Agreed?"

Wyatt nodded quickly. He then turned to his brothers. Michael adjusted his glasses and gave a curt nod. Matthew just grinned as his answer. Chris shrugged and glanced out the window as if bored.

"He'll be here in a couple hours for the meet and greet," Wyatt stated.

"I don't want him talking to the guests."

Wyatt eyed Barrett. "Would you just relax? It's just Strickler. What's the worst thing he could do?"

Chapter 2

Feeling refreshed and revived after the shower, Barrett whistled as he found the least dirty of his shirts, took a whiff and decided it wasn't too bad, and slipped it on. He wouldn't be wearing it long anyway, not with Gail.

Ah, Gail. He'd met her freshman year at Montana State University when she'd dropped all of her books as she walked out of the bookstore. He'd helped her pick them all up and hadn't been able to stay away from her ever since.

"You seriously going through with this?" Chris leaned back in the only chair in the room and twirled an origami bird he'd just folded between his fingers. "You know how I feel about her."

"So I take it you're out?"

"I was never in, not with Gail. I don't like her."

"As you've told me time and again."

Chris worked the crease on a piece of paper as he started in on another bird. "Sorry, cuz. We usually have the same taste in women, but with Gail, I'm going to have to say no. If you want to share her, you'll have to find another partner."

"Then I will."

"I think it's a mistake."

"This isn't about you," Barrett retorted. "I made the decision, and I'm following through with it."

"Yeah, but pinning her? Seriously, cuz. She's been playing you like an easy-read sheet of music since college. Play with her but don't pin her. She's bad news."

Barrett stiffened. "That's my future sub you're talking about."

“So you say.” Chris stood and tossed the bird down on Barrett’s bed.

“You don’t?”

Chris shook his head.

“Why not?”

“Gail is a BBDG—a Bigger-Better-Deal-Girl. Pinning her and expecting her to stick to your agreement is like trying to get a cat to submit. It’s on her terms and only her terms.”

Barrett swallowed and hid his expression from his all-too-knowing cousin. Damn him and his insight. “Whatever.”

“You claim to be a Dom. Until you find the right sub, you are just a poser.”

“And I suppose you have mastered being the Dom?”

Chris laughed and lifted the brim of his cowboy hat to scratch his forehead. “I don’t know if I even want that. I like having the woman challenge me for dominance. Makes it more fun than just barking orders.”

Barrett didn’t answer. Hell, he didn’t know how to answer. He’d wanted to dominate Gail since day one, but Chris made a good argument. He cleared his thoughts and went to the mirror above his dresser to gauge his appearance.

“Barrett? You have a visitor.” Wyatt’s voice sounded over the two-way radios the brothers used to communicate with each other at the ranch.

He tried to ignore the skip in his chest as he pushed his feet into his boots. Gail would probably have her hair up, but it wouldn’t stay that way for long. Barrett loved it down and would pull the clip out of her hair before taking his time undressing her and trailing kisses down every inch of her delectable body.

“On my way,” he responded and tossed the radio back on the dresser before glancing in the mirror to comb his fingers through his hair.

“It, uh, isn’t who you think.”

Barrett stopped and grabbed the radio. "What?"

"Just come down here. Not armed, though. You may want to bring Chris."

What the hell did he mean by that? Barrett always carried his .45 with him. Every rancher did. What with wolves and mountain lions threatening to take out the calves, ranchers had no choice. But since he wasn't going back out into the fields, he had no need to strap on his gun. And Chris would more than likely tag along just to eavesdrop on the conversation.

Concern and curiosity replaced whatever feelings he had swirling around inside him. Wyatt didn't sound happy. He opened his door and was about to step out when Chris stopped him.

"I've got a bad feeling about this, cuz."

"Such as?"

"Now why do you suppose Wyatt made it a point to mention being armed. He's warning you. Come on, Barrett. Pull your head out of that lump three feet below your shoulders. Who's the one person who makes you pissed enough to kill?"

Goddamn it. The dumb son of a bitch had better not have showed his fucking face at the GR&L. Tom Tremblay had been a thorn in Barrett's side since Gail first walked into his life.

"I'll be fine." Barrett walked out of his room and down the stairs, and slowed when he saw who it was. Damn. How did Chris know?

Barrett tensed and stopped on the second to the last stair. He felt Chris do the same behind him.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

Tom Tremblay, the man who used to call Gail Sawyer his wife, looked every bit as uncomfortable as he should. How dare he step foot into Barrett's domain after what he did to Gail.

"Can we talk?"

Barrett glanced around at his three brothers, all looking to him for the answer. One word, one single nod to them, and they'd band together to toss the son of a bitch out on his ass. He was about to give

them the signal when Gail stepped out from behind Tom and looked up at Barrett with those weakening gray eyes.

“Please, Barrett?”

What the hell was she doing back with him? He not only shattered her heart, he left her broken when he walked away. Barrett was there to pick up the pieces and hated Tom Tremblay more and more with every tear that streamed down her beautiful face.

“I told you,” Chris sang behind him.

“Shut up.”

Despite his want to break every bone in Tom’s handsome face, Barrett nodded and walked down the rest of the stairs before turning from them and marching into one of the private rooms on the main floor. He clenched his fists as he fought to restrain his temper. The need to kill Tom damn near destroyed his control.

He didn’t turn around when he heard the door close behind him. Gritting his teeth, he tried to contain the explosion he knew would come as soon as Gail delivered whatever news she wanted to share with him.

“Was this your big surprise?”

“We have something to tell you.” Gail’s musical voice floated into his ears. He closed his eyes and fought against the angst twisting in his gut.

“So speak.”

“Would you please look at me?”

So she could rip his heart out again like she did when she told him she was leaving him to be with Tom the first time? Not a chance in hell.

“He broke your heart, Gail.” *And two ribs and your wrist, and left a permanent scar on your cheek.*

“I’ve changed,” Tom said.

Barrett swung around and nailed him with a burning glare. Tom sank back and hid behind Gail, the fucking weasel. “Have you stopped beating the shit out of women? Tell me, Tom. Will you use

her as your personal punching bag again?”

Tom thinned his lips but said nothing. Instead, he looked to Gail to answer for him. Barrett’s less-than-stellar opinion of the man just tanked to one step below the shit he kicked off his boots when he walked in from the fields.

Barrett then rested his gaze on the woman he thought he’d be spending the night with. “Is this what you really want? Him? A coward?”

“He’s a good man.”

“He put you in the fucking hospital, Gail.”

Her pale gray eyes cooled as she looked at him. Goddamn, that look hurt. Anger replaced his pain as she thrust out her chin and arched her brow. Nothing good ever came out of that look.

“I’d rather take my chance with someone normal than buy in to your sick games.”

Jesus and Christ. He swallowed until the bile burning his throat raw settled back down into his churning gut. “Is that what this is about?”

“I’m not into the whole Dom/sub thing, Barrett. I never have been. What you do here at the ranch, the retreats, it’s just wrong.”

What the hell was so wrong with it? “How so?”

“You have men sharing women. Women sharing men. It’s unnatural. I could never do that.”

He didn’t even bother to argue with her. If she hated his lifestyle, she could have spoken up before now. “So was that your big news?”

Tom went to her side and took her hand. The vise around Barrett’s heart tightened as he focused on how her hand fit in his. This couldn’t be happening. Gail swore she’d never go back to Tom. She’d made a promise, both to Barrett and to herself.

“I’m pregnant.”

Oh shit. “Is it...”

“It’s Tom’s,” Gail answered quickly. “I’ve always been very careful with you.”

Yes, she had. She'd made it a point to never be without a condom when they had sex.

Past tense.

He didn't even want to look at her now. Her words sank into his very being and hurt like hell, like she literally took his heart and dug her nails into it the way she used to dig into his back.

"That's why I haven't been by to see you. We've been...well..."

"We're back together," Tom finished.

Barrett glanced back down at their hands. "No shit."

"Please," Gail pleaded. "You don't have to be so bitter. It isn't like you didn't see this coming."

Actually, he hadn't a clue she'd come here tonight to rip out his heart and feed it back to him with the help of the man who did the same to her. "I guess the joke is on me. Did you have this planned all along? Did you come running to me just to get him back?"

Gail's expression hardened, and Barrett saw a side of her he'd been ignoring for too long, and the side Chris had seen all along. Vicious. Callous. Calculated. Barrett also saw a spark of alarm in her uncaring eyes when he'd nailed it.

"You think you know me, but you don't. I hate what you do here, Barrett. The fact that you asked me to be a part of it tells me that you never really knew me."

Obviously.

"We're moving to Wisconsin. I have a job waiting for me there," Tom explained, like Barrett gave a shit why they were moving, only that Gail was about to slip through his fingers—this time permanently. "It's good money. She'll be taken care of."

Another blow, like a sledgehammer, slammed into his chest. Holy shit, what else could either one of them say to beat him down? Barrett wanted to snap Tom's little pencil neck. How dare he think he had the right to sweep Gail away.

Barrett had to turn away from the happy couple. "Good for you."

"If it makes you feel any better," Tom said, "we didn't plan for

this to happen.”

“It doesn’t.”

Gail spoke up, her tone cutting. “Barrett, I’m sorry it had to happen like this, but the heart wants what it wants. We can’t help who we fall in love with.”

Another blow, this one below the belt. Barrett closed his eyes and fought against the way her words sliced into his chest like poisoned daggers. Dear Jesus, she was brutal.

“Was there anything else?”

“I hope we can still be friends.” She placed her hand on his shoulder, and he stiffened. He never wanted to feel her touch again. She’d betrayed him, not once but twice. He was done longing for her to do anything to him.

“Good-bye, Gail. Enjoy Wisconsin.” *Alone, because I won’t be there when he puts you in the hospital again.*

“We can visit when we come to see my parents once the baby is born.”

He tried to bite his tongue, but the words fell out. Cold words meant to hurt her as much as she hurt him. “What the hell makes you think I’ll want to ever see you again?”

Gail gasped. “You don’t mean that.”

He sure as hell did. Feeling another presence in the room, he stiffened and glanced over his shoulder to see his cousin standing there in the doorway. He didn’t even hear the door open over the thumping of his pulse in his ears.

“It’s time for you to leave, Gail.”

“Chris.” She nodded once in a cool, aloof greeting. “Always good to see you.”

“Can’t say the same. You heard me. Go.”

Gail stiffened her spine. “I see that famous Gideon charm runs through the blood of all of you. Are you all as perverted?”

Her words meant to strike at him, but Chris simply nodded and even tipped his hat. “Yes, ma’am.”

“Come on, sweetheart.” Tom pulled her away. Her hand fell from Barrett’s shoulder, and the void ripped his world apart.

When Gail let out a sob, he cringed. Her tears had already started.

“You okay?” Chris put his hand on Barrett’s shoulder.

He sucked in a long breath to keep his control in check. The old wood floor groaned and settled as the love of his life walked out on him with the devil on her arm, and still he didn’t release the breath. Not until he heard the large front door open and close did he finally let it out.

He swallowed several times to push his emotions back down. As the oldest living Gideon in this family, he couldn’t let his little brothers see him like this. He had to remain strong, not broken like the way he really felt.

“I’m not going to say it.”

Barrett swallowed thickly. “You couldn’t have predicted this.”

“Is that so?”

He turned and looked into the hazel eyes of his closest relative, aside from his brothers. “Chris, I really don’t need your ‘I told you so’ right now.”

“Do something for me.”

Barrett frowned. “What?”

“I’m here to pin a sub. I’ll find her, but you pin her first.”

“I’m really not up for it,” Barrett said and shook his head.

He dropped his shoulders as the weight of the world pulled him down.

Chris flashed a crooked grin and patted Barrett’s shoulder. “You are up for it more than you know, my friend. Trust me, this is exactly what you need.”

He gritted his teeth as every muscle in his body tightened with tension. Should he hide out in his room and wallow in self-pity? Was that the Gideon way?

Hell no.

With his chin up, and despite that he no longer felt anything but

the harsh realization of the bitter truth, he answered, "I'm in."

"It started to snow, so the twins are moving the meet and greet to the bar so the guests can go out to the covered patio. Matt already has the heaters going."

"Fine. Give me an hour."

Chris nodded. "Now that's the Barrett Gideon I know. Turn this into a good thing. Gail doesn't know what she's given up. However, some young filly is about to find out."

Barrett couldn't agree more. He couldn't let Gail's betrayal affect him. Deep down he knew this day would come, as much as he'd done everything to ignore it. She may have let him have her body, but he never really had her heart. No, that belonged to Tom and always would.

Maybe he should be more like Chris. He never kept the same woman around long enough to get attached and seemed happy enough. Without that emotional tie, Barrett could be free to really enjoy himself here at GR&L. No more guilt for participating in a weekend ménage.

Gail knew what went on at the ranch and never said anything until now. Had he known how she felt would he have stopped participating? He shouldn't be a third party in a ménage when he belonged to her. He laughed at the thought. Belonged? Hardly. He may have thought that, but Gail never reciprocated.

Now he knew why. She just didn't give enough of a shit about him to really care.

With his head down, he hurried back up the stairs to his room, avoiding the watchful gazes of his kin and whatever guests had already arrived. He changed into the black head-to-toe attire each of the Gideons wore during the meet and greet. As one of the rules of the meet and greet, anyone dressed in all black had no ties and had come in search of nothing more than participating in a no-strings-attached ménage.

This weekend Barrett planned to take a very active role in the

woman Chris chose for them.. He'd make it a weekend none of them would ever forget. Placing the black cowboy hat on his head, he spun on his booted heel and went in search of the lucky filly.

Chapter 3

What a mistake.

What the hell was she thinking coming to a ménage ranch alone? Here Sarah Emerson sat milking her glass of wine, dressed in all black as per the rules, waiting for a couple to approach her. Just like her disaster of a love life, she'd struck out.

Her brother had been sadly mistaken. This wouldn't be the release she'd needed to get over her breakup. Norris bragged about both the Gideon Ranch & Lodge, as well as The Roadhouse. Since The Roadhouse closed down every night, sending the patrons home before dawn, that left the GR&L for her to experience her first ménage. She knew if she didn't actually have to stay, she'd more than likely chicken out and leave before ever finding this so-called release.

The spaghetti-strapped LBD her best friend talked her into buying for this hugged her curved frame and made her feel all that more uncomfortable. Little black dresses belonged on models and those attending the opera, not on women who preferred jeans to skirts, especially those built like Sarah.

She wasn't a size six, or eight, or whatever size LBDs were meant to flatter. She had too many curves, and they made the dress ride up whenever she moved, so she'd remained firmly planted in her chair for the past hour, tugging and fidgeting to make the tiny piece of fabric cover her essential parts.

Maybe she should have worn something a little less revealing. But then again, if she dressed in her usual faded jeans and whatever shirt she grabbed out of her dresser, she'd never catch anyone's eye.

Especially Lucky, the thieving bastard she'd come to GR&L to

find. If she only knew what he looked like. Or the woman he was with, since she'd heard he'd taken a female partner in for this job.

How did Norris do it? He had a natural talent to easily spot the guilty amongst a crowd. Since Lucky was about as guilty as they came, he should have stuck out like a sore thumb.

When she scanned the room, she only saw partygoers all having a good time. Not one of them looked like they lived the life of a millionaire. Since no one seemed to know what this guy looked like, it made it all that much harder to spot him.

But that was the point. Lucky didn't want to be found, which made the chase all the more exciting.

Scanning the crowd, her gaze drifted back to a tall, dark, and dangerously handsome man standing at the bar, sipping on his drink and watching everyone else have fun. He didn't look like he was in the mood for company.

A Gideon.

They all had breathtaking family resemblances, from their dazzling blue eyes to their arrogant square jaw, and on down. Truly amazing. And mouthwatering.

She couldn't keep her eyes off of him. He had on all black, the attire of a single looking to join a couple. Every time he moved his gaze her way, she quickly looked away until she no longer felt the heat from his eyes touching her.

She brought her attention back to the crowd. Most couples had already picked their lucky third party and were now actively engaged in conversation, amongst other things. Sarah thought this would have been the perfect thing to do to not only forget Ryan, but to prove to her brother that she could do a job without him looking over her shoulder.

Instead, she sat alone and watched everyone else find their fantasy. It only reminded her of the mistake she'd made by trying to sneak in and finish the job before her brother caught on to her plan of moving in on his score.

"You'll love the ranch." Sarah muttered her brother's words as she stared at her wine. "Sure, Norris. I'm having a bang-up time."

"Are you talking to yourself?" Carol, a gal Sarah had met through Norris a few months ago, plopped down in the chair opposite Sarah's. Dressed in black as well, Carol's LBD actually did its job on her. She looked like she should be at the world premiere of a movie. She looked that good.

Sarah let out a breath and smiled through her misery. She tried to ignore the flames licking at her skin as the man at the bar glanced her way once again.

"Having a good time?"

"Fabulous," Carol exclaimed and widened her brilliant blue eyes. "You should see this guy flirting with me. Dressed in all black from his cowboy hat down to his shit kickers, and these eyes—they're like the color of the sand of the Sahara right at sunrise. And the way they eat you up when he grins...Ah! Amazing. I'm telling you, he's got to be the most beautiful man on the planet."

Sarah darted her gaze back to the man at the bar, dressed the same as Carol's description. Their eyes met, and instead of pulling away, she held still as he raked that blistering gaze over her face. Oh, wow. She'd never physically reacted from a look before. Cool chills washed over her skin and tightened around her nipples.

"Earth to Sarah. Are you still with me?"

"Sounds like you like him," she said, recovering quickly by pulling her gaze away from his.

"I'm in love," she informed her matter-of-factly. "I've already picked out our china pattern."

Of course. From what Sarah knew of her, that was Carol in a nutshell. She fell in love with the man of the week, and God help him. Sarah laughed. "What? No names for all the kids you'll have?"

Shuddering, Carol then reached over and took a long drink from Sarah's wine. "Bite your tongue. China is one thing, but kids? That's a whole area I don't want to even think about. You know, if you'd get

your butt up out of that chair, you just might find yourself having fun.”

She shrugged and took her wine back. She had the perfect view of the entire bar from her seat. Once she spotted Lucky, she’d make her move. “I’m fine.”

“You’re not fine. Look at you. You’re like *Baby* stuck in the corner. Come on, Sarah. Come back to my table with me. My future husband has many friends. The Gideon brothers are, like, related to him somehow.” She wiggled her perfectly painted brows.

“I’ll stay here, thanks.”

Carol lost her smile as she studied her. Sarah hid her eyes and hoped her friend didn’t put two and two together.

“Sarah Kay Emerson, you’d better not be working. You promised Norris you wouldn’t try and find this Loopy on your own.”

“Lucky,” Sarah corrected. When she realized Carol gave her the wrong name on purpose to catch Sarah in her own trap, she hid her gaze as heat slapped her cheeks.

“Sarah, come on. You can’t move in on Norris’s scam, or con, or whatever he calls his modern-day Robin Hood role. The family hired *him*, not *you*.”

“But he’s in the middle of another job. I’m just trying to help him out. This guy has put too many families into bankruptcy. He needs to go down.”

“And he will.” Carol grabbed her friend’s hand. “Just as soon as Norris catches him. Leave Lucky to your brother. Just have fun. Please.”

“I will as soon as I find who I’m looking for.” Sarah glanced over Carol’s shoulder and met the gaze of a striking man dressed in all black, his hazel eyes dancing in wicked mischief as he watched her. Carol wasn’t exaggerating—he was stunning, like a statue. He looked remarkably similar to the man at the bar, with the square jaw and massive shoulders. They had to be related.

“I believe your future husband doth approach.” Sarah watched

him walk over and released a shudder. Man-oh-man, he got better and better the closer he came.

“Chris Gideon,” he said in a silky smooth voice that washed over her senses like a warm breeze.

Ah, yes. Of course he was a Gideon. They were like Gods, those Gideons. But this one had hazel eyes and caramel-colored hair, and a hard body that commanded the room’s attention. Every last one of those Gideons had the women in the bar panting, all falling over themselves to pique their interest.

Except Sarah. She couldn’t move in this damn dress. Besides, she’d never be able to sway the affection of a man who looked like an underwear model. Even if she did, she’d never be able to keep it.

None of that mattered anyway. Not one of them so much as gave her a second glance. Obviously Chris had come to pull Carol away.

She adjusted her glasses and swept her medium-length chestnut curls behind her ear. It wasn’t a big shock that the men didn’t notice her.

She looked nothing like what men considered worthy of their time. Her brown eyes were easily forgettable, her chestnut hair recalcitrantly wavy to the point that she had to keep it no longer than her shoulders, and no matter which diet she attempted, the weight she’d lose always came back and brought friends.

Carol, on the other hand, had blonde hair, blue eyes, and a body straight out of a porn. Beautifully tan skin, perfect boobs that she made payments on, and an athletic build, Carol was everything Sarah wasn’t.

Being a redhead, she couldn’t tan. If she tried, her freckles took over and made her look like a cheetah. Her dull brown eyes were no match against eyes as blue as Carol’s—even if the blue was the result of colored contacts. Sarah adjusted her glasses again and let out a dejected sigh that deflated her spirit as well as her lungs.

Despite being a size twelve, Sarah barely had B-cups at best. They didn’t bounce like a *Baywatch* beach babe’s, or even qualify as ample.

She wouldn't consider herself too overweight, but she was healthy, and because of that she wouldn't be gracing the cover of any magazines any time soon.

Forget it. She'd made a huge mistake thinking she had what it took to sway a man's attention for very long. She should just leave before anyone caught on to why she'd come, especially Lucky. Carol had already caught on. Sarah couldn't afford anyone else knowing.

It might get back to Norris, and then she'd have all kinds of hell to pay.

"You don't look like you're having much fun."

Slowly she traveled her gaze up his broad body, his shoulders perfectly displayed in a snug T-shirt that showed off his bulging arms. Smiling to hide her reaction to him, she simply shrugged.

"What can we do to change that?"

Send me packing. Sarah shrugged again and sipped at her wine, wishing it were something stronger like whiskey but unable to get up and make one for fear the dress would ride up and give everyone in the room a nice show of the G-string she'd also purchased for tonight. And regretted. That, too, had started to ride up to places no cloth should go.

"I'm trying to get her to join in," Carol explained. "But she's being stubborn. You know, she's an Emerson. I figured she'd be the first one out there finding her partners."

"So you're Norris Emerson's little sister. My cousins told me to look out for a very special guest here at the ranch this weekend."

"Sarah," she corrected, not wanting to use Norris' status among the ménage community for special treatment. The heat in Sarah's face expanded to her ears. She'd never be able to live up to the family name. "I came here with Carol."

Chris lifted his brow and curled the corner of his lips into a whisper of a grin. "Well, I guess I'm in the right place at the right time."

Sarah widened her eyes. "We aren't *together* together."

“Alone, then?”

“Yes.” *And thank you for pointing that out.*

“Carol, why don’t you see if the twins are lonely.”

Carol’s entire expression lit up. “With pleasure.”

After Carol jumped up and disappeared into the crowd, Chris took her seat. “Tell me, Sarah Emerson, what brings you out to the ranch? You don’t look like you’re actively looking for partners.”

She couldn’t tell him the truth, but did have a story ready. After all, she did have a family reputation to uphold. “Just looking for a little fun for the weekend.”

He turned and glanced over his magnificent shoulder. “Well, from what I’ve heard, Joey and Greg are regulars at the ranch. That’s them over there in the corner. They’ve already pinned their third and... *Wow*. They’re putting on quite a show, I’d say.”

Sarah followed Chris’s gaze to two burly men sandwiching a woman in a short leather skirt that barely covered the curve of her ass. Well, it used to barely cover her ass. The dark-haired man behind her had lifted it up, pulled her tiny G-string aside, and knelt down before burying his face between her legs.

Sweet Jesus. So this was why she had to sign the nondisclosure agreement when she first arrived. The man between her legs really put on quite a show against the woman’s bare pussy. He used his lips. Teeth. Definitely his tongue. The woman panted and moaned into the other man’s mouth as she bunched the material of the man’s shirt in her clenched fists.

This shouldn’t turn her on, but it did. Liquid heat boiled inside her, melting her, flooding her own pussy. She turned away and almost gasped when she spotted the man at the bar, his gaze intent on watching her. Those dark eyes, so full of thick lust and hunger, didn’t so much as falter as he continued to watch her.

He quirked his lips into a sexy grin that had Sarah smiling in return.

“What’s his name?”

She didn't miss the spark of amusement in Chris's expression when he glanced over at the man. "That would be my charming cousin, Barrett. Forget about him. He's about as friendly as a rabid dog."

He glanced back toward the crowd. "Looks like Carol is about to be pinned by the Spanglers. Too bad. I would have liked to take her for the weekend."

Sarah grabbed her wine and brought it to her lips to hide her disappointment. As usual, she served as the inferior choice, the one men were stuck with instead of being with the one they really wanted.

"Carol is definitely going to enjoy herself at GR&L." He stopped and turned back to her. "Once you start enjoying yourself."

She stopped mid-sip and looked at him. "Excuse me?"

"She told me that she'd only feel free to enjoy herself if she knew you were taken care of first."

Great. Now she had guilt to add to the mix of emotions she had fighting for dominance. She couldn't do this. She'd find another way to find Lucky.

"Looks like we may be stuck with each other if you don't get out there and find yourself a couple."

That did it. She didn't want anyone *stuck* with her. It was high school all over again, being picked last in gym, for prom, and even to sit with someone at lunch. She already felt bad enough about herself. She didn't need to sit here and be reminded of all of her shortcomings.

She found herself once again looking at Barrett. He looked away and scowled, and what was left of her hope shattered.

"I'm sorry. I think I made a mistake by coming here." She pushed away from the table. "I'll just grab my bags and call a cab."

"Don't break my heart and tell me that you'd leave me alone."

"Something tells me you'll be fine."

He raised his hand, and before she knew it, the one Gideon she hadn't been able to take her eyes off of joined them. Her mouth fell

open, and she lost her ability to speak. She thought the first one had to be straight from her dreams, but this one—he had to have been chiseled out of bronze. He was that perfect.

“May I?” The God grabbed the back of the chair next to hers. With a quick nod, she consented and secretly granted him permission to do whatever else he wanted.

“What are we drinking?”

“Uh...um...” She should go back to her room. She should pack and get the hell out of here before she did something she’d regret.

Like agree to sleep with two complete strangers, no matter how intoxicating they looked.

Instead, she scooted back to the table. “Wine.”

The way he curled his sensual lips into a breath of a grin had her stomach flipping like a little kid on a trampoline. “Merlot? Cab? Shiraz?”

“Yes,” she whispered, unable to think straight when he smiled like that. Blinking, she forced her brain to engage. “I mean, Merlot.”

“I’ll fetch us fresh drinks,” Chris stated and stood.

“But my glass—”

Barrett grabbed her glass from her and emptied the contents before finishing her sentence. “Is empty.”

Oh wow. She really liked the way he just took complete control like that. When he licked the remnants of the wine from his lips, Sarah licked hers in return. He missed a spot, and for the love of all things good she wanted to retrieve it for him.

Screw her search for Lucky. She wasn’t supposed to be working anyway. She smiled and leaned toward the Gideon God known as Barrett.

“That wasn’t very nice. You didn’t even ask.”

He flicked his tongue out and swiped up the wine, a wicked glimmer in his gaze. “When I see something I want, I don’t ask. I take. And I want you.”

Okay, maybe she should stay, at least for the night. After all, she

didn't want to seem rude.

Chapter 4

“I see you’re dressed in black,” he pointed out.

She glanced down at her LBD and nodded, her heart now in her throat. How were they supposed to do this? Did they say a few niceties about each other’s clothes, the weather, and then find a room to have heated and meaningless sex until morning? Would the Gideon who went to fetch them all drinks be joining them?

“It’s new.”

“Bought for this occasion?”

She nodded.

“My name is Barrett Gideon.” He held out his hand. When she took it, he ran the pad of his thumb across the tender part of her wrist, and her body immediately responded. Chills danced across her skin and coiled around her breasts, twisting her nipples into hard peaks.

“Sarah Emerson.” Her voice sounded so foreign, so distant, as she purred her response.

“Your wine,” Chris said as he rejoined them. “Barrett, this is Norris Emerson’s little sister.”

Sarah didn’t bother correcting him this time. It didn’t matter. She couldn’t form a coherent thought at that moment with them both staring at her, surrounding her with heat.

She darted her gaze back and forth between two men who rivaled in her mind for the most perfect being in the world. Both had amazing square, chiseled chins straight out of her dreams, and broad shoulders that blocked her view from anything else. Barrett had deep blue eyes that rivaled the color of the Montana sky right before dark. Chris, on the other hand, had playful hazel eyes that made a girl both skeptical

and intrigued by their power.

Chris wore his light brown hair longer than Barrett's, but still neatly groomed around the brim of his black hat. The strong, fierce features they shared had her body humming and ready to give in to whatever they wanted to do to her.

As long as she could get out of this damn dress.

With his glass held high, Chris declared a toast. "Here's to the future, whatever it has in store."

Barrett growled and even snarled, and Sarah set her glass back down without taking a drink, the harsh realization slamming into her like a callous wind. Her heart crashed to the pit of her stomach when she realized what this was. A drink meant to make the wallflower sitting off in the corner feel a little bit better about her pathetic self. Well, it backfired. Now she felt even worse. And, to add to it, it really pissed her off that they thought she needed a pity drink.

The bastards.

She stood and tugged at the hem of the dress to pull it down. "Thank you for the drink, but I need to call a cab."

Chris lost his smile. "Still thinking of leaving?"

"If she wants to leave, let her go. Story of my life," Barrett finished in a mutter.

She glanced over at him, who still had a scowl on his face as he continued to stare at the glass of wine in front of him. The sadness in his voice hit her and fed on the despair eating away at her. Why would someone who looked like him have anything to be sad about? Those stunning blue eyes swirled with such pain it made her ache for him.

"Are you okay?"

Barrett glanced up, met her eyes briefly, and then darted his gaze back down to the wine in front of him. "I'm fine."

"You don't seem fine."

He shrugged his massive shoulders as his expression hardened. "Maybe this *is* me being fine."

“If this is you being fine, you suck at it.”

He stiffened and narrowed his gaze but still didn’t glance up from his cup. The emotions swirling in those dark blue eyes had tears threatening hers. This broke her heart, seeing him so sad, so lonely. She didn’t know him from Adam, and yet she wanted nothing more than to ease that pain—or, better yet, remove it altogether.

“So what if I do?” His gaze pinned her to the spot, paralyzing her and leaving her powerless but to stare back. At first the fear gripping her threatened to take over, but then something moved in those dark eyes, something wicked, something roguish.

She had to blink to convince herself of that look in his eyes. He was enjoying this, his torment, and it only made her want to take off her three-inch stiletto and throw it at him.

If he wanted to sit here and feel sorry for himself, she wouldn’t stop him. But she’d be damned if she sat here and let him take her down with him.

“So how about you stop feeling sorry for yourself.” She ignored the heat brushing against her skin from the way he glared at her. When he didn’t respond, she pushed further. “Or is this what you think passes as a pick-up line nowadays? Tall, dark, and troubled. Every woman’s fantasy.”

“Is it your fantasy, Sarah?”

“Rescuing the hardened heart? Hardly.”

“And why is that?”

“Because I’ve been there, and frankly, I have no desire to ever go back. So either channel some charm or plan to spend the night with Rosie and her five little sisters.”

Barrett’s lips tightened as he looked like he fought to stop them from pulling up into a grin.

“So what is your fantasy?” Chris asked.

“Definitely not watching your cousin feel sorry for himself.”

Barrett raked that mystical, midnight-blue gaze across her face, and delicious chills washed over her.

“Wasn’t that exactly what you were doing?”

She sucked in a breath, but then snapped her mouth closed when she couldn’t think of any witty retort. Besides, he’d nailed it.

“So women are allowed to do whatever they want, but men can’t.” He challenged her with a spike of his ebony brow.

“As a matter of fact, yes. We also have the right to change our minds, and I’ve changed mine about you. Thanks but no thanks, Barrett Gideon. You can go back to sulking. I’ll find someone else to fulfill my fantasy.”

“Baby, there is no one else.”

Oh, it was so on. This man’s arrogance needed to be taken down a few thousand pegs. “Ha! I could have anyone in this bar if I wanted to. You are not the only man here.”

Barrett shrugged those massive shoulders. “Maybe not, but I don’t see anyone else knocking me over to sign your dance card, sweetheart.”

Chris leaned toward Barrett and clenched his teeth. “Barrett, what the hell are you doing?”

Barrett didn’t answer. Instead he watched Sarah with those penetrating blue eyes, waiting. She debated leaving. She could easily walk away and never give the arrogant ass a second thought. She’d slap him as she walked away, just for good measure.

But she didn’t. Instead she unleashed all of her pent-up frustration. Frustration over Ryan dumping her. Frustration over thinking she could come to the ranch and blindly find a man who’d successfully evaded the best trackers on the planet.

Frustration that she couldn’t attract a man for anything more than for him to bring her down just so he felt better.

“You know what your problem is?” Sarah couldn’t stop her silver tongue from engaging.

“Oh, do tell.”

“Barrett,” Chris sang under his breath. “Can I speak to you in private?”

“Hell no,” he answered, his smoldering gaze never leaving Sarah. “I’m sure whatever you have to say will be just as enlightening as whatever Sarah is about to say.”

Anger fueled her words. “You’re an asshole.”

“I rest my case.”

Chris stood. “Looks like you two need to resolve some issues. I’ll just be over...uh...somewhere else.”

She tried to smile but deep down wanted to cry. It didn’t take Chris more than five minutes to realize she wasn’t worth sticking around. How long would it take Barrett to realize the same? How many more digs would he get in before he got up and ran away, rejoining his cousin to seduce someone more interesting?

The lines in Barrett’s face deepened as he sank down in his chair. Chris walked away and disappeared into the crowd of guests there for the weekend. Sarah watched him go before turning her attention to Barrett.

“You’d better go, too.”

“What, no more witty retorts? No more enlightening comments about my lack of charm?”

“No, you being an asshole pretty much sums it up.” She paused to catch her breath, not sure why she felt like she’d just run uphill for miles.

He watched her, and the intense look in his eyes forced her to swallow several times to impose a sense of calm.

“I remember those days.” A man’s comment caught Sarah’s attention. She turned to see a couple in their mid-fifties sitting at the table next to Sarah, both smiling and nodding. With them was a man half their age, his hand on the woman’s bare shoulder, his thumb drawing back and forth across her skin. On him he had a ruby-red jewel pinned to his collar.

Apparently the couple had found their third partner for the weekend.

The woman reached over and took the older man’s hand as she

addressed Sarah. "Sweetie, you don't need to play hard to get, not here at the ranch. Barrett is just about as perfect as they get. He's already set his sights on you. I can see it in his eyes. And you want him, too. Why put each other through this when you know it's inevitable? I didn't even bother to put up a fight when Barrett joined us our first weekend here."

"Joined you?" A twist of jealousy swirled inside her like a demon. She didn't want him, she told herself. It didn't matter who he'd slept with in the past, present, or future.

"Barrett made Rhonda scream in three different languages." The older man smiled proudly.

"He sure taught my Jacky-poo a thing or two." Rhonda purred and puckered up her lips at *Jacky-poo*.

"Thanks, Rhonda." Barrett lowered his gaze and grinned sheepishly before stealing a glance at Sarah. After shrugging, he tugged on the brim of his hat to cover his face.

Despite her want to stay upset at Barrett for being so arrogant, she really wanted to see just how many languages he'd make her scream in. She didn't even know any other languages, but somehow she figured that didn't matter. An orgasm with Barrett Gideon would have her speaking in tongues.

"Sit."

Sarah opened her mouth to protest, but when Barrett glanced up with a deep, heated look, the air froze in her lungs. Her heart hammered in her chest as a hunger stirred deep in her stomach. What she wouldn't do for a night with this man, arrogance and all. Something about him held her captive.

And, just like that, she took her seat. They sat there staring at each other for an eternity before she finally had the strength to pull her gaze down to her untouched wine.

"Drink."

She did, gulping the Merlot and not tasting it.

"Do you have a charm?"

“A what? Oh, you mean the thing I’m supposed to pin to me if a couple chooses me? No. As you so kindly pointed out, I don’t exactly have anyone vying for my attention. The one man I did have just ran away, so thank you for that.”

“That’s Chris. He wouldn’t know a good thing if it bit him on the ass.”

She wouldn’t mind taking a nibble. Lifting her wine to her lips, she was about to take a drink when his words hit her. She set the glass back down before she dropped it. “You think I’m a good thing?”

He didn’t explain his comment, which both infuriated her and intrigued her. Instead he pulled a gemstone as blue as his eyes out of his breast pocket and handed it to her. “My charm.”

She held the broach in her hand and stared at it. He couldn’t be serious. It shocked the hell out of her that he’d given her his trinket to wear. A Gideon. Not just any Gideon, but by far the most captivating of all the brothers.

The other three Gideon brothers all laughed and mingled with their guests, clearly enjoying themselves. They had booming voices, those Gideon boys, and every time one chuckled, the sound echoed throughout the room like thunder. Chris stood off in the corner, conversing with people as they walked by, but never taking his laser point gaze off of her.

She glanced back at the Gideon sitting with her. He wasn’t laughing. He’d barely cracked a smile since she first spotted him in the bar.

There had to be some kind of mistake. No way could she hold his interest. Once he realized the mistake he’d made, he’d find a way to escape just like his brother.

At twenty-eight, she wasn’t out of her prime, but she certainly felt like it. Every time she went with Carol to a bar, the men flocked to her best friend and left Sarah standing off in the corner, wishing she had what Carol had. Looks. Charm.

The ability to attract the opposite sex.

She adjusted her glasses before trying to hand the broach back to him. "It's lovely, but it isn't for me."

He tipped his hat back, and for the first time the power of those midnight-blue eyes bore into her, sending pulses of erotic energy shooting through her, centering deep into her core. Dear God, he was magnificent.

"Sarah, wear my charm." It wasn't a request.

She hesitated. "What does it mean if I wear it?"

"That you belong to me, at least for the weekend."

Shock plunged through her body. What did he mean by *at least*? That thought sent her pulse into a seizure. "You and who else?"

"I have a few suggestions." His eyes danced wickedly as his sultry lips curled into a crooked grin. "Not every pairing has to be in threes, although that is a hell of a lot more fun. Ask your brother."

Yes, Norris Emerson had made a name for himself partnering with Amber Dalton and Brett Fields. Together the three of them ran *The Roadhouse*, one of the most successful alternative love clubs west of the Mississippi River.

Norris made it no secret how happy he was sharing Amber, and Amber couldn't stop talking about *her men*. Sarah had always envied her for having not one, but two men to call her own.

"I can tell you're thinking about what it would be like, me possessing you, loving you, making you scream. My hands fisting your hair, my tongue exploring your body. I'd start with your mouth and inch my way down until I buried myself between your thighs, licking and teasing your pussy until you cried out for release."

Heat slapped her cheeks as she lowered her gaze. She'd never heard a man use that tone of voice with her before. Rasping, thick with hunger. With lust.

"Now imagine that times two. Two men loving you and only you, tending to your every ache, fulfilling your every fantasy. I want you, Sarah. Chris wants you, too. Let us take care of you, baby."

Oh, boy. He definitely knew how to talk a girl into doing

something. She closed her eyes and bit her tongue before she gave in to his words. “Barrett, I don’t know about this. A few minutes ago you were all about the insults. Now you want me as your lover for the weekend. It’s hard to keep up with your mood swings.”

“When did I insult you?” He seemed genuinely surprised as he sat back, hurt clearly swirling in those captivating eyes. “You’re the one who called me an asshole. You’re the one who commented on my lack of charm.”

She wanted to argue, but he was right. He may have truly been an asshole, but he never once insulted her. Still, that didn’t give him permission to treat her like just another piece of ass. “Good-bye, Barrett. I hope you find someone who enjoys someone bipolar like you.”

“Bi-*what*?”

“You heard me. Men like you always get what they deserve in the end.” She leaned toward him and narrowed her gaze. “Always.”

He leaned into her so that their noses touched. “Promise?”

For that, she had no retort.

Chapter 5

“You’re gorgeous when you’re pissed, you know that?”

She licked her lower lip and sucked it between her teeth. If they didn’t move past this playful banter soon, she’d end up attacking him right here in the middle of the bar.

But she wouldn’t let him get her that easily. “Don’t think your empty compliments will win you any points, mister. I’m still angry.”

“Stay angry at me, Sarah. Anger will allow you to give in to your raw passion. Release your inhibitions. Just let yourself go. Let me take care of you this weekend. I promise you, you’ll have the time of your life. Once you’ve experienced a real ménage, you’ll only want more.”

The heat from his breath tickled her lips, and she licked them. This shouldn’t be turning her on. Heat plunged through her body at the thought of having Barrett and his brother touching her, loving her. And, yes, making her scream. The image planted itself firmly in her head and had her close to climaxing in anticipation.

She wanted to give in, but she also wanted to rake his eyes out. His arrogance enraged her. It also turned her on.

But she couldn’t let him know that. “What if you don’t turn me on?” She was so going to hell for that lie.

Her question seemed to amuse him. His eyes danced as the corners of his perfect mouth curled into a grin. “I don’t think that’s going to be an issue. Your nipples are so hard they are going to rip your pretty new dress. I bet if I reached under this table and put my hands between your legs, explored your sweet pussy, I’d discover just how turned on you really are. Are you wet for me, Sarah? Do you

want me to find out for myself?”

His crass words should have shocked her. Instead, a swift flood of blistering juices drenched her panties, and she clenched her thighs together to ease the throbbing ache swelling her clit. “I double-doggy dare you.”

His expression stilled for an instant before he broke into a chuckle as he shook his head. She remained silent as she waited for him to share whatever joke he’d just thought up and hoped she wasn’t the punch line.

He sat back and studied her intently for several seconds. “You honestly think I’m bluffing, don’t you?”

“We are in a room full of people, Barrett. I don’t think—Hey!”

He did exactly as he said and reached under the table. Her knees caught his hand and trapped it between them. Looking up at her, he tilted his head. “I’m waiting.”

“What the hell are you doing?”

“I’m not one to turn down a dare, especially when it’s a doggy dare.”

She thrust out her chin to hide the fact that every inch of her body throbbed in need. “I still think you’re bluffing.”

Something sparked in his gaze, something dark, heated, hungry. It became more intent as he roamed it across her face, her neck, her breasts, before snapping back and holding her prisoner.

“Like I said, when I see something I want...”

“You take it,” she finished in a breath and released the grip she had on his hand. His gaze never left hers as his hand drifted up higher, past the hem of her dress. Then higher, to her G-string. Without hesitation he ran his knuckles along the damp fabric and curled his sexy lips into a grin.

His hand slipped beneath the silky material, and he licked his lips as he groaned and she whimpered. “Damn, Sarah. I like how wet you are. If I weren’t sitting so far away I’d sink a finger into that saturated pussy and tease you until you agreed to wear my charm.”

Stupid table blocking his way. He barely brushed across her swollen clit, but it was enough to cause her to rock her hips as she sought out his finger. She needed him to touch her again, to release her from this frantic torment that he and he alone had somehow wound up in her in a manner of seconds.

“I bet there’s a wildcat inside that tight little body just growling to get out. Tell me, Sarah, have you ever been fucked by two men at the same time?”

The flames he had growing in her body ignited into an inferno, burning her from the inside out. She liquefied, and scorching juices coated her pussy.

He smiled and traced her lips with his finger. “You like my touch, don’t you, baby?”

Her nipples twisted and ached as they pushed against the fabric of her thin dress.

She shook her head.

“Answer me, and don’t lie, or you will be punished.”

A fine sweat broke out over her skin and tickled deliciously. Something told her Barrett Gideon was used to getting his way. Still, she wasn’t the type to give it so easily—another trait Ryan hated about her. Swinging her gaze up at him, she then snapped her knees closed and twisted in her chair as she thrust out her chin.

“No man tells me what to do.”

Shock and hunger blazed in his eyes. That look made him even sexier as he eyed her like she was his next meal. His gaze narrowed as he sat back in his chair. “As long as you wear my charm, this man does.”

The roughness in his voice sent her senses staggering like a drunk at closing time. She loved the way her body hummed when he talked and wanted to know what else her body would do under his command.

Her hands shook as she started to pin the broach to her dress.

“Wait.”

Was he already changing his mind? “What?”

“There’s something I need to do before you wear my charm.” He stood then and, without hesitation, swept Sarah into his arms, and lowered his lips to hers.

His kiss, possessive and demanding, flooded her senses as heat scorched every nerve ending. He pressed his chest against hers, pulling her in tighter and surrounding her with him. All of him. She was scandalously aware of his bulging erection pressing against her stomach and rocked her hips in response.

The sounds around them faded as their kiss deepened. A blistering chill washed up her spine when his large, calloused hands caressed her bare shoulders. His touch caused her nipples to tingle, her clit to throb and swell, and her knees to weaken. With every passing second her body readied itself for him and whatever he wanted to do next.

And what he did next had her ready to submit to whatever he wanted. His hand had found its way home and burrowed beneath her flimsy G-string. He slipped past the barrier and sank a finger into the aching entrance of her pussy.

She arched against him and pulled him closer as she rocked her hips back and forth, fucking his hand in her desperate need for release. It wouldn’t take much for him to send her right over the edge, he had her that close to an orgasm already.

He pulled out and eased his finger back in, taking his time and driving her crazy. She needed more. So much more.

“Please, Barrett.” She didn’t care that she begged for it and that she did it in front of the entire bar. She was going to die if he didn’t break this tension coiling around her, squeezing her, teasing her as her climax hovered just out of reach.

“Wear my charm.”

“Anything,” she whispered, her breath quickening. He crooked his finger inside her pussy and found the one spot her vibrator could never touch. “Oh, God.”

“Are you mine?” He pulled out and slowly sank his finger back

into the depths of her weeping cunt, brushing her G-spot and forcing a moan from her lips.

She sucked in a breath when his thumb flicked her clit. “Are you mine?”

“Are you really challenging me?” His voice rumbled like an avalanche, consuming her and sending her that much closer to shattering.

“As much as you are me.”

She whimpered as his fingers withdrew from the depths of her pussy. When he pulled back she stared up at him, at the way his eyes had darkened to almost black. The eyes of a hunter about to attack his prey, and she wanted to be attacked, to be devoured. Her body ached for him to finish.

He then reached over and pinned his charm to the strap of her dress as if he hadn’t just had her near a blinding orgasm. “We’ll just have to see how far you’re willing to take this, my sweet Sarah.”

Barrett sat back down, and Sarah mirrored his action. When he leaned toward her, his elbows on the table, Sarah did the same. “Our lips are definitely compatible, but I’m more interested to find out what else of mine fits perfectly with yours.”

Oh, dear God, did she want to know the answer to that. She was dying to have him touch her again, to quench this arid thirst she had since first spotting him running up the stairs when she arrived at the ranch.

“Would you like me to take you somewhere else?”

She nodded. Why argue? She could look for Lucky tomorrow. Tonight she wanted to get lucky in every other sense of the word.

“Is that a yes? Words, Sarah. I demand words.”

“Yes,” she whispered raggedly.

“Good. I’d hate to have to punish you right here in front of the rest of our guests.”

She tensed at his words and was about to ask what sort of punishment he had in mind when another brooding male appeared at

their table and interrupted the erotic spell he had her under.

“Change your mind?”

Chris stood there, his hazel eyes digging into her, his expression a mix between lust and anticipation, waiting for her answer. He spotted the broach Barrett had pinned to the left strap of her dress. With a quirk of his lips, he took a seat. “I see you’ve already been claimed. That’s too bad. Seems as if I’m losing out on all the good ones tonight.”

“She has another side yet to claim,” Barrett murmured, his gaze slowly scraping over her body and searing a trail across her skin. “Don’t you, Sarah?”

Chris darted his gaze to Barrett as he spoke and then to Sarah, holding it there as he grinned, causing his eyes to dance just as wickedly as Barrett’s. “Is that so? Looking for a third?”

Before she could stop herself, she nodded.

“Words,” Barrett demanded. “I’ve already told you I expect you to speak. As your Master you will obey me, or you will be punished. Is that understood?”

Master? Seriously? *Not going to happen, big boy.*

“I happen to agree. I would have liked to be your Master, but since Barrett pinned you first, I have to stick to the rules. You belong to Barrett first, but if you accept my pin, you also belong to me and must submit to my commands.” He sat down, his twinkling gaze never leaving hers.

She leaned forward, daring him to take it to the next level. “And if I don’t?”

Chris accepted her challenge and leaned forward until his nose almost touched hers. His eyes held a naughty glimmer. “Would you like to find out?”

Would she ever. “Maybe.”

“Then keep pushing me, Sarah. I promise you, you’ll never experience anything like it. Barrett and I can take you places you’ve only read about.”

She remained silent just to see if he planned to do anything. When he narrowed his blazing gaze on her, it ignited every sexual desire she'd ever had since her first smoldering thought as a teen.

Her bravado took over, and she went along with it. She licked her lips in response, testing him, daring him to push it a step further. "If you say so."

"Should we test your theory?" He nudged his nose against hers.

"Maybe we should." She slid her nose against his until her lips were only a breath away from his. "Would you spank me?"

He shook his head, his mouth brushing across hers. She flicked out her tongue and ran it along his bottom lip. "I'd definitely ballgag you."

"And why is that?" she whispered.

"You talk too much." He nipped at her lips.

"So shut me up."

"With pleasure." He took her lips. No hesitation. No pretext. He wanted her. She tasted it in his kiss. Stroking her lips with his tongue, he took control of their connection and took Sarah's world from black and white and brought it into full color.

His kiss told her he wanted her and her alone. He was dying for her, and she didn't know why she knew that, only that she did and reciprocated it.

Before she knew what happened, Chris had another blue jewel pinned to her right strap. To seal the deal, his tongue swept her lips open and licked at her, teasing her and burning her from the tips of her nipples clear through her womb, and coated her channel as her body primed itself for their taking.

He then broke their kiss and sat back as if he didn't just render her temporarily speechless.

Chris studied the two broaches. "You look good in blue."

"I bet she looks better in nothing," Barrett growled.

Sarah bit down on her bottom lip to cover how much she'd started to tremble. This was insane, thinking the two hottest men in the room

wanted her, but they'd both pinned her. According to the rules, they now owned her. Two! Until she removed the pins, they could do anything they wanted with her. A quick glance over to Barrett and she saw that roguish gleam in his eyes. She curled one side of her mouth in return.

Chris rose from his chair. "How about we move this to a separate room? We could get better acquainted and out of clothes that make us all look like we just attended a funeral."

Barrett didn't move. His gaze remained glued to Sarah, making her hot, and had her body responding. "Or we could stay here and really see how adventurous you can be. The room is starting to clear out."

She'd barely noticed. The two men focusing all of their attention on her had her spellbound. Drawing in a deep breath, she tried to keep her voice firm instead of stuttering with nerves. "What would we do out here in the open?"

Barrett spiked his brow in response. "We could always finish what we started."

"Come on, Barrett. Let's not scare her. I think you've proven your point." Chris grinned in apology. "He can be a little intense."

Sarah liked that about him and couldn't wait to see what else he did to cause her heart rate to spike.

"Barrett doesn't scare me," she admitted truthfully. "I've seen worse." *Much worse.*

Chris continued to smile. "We'll never scare you."

"Unless you want us to," Barrett added.

"What if I do?" She didn't know where all of this came from. Maybe, deep down, she'd been a challenging submissive all along.

Who knew?

Chris' gaze darkened with lust. Pure, unadulterated lust. "Just how scared do you want to be, Sarah? Because, as God as my witness, I'm willing to take this as far as it needs to go for you to come. And you will come, sweetheart. Come hard. Come often. But you will only

come when given permission. Is that clear?"

The smile she had firmly planted on her lips slid off. Was he serious? She'd never equated fear with desire, but just the thought of what this man—what both these men—would do to scare her had her breathing in shallow gasps as her blood boiled in anticipation.

Just how far would any of them go?

Chapter 6

“Do you think she’ll want to be restrained?”

Barrett grunted as his answer.

Chris laughed at his own question. “What am I thinking? Based on her reaction in the bar, I think she’s open to just about anything we show her.”

He couldn’t argue with that, nor did he want to. The idea of serving up some fun BDSM-style had his interest piqued and his cock engorged. He’d take her, over and over, until the agitation churning in his gut dissipated.

Sarah Emerson had more than everything he wanted and needed. A mix of disbelief, irritation, and rampant lust snaked through him as his brain bounced back and forth between her and Gail Sawyer. He couldn’t stop himself from comparing the two.

Sarah’s witchy eyes looked to him in heated challenge, wanting to defy him as much as give in to him. She had his body tense, his balls tight. He wanted her, wanted to punish her, to pleasure her, and give her the best *fucking* weekend of her life. Had he ever felt that level of intensity with Gail? With anyone?

Barrett wiped the sweat from his brow and let out a long, unsteady breath. It didn’t make any sense, his sudden shift in want. He’d always wanted Gail. *Always*. Every weekend that he participated in as an instructor he was just that—an instructor.

This time he wanted to be more, and he couldn’t explain why. There was no reason why an hour—if that—would affect him so drastically. No woman had ever made him so hard so fast, including Gail. Then again, Gail just laid there and never so much as released a

loud moan when he brought her to climax. Somehow he knew Sarah would be so much more.

“You boys have collected a few more toys since my last visit. Nice.” Chris held up a glass dildo and turned it in his hand. “I brought my own bag, just in case I didn’t find anything I liked.”

“This isn’t about you, Chris.” Barrett shrugged and continued to rifle through the closet, completely oblivious of the internal battle Barrett fought as he sat there in the chair, staring at the very spot Gail had stood when she callously ripped out his heart mere hours ago.

His brilliant, clueless cousin must have forgotten that the room he’d chosen to use to bring Miss Sarah Emerson to new heights of pleasure was the same room Tom and Gail had said their good-bye. Instead of joining in on the search for all the sex toys and BDSM gear they’d need, Barrett sat in the chair against the opposite wall, sipping on straight whiskey, debating whether to call this entire thing off. His feelings for Sarah scared him, and he’d be damned if he’d let himself go there again.

Ever again.

Would it be a betrayal to Gail if he let himself actually enjoy the flesh of another woman so soon? When he drove Sarah crazy by diving between her thighs and driving her to climax with his mouth, would Gail even cross his mind?

“We’ll definitely need those,” Chris commented as he tossed the velvet handcuffs onto the bed. He added a ball gag, blindfold, flogger, and various other paraphernalia.

Turning to Barrett, he frowned. “Why aren’t you over here helping me? This is supposed to be your call. You pinned her first. You’re the Master. Matt told me you all promised Norris you’d take good care of her.”

He didn’t give a shit. Every passing second the memory of Gail sank deeper into his brain and depressed him even more. He should definitely call this off. “Take it, then.”

“Oh, no. This, dear cuz, is exactly what you need.”

“How so?”

“For as long as I can remember, Gail Sawyer has had her little pussy wrapped around you. She controlled your relationship, if you can call it that.”

“You don’t know what the fuck you are talking about.”

Chris laughed, and Barrett gripped his glass tight as he clenched his teeth. Only Chris would have the balls to irritate the shit out of Barrett by talking about Gail right after she shattered him.

He didn’t want to hear this. In just a few minutes, their guest would walk through the door and expect him to perform all kinds of unbelievable sexual acts. The last thing he needed was a lecture on what he did wrong with Gail, especially from a perpetual bachelor like his cousin.

“I think I do,” Chris countered and turned back to his quest for more things to put into play. “I know you, apparently better than you know yourself.”

“You know what I want you to know.” Barrett took a long pull of his whiskey and breathed out as the burn coated his throat, warming him throughout his body.

“We are Gideons. It’s in our blood to dominate in everything we do. You can’t stop being who you are, Barrett. Gail made you hold that part of you back. You weren’t yourself with her. At least now you can finally be yourself again.”

“I’m exactly who I want to be.” One miserable bastard.

“Bullshit.”

“Can we just get this over with?”

He whipped around and glared down at Barrett. “What the hell is wrong with you? Sarah is going to walk through that door any minute. If she sees you wallowing in your own goddamn self-pity, what do you think she is going to say? To think? You can tell by the way she holds herself that she has self-esteem issues. She sees you moping like that and she’s going to take it personally.”

“She’s beautiful. There’s no reason for her to have a self-esteem

issue.”

Chris laughed. “No argument there, cuz. I knew she’d be perfect for us, which is why I flagged you over. Sarah does love a challenge, and to have two Doms challenge her made her all that much hotter. You like her, don’t you?”

She’d definitely caught his eye, and it bothered the hell out of him. He wasn’t even over Gail, and here he sat, lusting over another woman. A woman with dark red curls of satin and big brown eyes that pulled him into their depths.

“Yeah, I like her.”

Chris chuckled and flashed that charming, Gideon smile. “Yeah, me too. She’s got the cutest little crinkle between her eyes when she looks at you like you’ve lost your ever-loving mind. And the way she challenged us both was spectacular. Man, I’ve never seen you so frustrated and me so goddamn hard I could split rocks.”

Barrett continued to pout as he stared at his glass of whiskey, at the way the ice had begun to melt and swirl around in the amber liquid.

“At least with Gail out of your life, you are finally free. You get that, right?”

Ignoring the pinch in his gut at that little dose of reality, Barrett closed his eyes and tried to tune out his cousin as Chris continued on with his theory.

“Barrett, I’m going to tell you something that you need to hear. It’s going to piss you off, but you need to hear it.”

Barrett opened his eyes and glared at his cousin. “Is it worth ending your life over?”

Chris rolled his eyes. “Oh, yeah. Always the tough guy. Listen to me, you have to know that you never had her.”

“Excuse me?” Barrett tensed and readied himself for jumping out of the chair and kicking the shit out of his favorite cousin.

Despite knowing it could be his last breath, Chris used it to continue pissing Barrett off, as always. “Seriously, cuz. Gail used

you. She used you to make Tom jealous before they got together. She used you to get back at Tom when those two split up. She used you to get Tom back. It's always been a game to her. Why can't you see that?"

He lowered his gaze to his glass as the truth of what Chris said struck him hard. Still, Barrett tried to refute. "You're wrong."

"How am I wrong?"

"You don't know Gail the way I do."

"I don't need to know her. I know women like her. Hell, I've been on both sides with women like her."

"Did any of them tell you they loved you?" Barrett didn't have much of a defense left and started to grasp at straws.

"Those are just words, dude. Did she ever look you in the eye when she said it?"

Goddamn it. "She didn't need to. I know she meant it."

"You need to see it for what it really was," Chris said, his jovial tone gone. He rarely showed this serious side.

Barrett took notice and glanced up at him. "And that is?"

Chris's hazel eyes bore into him. "Gail never loved you. And, frankly, I hope this time she's gone for good. The rest of us have had to stand back and watch the way she strung you along. It sucked knowing that whenever she wanted anything from you, you'd drop everything to be at her beck and call."

"That's being a good friend."

"At what cost? Jesus, Barrett. You're thirty years old and have never had a serious relationship because of her."

Barrett's blood began to boil. He didn't need to hear this. He didn't *want* to hear this. "This from the guy whose idea of a serious relationship is the same woman for more than one weekend."

"That's by choice."

"And so is mine."

"Keep trying to convince yourself of that. All I'm saying is that with Gail out of the picture, maybe you'll finally be able to find

something more than being a third party in a weekend ménage.” Just then a knock at the door sounded, and Chris grinned wide as he closed the folding closet doors before approaching the other door. “And that something may be closer than you think.”

Before Barrett could protest against his cousin’s ridiculous notion, Chris opened the door and immediately lost his smile. “Carol?”

Barrett stood as the blonde bombshell walked into the room. He spotted her in the bar. She already had so many guests, men and women alike, surrounding her, all trying to claim her, that he didn’t even bother. She screamed high maintenance, from her fake boobs, fake tan, and fake nails, all the way down to shoes that probably cost more than her fee for the weekend.

So why was she here instead of Sarah?

Chris didn’t seem to mind, the heartless son of a bitch. “Well, well, well. Are we adding a bit of flavor to tonight’s activities?”

Carol gave him a slow once-over. “More like a replacement.”

“Where’s Sarah?” Barrett demanded.

“She left.”

Chris and Barrett exchanged surprised glances.

“Where’s your couple?” Chris took a step toward her. Barrett knew from the look on his cousin’s face and that horny gleam in his eye that he’d already forgotten about Sarah. “Were you too much for them?”

“They’re sleeping,” Carol explained and batted her large blue eyes at Chris. “And now I’m all alone.”

“You don’t have to be.”

Carol’s gaze flicked over to the bed. Instead of fear flashing in her eyes, she licked her lips and bit down. “Looks like you already have plans.”

“Plans can be altered,” Chris countered in a hungry growl.

Barrett didn’t want Carol. He didn’t realize it until she hadn’t showed, but he was actually looking forward to seeing Sarah again. Having her decide to leave even after the heated banter between them

really cut deep.

“Where is she now?”

Carol turned to Barrett and gave a long sigh. “She’s out front. I tried to talk her into staying, but she refused. She said something about not being good enough for two men. Wait, did you both pin her?”

Barrett didn’t answer. He hurried out of the room and toward the front door to stop Sarah from leaving.

Carol’s voice echoed behind him. “Why would either of you pin her instead of me?”

“Let me see if the twins are busy,” Chris said, and then closed the door.

Chapter 7

Barrett opened the front door and easily spotted Sarah sitting on one of the wrought-iron benches, her teeth chattering on this March evening, surrounded by gracefully falling snow as she waited for her cab. When she glanced over and saw him approaching, her eyes widened, and she quickly turned to look straight ahead.

She looked more at home in her faded blue jeans and heavy pullover, wafflestompers covering her feet. And for some reason he couldn't explain, this Sarah Emerson had him immediately and painfully hard, his want for her tightening in his balls. She looked so natural, so beautiful as the snow fell around her.

"I'm leaving," she informed him as he stopped next to her, her voice firm.

"I heard." He glanced down at her small rolling bag and frowned. Most of the guests had at least twice that for a weekend at the ranch—one for clothes and one for when they weren't wearing any. "Do you need help with the rest of your bags?"

She swung her large brown eyes up to him, and Barrett had to suck in a breath. Her eyes sparkled with defiance through her glasses, with uncertainty. And more than anything else, fear. It wasn't the kind of fear that excited a sub. No, this fear meant so much more. Seeing it flash in her eyes made him feel it, too.

Damn it.

He'd scared her. Him. This was his fault that she now sat out in the cold waiting for a cab that would more than likely never come. When it snowed, the long, winding road up to the ranch could be dangerous to travel on. The ranch owned several ATVs and snow

mobiles as backup just in case.

Barrett lifted his gaze to the sky. Thick grayish-white clouds hung low like a dense fog. With the temperature continuing to drop and from the looks of the fat clouds, the guests could be in for a longer stay than anticipated.

"I don't have any other bags."

"May I?" He motioned at the empty spot next to her.

"I'm leaving," she repeated, her tone not quite as sure as before.

He sat, ignoring the numbing cold as the snow sank into his backside. "Heading to Holston to visit your brother?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe."

"Travel is going to be tricky in this weather."

"I'll take my chances."

"Fine. I'll stay with you until your cab gets here, or until we freeze to death. Whichever comes first."

She blinked at him and swept her pretty chestnut curls behind her ear. "Are you going to try and talk me into staying?"

He'd give anything to run his fingers through that hair. The mist from their breath combined and swirled above them, and he couldn't help but want that to be them, twisting and joining together as one. "Do you want me to?"

She shrugged as her answer. "I left your charm up in my room, if that's why you're here."

"That's not why I'm here."

"Then why?"

Hell, he didn't even know the answer to that question. Ever since he'd spotted her in the bar, sitting alone, looking about as comfortable as a balloon in a cactus patch, he wanted to know more about her. Her innocent yet seductive look intrigued him. When Chris approached her first, it irritated Barrett. And then his cousin had made the signal that he needed a closer to come in and assist.

So assist Barrett did. And in return, he'd found himself even more intrigued. "Can I ask a question?"

“Sure.”

“Why did you come to the ranch?”

She drew in several breaths that had her high, firm breasts rising and lowering. Small, yet real. “My brother had the bright idea that I needed this.”

“Don’t you?”

Her laugh lifted into the air and slammed into his chest. He’d never heard a giggle so sweet and yet so sensual. “I don’t know what I need.”

An honest answer. Another thing he liked about her. “Did I do something to frighten you? Is that why you’re leaving? Listen, if you aren’t into BDSM, we don’t—”

“Oh, no. It isn’t that.” With wide eyes, she turned to him and placed her hand on his arm. The heat from her touch shot up his arm and coiled around his heart, which had him both curious and a bit alarmed.

His already throbbing cock ached at the thought of them taking their conversation from the bar to something more than talk. To see her running away, tail firmly planted between her pretty legs, made him wonder what he did to scare her. It had to have been him. Chris didn’t stick around long enough to say more than a few words.

“Then what is it?”

“Please don’t think it’s you. It isn’t. It’s me.”

He grinned and shook his head. When she crinkled her brow at him, he laughed. “The proverbial response when breaking up with someone.”

She laughed as well, and the sound would forever be imprinted on his very soul. “That isn’t what I meant. Besides, it isn’t like we had a moment back there.”

“We didn’t?” He thought they had.

Turning to him, she lost her smile. Her wide gaze bounced from his eyes to his lips and back. She then licked hers before sucking her lower lip between her teeth.

“We did?”

“Didn’t we?”

“I...uh...I’m not...I mean...”

No sooner did she pull in a breath before his mouth caught hers. He licked her lips open so his tongue could play with hers. They tasted each other, taking their time exploring.

He lifted his hand and weaved his fingers into her silky waves. When he fisted the thick tresses, Sarah moaned and leaned into him. He fought against the need to reach up and touch her with his free hand, to grab her by the hips and pull her closer to him. He wanted to sink his cock inside her with a hunger so deep, so vivid, that he didn’t know how much longer he could fight it.

She had him on edge. His skin way too sensitive. His senses on high alert. He pulled back and stared into her eyes. “You do know what goes on here at GR&L, right? Norris explained what we do here?”

One word. Three letters. Hell, she could nod and that would be enough for him. He’d take her back to his room, fall to his knees, and worship the moist flesh between her thighs, slowly driving her insane with his tongue.

For starters.

Barrett watched as she drew back. Her pretty eyes lost some of their amazing shine. “I know, which is why I’m leaving.”

“But you knew before you agreed to spend the weekend here.”

She hesitated, and the wait nearly killed him. Then she gave him a slight nod. “I knew.”

He frowned. “Then why are you leaving?”

After visibly swallowing and forcing out a slow breath, she turned to him. “Listen, you really don’t need to do this.”

“Do what?”

“This. Right here. You’re being nice to me because you have to. Don’t worry, Mr. Gideon. I won’t be requesting a refund. This is my choice to leave. I thought I was ready for something like this, but I’m

not.”

Mr. Gideon? What happened to them being on a first-name basis? Especially when they’d hinted at doing unspeakable things to each other. “So what are you ready for?”

“To tell you the truth? I don’t know.”

“Then how do you know you aren’t ready for something like this?” Whatever *this* was.

Instead of protesting, she smiled and nudged at him as she lowered her gaze to her boots. “Good point.”

He let out a long sigh and stared up at the way his breath hovered above them. “It’s freezing out here. Why don’t we take this inside and get something warm to drink?”

The way she smiled, flirting at him with nothing more than a look, had him ready to start panting. Dear God, she was beautiful.

“What did you have in mind?”

He wondered if she had any idea what that look did to a man. It made him think of only one thing, and it involved her beneath him, her sweet body writhing and glistening with sweat as he drove into her over and over until they both screamed out.

“Let’s start by going inside. We’ll see what sparks our interest.” He stood and held out his hand.

She slipped her hand in his, and he didn’t miss how well it fit. The heat from her touch sank into his bones, and despite his last statement, his cock twitched as the heat reached his balls. They tightened as the lust that suddenly raced through him bubbled in his groin.

“Are you sure?” Her eyes were wide as they searched his.

“About spending time with you?”

She nodded. “I’m not exactly the type of woman men like you tend to go for.”

“And what kind of man am I?” *This ought to be good.*

When she blushed furiously, the beautiful color lit up her cheeks as well as her eyes. She lowered her gaze and offered him a sheepish smile. “Are you really going to make me say it?”

“Oh yeah.” He laughed.

She looked up and rolled her eyes, and Barrett loved the way it lit up her entire face. He’d never seen anything like it. Most women rolled their eyes as a sign of irritation. She did it more as a way to taunt him even more. His dick pushed against the buttons of his jeans.

“Fine,” she groaned. “You’re like a tall, dark, and dangerous dream. You and your cousin shouldn’t be allowed in the same zip code, let alone the same room.”

“Is that so?”

“Sure. You two are destructive to any woman’s self-control.”

“We are?” They were? That was news to him.

“Just look at you,” she went on, her words falling faster and faster. “You both have shoulders that could hold up the world, hair that just makes me want to run my fingers through it, and eyes—oh wow, your eyes are like these unending pools of deep blue. They’re like a midnight blue, your eyes. And what’s worse, your cousin is just as gorgeous with his dancing hazel eyes and yummy caramel hair. It’s like God so wanted to tempt every female on earth that he created the Gideons as punishment.”

“Punishment?” This just got better and better.

“Men like you two don’t even look twice at women like me, which is okay. I don’t know if I could handle having men like you interested in me. I’d never be able to hold up to whatever attracted you in the first place. I’m just me, just plain old Sarah Emerson. I can’t compete with the rest of them.”

Some asshole really did a number on her self-esteem. “Well, *just* Sarah Emerson, I hate to disappoint you, but everything I’ve learned about you so far has only attracted me more. You’re different, and I like that. You aren’t trying to wow the men at this ranch with some outrageous outfit, or something surgically enhanced.” His gaze raked across her face before flicking down to her heaving chest as she seemed to be struggling to breathe.

“You like my boobs?”

He laughed. This woman just spoke her mind, and damn if he didn't find it endearing. "Yeah, I do."

The color returned to her face, and she released a shaky sigh as she smiled warmly. "Really?"

A vibration of blistering pleasure rocked through his body and settled into his rock-hard cock. He shouldn't be feeling something this intense for a guest. They'd just met, yet he'd swear they'd known each other for a lifetime.

"Tell you what, you stay with me for the weekend, and let's see if we can find something about you I like more than your breasts. How's that sound?"

Sarah smiled and nodded. "You're on."

Chapter 8

“Do you want real or decaf?”

Sarah sat in the giant industrial kitchen, her hands tightly folded in front of her to hide the way she quivered in anticipation and uncertainty. Were they really there for coffee? Or had Barrett lured her there under false pretenses for something more?

She had to admit, the idea hadn't escaped her mind. She'd already spotted several surfaces that wouldn't take much to clear if they decided to have hot, sloppy sex right here amongst the stainless steel appliances.

“I'd better have decaf. I'll never sleep if I have caffeine this late.”

He turned with a grin. When he winked she physically trembled. “It's not uncommon for guests to be up all night at the ranch.”

The quivers rocking her system intensified and attacked her, hardening her nipples and sending a shock wave of liquid pleasure ripping through her body. She imagined what it would be like spending the night with Barrett.

Yet the little doubt demon firmly planted itself in the back of her mind. Was she making a mistake by agreeing to stay with him? Would it end in disaster like every other relationship she'd ever had? What if he thought this meant more? What if she wanted more and he didn't?

But above all else, what if they did end up having sex and she sucked at it? She wasn't a twenty-eight-year-old virgin, but damn close. A few awkward times, once in college with a boy who never called her again, and then with Ryan, made her a far cry from experienced, despite the reputation her brother had set in place for the

family name.

Barrett, on the other hand, ran a couple's ranch specializing in weekend ménages. No doubt all of the Gideons knew how to please a woman and expected their woman to be able to please them.

She was doomed.

Barrett cursed as he opened and closed cabinet after cabinet in search of coffee. "How hard can it be to find coffee?"

"Can't you ask the people you have working back here?"

"We send them home before the meet and greet."

Odd. But then again, she didn't see anyone eating anything. No, people's hunger was focused on the other guests, not on food. "What if someone gets hungry?"

He turned and looked at her, an intense gleam in his eyes. "The guests aren't hungry for food. They want wild, uninhibited, and often extreme sex. They don't want food unless it is part of the sex act."

Food? She'd never so much as had anyone feed her grapes. The idea of having Barrett use food as a sexual toy planted itself and throbbed in the walls of her pussy, pushing blistering liquid down her channel and drenching her panties. She wanted Barrett to use food on her. She didn't know how, and she didn't care.

She tried to sound disinterested as she picked at her nails and asked, "How would they use food?"

Barrett quirked his lips and tilted his head as he studied her. "Are you asking me to tell you? Or to show you?"

His question shocked her, but her body's reaction to it shocked her more. Desire plunged through her, tightening her already way too sensitive nipples so much that she couldn't stop the whimper that fell from her lips. Her pussy tingled in anticipation, her clit throbbing relentlessly as it demanded attention.

Casually, Barrett stalked over to the enormous refrigerator and leaned against it with his shoulder before folding his arms in front of him. The gesture had his already bulging biceps strain the fabric of the shirt.

“Well?”

Oh, boy. Here it was. The decision she'd been waiting for and dreading at the same time. She only needed to say the words, and he'd no doubt have her naked within five minutes. And she wanted him to. Dear God, did she want him to.

So why, then, was she hesitating?

“Is it really that hard of a decision?”

She jumped as Chris walked into the kitchen, that ridiculously charming grin on his handsome face. He moved to Barrett, gave him a quick nod, and then motioned for him to move. Barrett narrowed his gaze in return.

“Why don't you see if you can go help our guest with her decision.”

Barrett nodded and licked his lips as he waltzed over to Sarah, stopping behind her and running his hands along her shoulders. “Tell me, Sarah. Have you ever had frozen grapes pushed up into your pussy and then had them sucked out, one by one? Or Bing cherries? Have you ever enjoyed fruit in any other way than orally?”

Heat sparked flames that started in her cheeks but quickly plunged throughout her body. A steady *thump, thump, thump* swelled her clit as her libido tried to sway her decision. She blew out a breath and deliberated whether to have what would be the best sexual experience of her life, or run and hide out in her room until the snow lifted enough for the roads to clear.

Chris opened the large stainless steel refrigerator and pulled out a pointy carrot with a straggly root snaking out one end, a full head of greens on the other.

“W-What are you going to do with that?” she stammered as his well-muscled legs steadily chopped up the distance between them with deliberately slow, steady steps, his expression hardening to steel as his gaze darkened to almost black.

“I'm going to help you decide,” he told her before lifting the carrot and running the greens across her neck. Sizzling chills

burrowed under her skin, and she released a violent tremor. “Close your eyes.”

She did and sucked in a breath when he traced the chilling greens along her jaw, up her cheek, across her forehead, and back down. When the heat from his breath hit her neck a split second before his lips, blazing shock waves ripped through her, hardening her already aching nipples and centering in on her pussy, setting her on fire.

“Tell me, Sarah.” Barrett’s whisper, thick with want and so hot she broke out in a fine sweat, tunneled through her resolve and threatened to destroy her. He nipped at her sensitive skin and then ran his tongue along the bite to soothe it, and kept his lips against her neck as he spoke. “What would you like us to do with this carrot? Tickle your back? Your nipples? Would you spread those pretty thighs for us, let us tease your pussy, slicken your core, and get you nice and wet for our cocks?”

She shuddered.

Chris joined in on the naughty talk. “I want you to come on my tongue. I want to taste your syrup as you flood my mouth, drink up every last drop, and then do it all over again before I wedge myself between your legs and stretch your tight little pussy. Would you like that, Sarah?”

Oh, dear God, would she ever.

“Words, Sarah.” Barrett gripped her shoulders and squeezed. “You know I demand words. Don’t make me punish you for disobeying me on our first night.” He nipped at her neck again, and she whimpered.

But his words and what Chris did with the carrot, the way they both had everything dancing across her flesh like a warm breeze, wasn’t nearly as wicked as what Barrett had started to do with his hand. He slid his palm between her knees, pushing up, the warmth from his hand searing her skin as he moved closer to her pussy.

“I can feel your heat,” he groaned and bit at her ear before running his tongue along the edge of her lobe. “You want me. I can smell it.

Can you smell it, Chris?”

“Dear Jesus. Sarah, sweet baby. You’re growing hot and wet as you listen to our words, desperate to give in to them. Aren’t you?”

Chris reached up and removed her glasses. She blinked to do her best to focus without them, but she didn’t need her glasses to see the dark hunger in Chris’s eyes. It glowed, heated the room, and charged the air with fervent energy. Before she knew it, he had her thick pullover and turtleneck off in one smooth motion, leaving her in her bra. She quivered from the burst of cool air that scraped across her skin as her nipples peaked.

Barrett reached around and cupped her breasts, squeezing the nipples between his finger and thumb and drawing a quick hiss from her. She arched her back and leaned against him.

Using the greens on the carrot, Chris tickled her tummy and tilted his head, studying the contact between the vegetable and her skin as he moved it up along her ribs. She jerked back with a giggle, and he curled his lips into a grin in return.

“Ticklish?”

She nodded.

“Good to know,” Barrett growled and nipped at her neck.

And then Chris decided to torture her. His gaze met hers as he scraped the greens across her nipples, causing her hard buds to push against the thin satin of her bra.

“Look at me,” he whispered, his gaze still intently on her. Every cell in her body throbbed, and when Barrett brushed the pad of his thumb over the peak of her breast, she whimpered.

Barrett ran his tongue along the ridge of her ear. “Your nipples are hard, Sarah, and you’re trembling. Are you nervous? Excited? Scared?”

“I think it’s all of the above.” Her voice sounded so raspy, like she’d screamed for a week straight. Oh God, how she wanted to scream for them.

Barrett unsnapped her bra. It slid from her shoulders and fell to

the floor to join her other clothing. Chris then moved behind her, that damn carrot teasing and tickling her back and driving her wild.

“What do you want, Sarah?” Chris’s voice rumbled at her ear, his breath wet and hot as it caressed her skin. He pushed his hard chest up against her back, and she couldn’t stop herself from leaning into him. Reaching around, he set the carrot on the counter and cupped her breasts all in the same movement before burying his face against her neck.

She slanted her chin to grant him full access and rested her head on his shoulder as she moaned. Just having his calloused, gentle hands caressing her instead of the carrot sent spikes of violent need coursing through her, slickening her pussy.

“Touch me,” she pleaded, unable to hide the desperation in her voice. “That’s what I want.”

“Who do you want to touch you, baby?” Barrett asked.

“Both of you.”

“Like this?” He pinched her nipple, and she arched her back, biting her bottom lip to stop from crying out. She was frantic, fraught with need that had every nerve ending on high alert.

“Or do you want a little more attention here?” Chris’s hand disappeared, only to reappear between her legs, covering her dripping cunt. Damn jeans. She barely felt him with the thick barrier between them.

“Barrett,” she whimpered in a weak voice when he reached up and unfastened her pants. “What if someone walks in?”

Chris lifted her up off the stool. With him still behind her she couldn’t see his face, but somehow she knew he smiled at her question. “Let them.”

With that said, Barrett lowered her jeans down her legs and left the material right above her boots. When he stopped and studied her panties, she closed her eyes and muttered a curse as mortification washed over her.

“Are those new, too?” His amusement only embarrassed her

further.

She thought by wearing her least sexy panties it would stop her from taking it this far, if by chance he came after her. And come after her he did. And now here they were, her practically naked except for her boots and granny panties.

“Oh, damn it.” She reached down to grab her pants and pull them up, but Barrett stopped her. She couldn’t bring herself to look at him, the humiliation too much. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be.” He then undid his pants and pulled them to his knees, revealing the kind of boxers only men married or otherwise not looking to get laid wore. “What do you think? Sexy, right?”

She laughed and looked up at him. “I thought by wearing these that I’d stop before I let it get this far.”

“And I thought by wearing my grampy boxers I’d definitely not be stripping down tonight.”

“Grampy boxers?”

Chris pulled his pants down to reveal a similar pair of baggy boxers. “Grampy boxers. We all got them from GG every year for Christmas. Don’t knock the name.”

She hid her smile. Sort of. “Oh, I wouldn’t think of it.”

They all stood there with their pants around their knees, and stared at each other for several seconds before bursting out in a fit of giggles that had them almost in tears. “Sit,” Chris ordered. “Let me get those wafflestompers off.”

Sarah did and lifted her leg for him to start on her left boot. He unlaced her boots and slipped them off, never bothering to pull his pants back up. Her gaze flicked down to the rigid cock between his legs, hidden behind his ugly boxers, and she quickly looked away.

Dear God. He was huge. That thing would never fit in anything of hers. She then glanced over at Barrett and almost swallowed her tongue. He’d already removed everything but his socks and hat, and had his rigid cock in his hand. As he stroked it slowly, his smoldering gaze never left her face.

“See anything you like?” Barrett wiggled his brow.

“Most definitely,” she purred, wiggling her brow in return.

Chris brought her attention back to him as he slid her jeans all the way off. He left the granny panties on, and she looked down at them and giggled.

He kicked his boots off and sent the jeans and boxers with them. He then pulled off his hat, removed his shirt, and replaced the hat.

Holy and shit. She’d never seen anything so damn erotic and sexy in her entire life—two cowboys in nothing but a hat and socks. She lost her smile and stared at them, licking her lips and fighting the urge to lose all control, jump into one of their arms, and attack.

She didn’t have to.

Barrett stepped to her and pulled her into his arms, crashing his lips to hers and devouring her. He swept his tongue across her lips and opened her mouth, nudging her tongue with his and pulling her in tighter.

Sarah gave as good as she received. She’d never had anyone kiss her like this, like he was a dying man and she was his last meal. It made her shake with need, with uncontrollable desire.

Chris moved behind her and buried his face into her neck, nipping and teasing her flesh with his teeth. He reached around and dipped his hand down beneath the elastic of her panties. She rocked her hips forward to grant him better access.

He chuckled against her ear, his breath hot and wet. “That’s my girl. So hot, so wet.”

She reached up and weaved her fingers into the coarse hairs on Barrett’s hard chest, loving the way they tickled against her hands and breasts. Her core tingled, and if her clit didn’t get some sort of attention soon, she’d die, the need for her to quench that orgasmic thirst so stark, so vivid, that it actually hurt.

He rocked his hips and pushed his erection up against her tummy as Chris moved his hand around to her back and caressed her skin, running his fingers up and down her spine. She shuddered and rolled

her hips in return to create the friction she so frantically craved. Lifting her into his arms, Barrett then pulled a breast into his mouth as she wrapped her legs around him. Chris moved in closer behind her, and she sat perfectly sandwiched between cowboy Gods.

The way Barrett flicked his tongue against her sensitive flesh had her crying out from the carnal pleasure. Chris reached around and pinched the other nipple, and she cried out again.

“Your body is so sweet and hot,” Barrett whispered against her flesh, warming her with both his words and touch. Carrying her to the roller cart Chris pulled out next to the fridge, Barrett set her down, and she jerked up straight from the coolness of the metal against her sensitive flesh.

“Cold,” she explained when they both spiked their brows in unison.

“Let me fix that.” Barrett pulled her panties off and tossed them, where they landed Sarah didn’t know nor did she care. His finger had already started to burrow between the moist lips of her pussy. She grabbed on to the cart behind her when he slowly eased inside, exploring the recesses of her cunt, his gaze never leaving her face.

“Is that better?”

“It’s getting there.”

“How about this.” Chris stepped up next to her and rested the crest of his penis near her lips. “Would this warm you up, sucking on my cock?”

She licked her lips when she spotted a glistening drop of pre-cum oozing out of the end. “Let’s find out.”

He grinned and took a step toward her, sinking his flesh between her lips. She rolled her tongue along the underside and sucked him in, moaning at how good he tasted.

Barrett removed his finger and replaced it with two. “You like that, don’t you, baby? You like it when I fuck your pussy with my fingers.”

If they wanted to talk dirty, two could play at that game. Or, in

this case, three.

"I'd rather you use your cock to fuck my pussy," she moaned and pulled Chris's rigid cock back into her mouth. Barrett flicked the pad of his thumb across her clit. "Oh, yeah."

His gaze now black, clouded with insatiable hunger, Barrett reached down and pulled off his boxers. Sarah tried not to stare, but damn, he deserved to be stared at.

"You like what you see?"

"Is that for me?" She licked her lips and then glanced over at Chris's glistening dick. She had to admit, they had pretty incredible family similarities.

"And only for you, baby."

"That makes two of us," Chris groaned and pumped his hips to move his cock in and out of her mouth. "Jesus, Sarah. Your mouth is so fucking hot, baby. Suck me, just like that. Ah, yeah. I've never felt anything like it."

Her heart skipped a few painful beats when he said that. She knew it was all part of the role they played, but she couldn't help but hope he really meant them.

"Then fuck me before I decide to take my attention elsewhere."

Barrett grabbed a condom out of his pants and sheathed his enormous cock before nudging between her legs and resting the blunt head against her weeping opening. "I'll have you know, this isn't even the appetizer."

She took a breath to ask him what he meant by that when he drove deep inside her with a single thrust, burning and stretching her and forcing a cry of surprise and sheer ecstasy. "Oh, Barrett!"

He pulled all the way out and thrust deep again. The cart proved beneficial as he grabbed the sides and started to move it back and forth, driving his cock in and out of her pussy without either of them having to exert much effort.

"I love these carts," he groaned.

Chris growled and stood still as the movement of the cart brought

Sarah's mouth up and down on his shaft. "Ditto."

"I can see why," she answered and reached behind her to grab the cart so she didn't slip off.

"That's it, baby. Oh, yeah. That's it." Barrett moved the cart in a steady rhythm, driving his thick erection in and out of her, sending blistering waves of pleasure pushing through her.

She was going to come and in record time. Popping her mouth off Chris, she pleaded. "Wait. Slow down. I don't want to come yet."

"I want you to."

"But—" was all she got out before he started to move the cart faster and faster, thrusting his cock deep inside her, his expression savage as he pushed them both closer to release.

"Oh, God. Oh, Barrett. Oh, please slow down. I'm going to come."

"That's the idea. Shit, Sarah. Your pussy is so tight, so amazing."

"No fair," she whimpered and turned her head to suck Chris's cock with fervor. The tension burned like an inferno inside. It was going to be over too soon.

"Ah, shit. Yes!" Chris hollered as he shot thick streams of salty sweet cum deep into her mouth. "Swallow me, baby. Oh, yeah."

Barrett pounded her pussy without mercy, and she sucked in a breath as Chris withdrew. Her cunt spasmed as the first of her orgasm started to crest.

Barrett pulled her off the cart and held her in his arms, kissing her and rocking his hips, pumping his cock deep inside her and driving her into an explosion that had her screaming into his mouth. He swallowed her cries and joined them with his own, leaning her up against the wall behind them so they didn't collapse.

But he didn't stop there. As Sarah tried to recover from her climax, Barrett withdrew from her, lowered her down to stand on her own two feet, dropped to his knees, and attacked her pussy with his tongue. Chris joined in the fun and captured her lips with his, kissing her with such passion it rivaled Barrett's assault on her pussy.

Her orgasm returned with a vengeance and tore through her, shattering her bones and flooding her channel with her own juices. Barrett greedily lapped and sucked up every last drop, just as he'd said he would, as Chris swallowed her cries.

Only after she lost control of her legs and slid down the wall did Barrett pull away from her pussy with a grin.

"Oh wow," she purred and landed on the cold floor with a thud. Ouch.

"Give me a minute." Barrett stood and disposed of the used condom before returning with a blanket and a small velvet bag. *Where did all of that come from?* He tossed Chris a blanket, who then spread it out in front of the refrigerator. Both men took a seat before patting at the spot between them.

Sarah glanced over at her pile of clothes and then at the double swinging doors. "Shouldn't we get dressed?"

Barrett's answer was a laugh as he patted the blanket again. "Oh, sweet Sarah. Like I said, that wasn't even the appetizer. We were both so fucking hot for you that if we didn't get that out of the way the rest of the night would be done in a rush just to get to that climax."

She frowned. "Isn't that the point?"

"No," Chris said, shaking his head and chuckling in a damn sexy growl. "The foreplay leading up to the climax can be just as erotic as the orgasm, even more so. That's something you will learn this weekend here at GR&L."

Barrett opened the tie of the black velvet bag and pulled out a thick, tapered toy. When he clicked a button and it started to vibrate in his hands, Sarah's mouth fell open. *Oh, wow.*

He clicked it off before grabbing a tube of lubrication out of the bag. "Tonight is all about your pleasure. I promise you, there are few things in life that will make you come as hard as you will when you have a vibrating butt plug in while being fucked."

She met Chris's hungry gaze with her own as she crawled onto the blanket and settled between him and Barrett. Chris took the toy from

Barrett and clicked it back on, and then wiggled his brow at Sarah.

“What do you say?”

She rocked up to her knees and brushed her nose against Chris’s.

She whispered against his lips. “Show me.”

Chapter 9

“Close your eyes.”

She didn’t want to close her eyes. “But I want to see what you’re doing.”

Barrett’s dark eyes flashed. “You’re lucky we aren’t back in my room.”

Scooting closer on the blanket, the heat from their naked bodies warding off the otherwise chilly air, she brushed the hard peak of her nipple up against Barrett’s chest and arched her brow in challenge. “And why is that?”

Chris leaned in and nipped at the sensitive cords of her neck as he pushed up behind her. “I don’t know about you, cuz, but I’d be paddling that sweet ass for talking back.”

Sarah turned to him. “Is that so?”

“You bet your sweet ass, baby.”

“I’d like to see you try.”

He grinned and ran his nose along her jaw. “You don’t believe me?”

“Nope.” She couldn’t be any closer to him without sitting on his lap. When he brought up a massive hand and cupped her cheek, she breathed in roughly. The feel of his calloused hand against her face, every inch of his hard body responding to hers, ripped a shiver of debilitating pleasure through her.

Barrett sprinkled kisses against her back. “And why not? Don’t think he has it in him?”

She studied Chris’s penetrating hazel eyes and had no doubt he had it in him. He screamed Dom—they both did—and deep down, she

wanted to scream as their rebellious sub, needing to be tamed. “If you wanted to spank me, you would have done it by now, tough guy.”

In a quick motion, Chris had her upside down in his lap, his rigid cock poking at her drenched pussy, her ass up. She still didn’t believe he’d do it and even released a giggle.

Whack!

The sting sent convulsive shudders from her ass straight to her cunt, the rush of hot juices flooding her channel. Sarah tensed, more from her body’s reaction than the fact that he actually spanked her. He then smoothed his hand over where he’d just struck, soothing the bite to a tingle.

Barrett scooted up to her face, and she licked her lips. She was at the perfect level to take that hard cock into her mouth and taste him.

Chris slid his hand between her legs, forcing them open, before he slipped his fingers through her pussy lips, moving from her entrance to her clit and back, spreading her juices.

“Damn, Sarah. You’re soaking wet.” His voice rumbled, so thick and deep, delivered no louder than a raspy whisper. He teased her, barely brushing her clit before not one but two of his fingers tempted her hole. But he wouldn’t enter, and it was driving her insane.

“Please,” she whimpered and arched against him, almost hysterical in her need for him to drive his fingers deep inside her pussy. She eyed Barrett’s cock again.

“You liked that, didn’t you, baby? The way it hurt felt so good.”

“It felt amazing.” *Do it again.*

He pinched her clit, and she sucked in a breath. A rush of fresh juices coated his fingers, and he moved them up and down, from her clit to her rear entrance, and back. When he pushed a lubricated finger through the tight little ring, Sarah let out a cry.

Barrett took advantage of the opening and pushed his cock into her open mouth. She moaned and pulled his flesh all the way in, loving the taste of him.

And then, with a wicked, thick finger, Chris began to slowly

stroke her virginal hole. The burning pleasure had her pussy quivering in quick, strong spasms in time with his thrusts. She'd never had anything inserted into her backside. It hurt. It felt good. It confused the hell out of her.

"Oh, yeah. You're like a fountain of syrup, my sweet Sarah. I love the way your body responds to my touch. I can feel your pussy clamping down. The tension ripples through, right to here."

Whack!

She screamed, not just from the spanking, but from the simultaneous insertion of two fingers into her tiny rear entrance.

"Oh, my sweet Sarah. You definitely know how to make a man happy." Barrett fisted her hair to direct her pace.

Chris ran his hand along her ass. "I'm going to ballgag you, Sarah. If for no other reason than to stop the neighbors from complaining when you scream as you come harder than you've ever come in your life. Would you like that?" He scissored his fingers, relaxing her, expanding her, and sending her into a fit of tremors.

Whack!

"Answer me."

Barrett joined in. "Words, Sarah. You know I demand words."

She arched her back and bit her bottom lip. Lord knows she didn't want the neighbors to hear, let alone complain. But she didn't want to give in to either one so easily. "What neighbors? I think you're bluffing. I didn't see a single house—"

Whack!

It shouldn't feel this good, being spanked while lying naked across Chris's lap, his erection pushing against her hip. She wanted him inside her and twisted in his arms to break free. It made him only hold her tighter.

She cried out in frustration and stopped struggling. She wanted to fight him, but not too much. The idea of a ballgag didn't please her any. She'd had others, men and women alike, threaten to gag her, but it was never sexual, and it never had her scared that they'd follow

through with it. Her voice was all she had. Take that away and she had nothing.

Barrett pulled his cock from her mouth. "It's time for us to stretch that pretty little hole of yours, baby."

"Barrett," she whimpered. "It won't fit."

Chris pulled his fingers out of her backside, and she tried to let out a breath, but then Barrett disappeared behind her, and then she felt something blunt and cool against her tiny opening. Writhing, she tried to break free of his grip, to get away from the dark invasion.

Chris held her tight. "Stop fighting me, baby."

"I already told you, it won't fit. I saw the size of that thing."

"Relax. Push out for me. That's it." He slowly, steadily, pushed the toy against her rear until it broke through the barrier.

Sarah screamed and jerked when the toy started to vibrate. "It's too much. Oh, God. Chris. I can't stand it."

"I'm going to fuck this tight ass in time. So sweet and hot. For now, just relax and take it, baby. That's it. Take it all the way for me." Barrett circled her clit slowly, ever so slowly, torturing her. With firm consistency, Chris inserted the vibrating toy into her ass until the flared end popped inside, holding it into place.

She wanted to cry from the pleasure that bordered on pain. She'd never been taken anally and had no idea it could feel like this. The vibrations rippled through her, directing erotic pulses throughout her body so intense it scared her.

Chris increased the vibrations, and Sarah struggled again. She had to get away from the dark pleasure of it all. She couldn't stand it. The toy touched virgin nerve endings, sending devastating sensations ripping through her.

"Easy, my sweet Sarah." Chris turned her over in his lap, spreading her thighs so that she straddled him. Once he sheathed his cock, he pressed against her opening.

When he pushed into her in short, quick strokes, she threw her head back and bit her bottom lip to stop from screaming out. It didn't

work.

She screamed when he slipped inside her. He didn't slow. He didn't stop. He worked his cock deep inside her pussy, and her body expanded to accept him.

Intense convulsions stemmed from the toy and raced to the walls of her pussy. Her pussy fisted him, milking his cock, as he slowly started to move inside her.

Barrett sat back with a grin and enjoyed the show, slowly stroking his rock-hard erection with his hand.

As if Chris didn't have a big enough penis, having the toy in her rear and then him in her cunt had her stretched to the hilt. The feeling of being so full of him had her whimpering as fine beads of sweat broke out on her forehead.

"Look at me, Sarah."

The dark, carnal tone of his voice forced her attention to his face. Those eyes, gleaming with heated lust and searing hunger, bore into her as he held her gaze. Sweat had also broken out on his body, giving him a shine and mixing with the musky scent already filling the kitchen.

He lifted her and brought her back down, burying his cock to the hilt inside her pussy. She whimpered and then cried when he did it again, and then screamed when he lifted her and thrust hard, fast.

"Let it out, baby. That's it. Scream for me, Sarah."

And she did. He'd set them into a rhythm that had pleasure rushing through her so intense it hurt. His hips pumped, keeping in perfect time with the way he lifted and lowered her back down, burying his thick erection inside her slick pussy.

Flames, hot and turbulent, started to build inside her, twisting around her womb and biting at the center of her core. Her body convulsed as her orgasm grew like a wildfire.

"Oh, God. Oh, Chris. I can't stand it. I'm going to come."

"That's it," he growled as his thrusts became faster, stronger, more intense. "Come for me, Sarah. Let me feel your pussy squeeze

my cock. Yeah. Squeeze me, baby. Oh, Jesus. That's it. Let me have you. All of you. Take me. Come on. Fuck me, baby. Come on. Come for me."

"Chris!" Her orgasm detonated like an atomic bomb, mushrooming inside her and destroying everything. She screamed until her throat hurt as every bone in her body shattered.

He pumped one last time and stiffened as he spilled his life. "Sarah..."

"I'm right here. Right here, baby." She kissed him and swallowed his moans as he continued to move and keep them both at the peak of pleasure.

Only after the last of the waves ebbed did he gently lay her down on the blanket and excuse himself to remove the condom. She turned to see Barrett's heated gaze on her, his hand still stroking his cock.

"Would you like me to take care of that?"

He curled his sexy lips into a crooked grin. "Not right now."

She frowned and dropped her gaze to the engorged flesh in his hands. "But, don't you want to, you know?"

"Come? More than anything, but I'm holding back. I would like nothing more than to bury my cock deep inside your tight little pussy."

Oh, God. She wanted the same. These two hot cowboys had released some sort of wild sex maniac she didn't even know existed within her. "Then why don't you?"

"Control, my sweet Sarah."

Chris returned and grabbed his clothes. "Now you may get dressed, Sarah."

She didn't want it to be over. This night had been the best experience of her life, and she didn't want it to ever end. The vibrating toy in her rear refused to allow her libido time to recover. She wanted more. She needed more.

Barrett stood and released his erection. His enormous cock, glistening and hard, bobbed right at lip level. "We have to save some

of this energy—Holy shit!”

Wrapping her lips around his dick, she sucked with purpose and had him trapped within the confines of her mouth. She reached up and gently caressed his balls and swirled her tongue around the mushroomed head.

“Sarah,” he groaned out in protest, even though he’d already started to rock his hips, fucking her lips as he fisted her hair. “Jesus. Oh, shit. Yeah, just like that.”

She bobbed up and down, milking his cock with her mouth. He directed her pace with his hand and hips, pushing his flesh between her lips and to the back of her throat. She pulled back and went down again, taking him even deeper.

“Jesus, fuck. You have such a hot mouth, Sarah. Keep fucking me. Oh, baby. Yeah.” He started to drive faster, rocking his dick in and out of her mouth faster and faster.

And then he did something she would have never guessed he’d do—he stopped her and lay on his back, at the same time directing her upside down so her pussy hovered right above his lips, her mouth still on his cock.

“Come here, baby. Let me taste that sweet pussy again. Jesus, Sarah. You’re drenched already.”

She lowered down, and when his tongue stabbed into the depths of her damp hole, she bit down in surprise. When she realized what she’d done, she softened her hold and slowly rose and lowered to apologize.

He tensed and held her still. “Fuck me. Do that again.”

“You want me to bite your dick?”

“No. Squeeze my balls. Just...like...that. Jesus!”

He attacked her pussy with his tongue, taking no prisoners as he drove them both ever closer to release. The vibrations added to her pleasure and had her on the verge of another orgasm.

She followed his pace, and soon they were both in a frenzy to reach that climax and break the tension coiling around them.

Sarah stiffened a split second before her orgasm slammed into her, liquefying her body and splintering her control. She was about to scream out when the first of several bursts of hot semen jetted into her mouth. She sucked and swallowed until they were both barely moving.

With every effort she had left, she rolled off of Barrett and fell onto the blanket beside him, panting hard. "Now...get this thing out of me."

"I don't think so," Chris answered, fully clothed.

She rolled her head to look up at him, shock and a bit of fear now coursing through her. "Excuse me?"

His gaze, still dark from the events of the night and from the show she and Barrett had just put on, looked almost savage as he raked it over her body, leaving a trail of chills wherever it touched. "We pinned you, remember? You belong to us for the weekend."

Alarm held her speechless as she searched his gaze. Surely he had to be joking. When he watched her, his expression intense and unyielding, he'd never looked like more of a Dom than at that moment. A sexy, brooding Dom.

And damn if she didn't want to belong to him, to do whatever he commanded. She sat up and glanced between Barrett and Chris. "So I have to leave the plug in? What if I need to, you know..."

Chris clicked off the vibrations. Thank God. She just might be able to walk again. He turned his back to her.

"You may remove it to relieve yourself, but you will replace it once you are done." He looked over his shoulder at her. "This isn't up for negotiation. As long as you wear our pin, you belong to us. As your Masters, you will obey us."

"Don't I get a say in this?"

"Of course." Barrett walked over to his clothes. "You could always say no. We're never going to make you do anything you don't want to do, Sarah."

She moved up to her knees and had to pause and wait for the

clenching of her pussy to pass. The plug already had her ready to go another round. “And if I refuse?”

Chris pulled her to her feet. She didn’t think she’d be able to stand on her own and held on to his arms for support. The butt plug did exactly as he’d promised and kept her desire piqued.

“Then you are free to return our pins and find another suitable partnership.” He then cupped her cheek and brushed his lips against hers. “We want you, Sarah Emerson. We don’t want anyone else. Please, for us. Do this for us, baby.”

She reached up and cupped his cheek in return. Barrett moved up behind her, and with her other hand, she reached behind her and combed her fingers through his hair. Touching these two men, knowing they were hers for the weekend—and she was theirs—had her ready to agree to anything.

“For another night like this, I’ll do whatever you want.”

Chapter 10

“Weather report says we are expecting another foot by this time tomorrow.” Michael adjusted his glasses as he leaned forward to read the screen on his iPad.

Matt closed his clamshell cell phone. “Gus said he has to plow all the main roads first, but then he can plow the ranch’s driveway so we can start getting the guests out. He’ll call back as soon as he can get out here.”

“Come on,” Wyatt stated easily and slid down into one of the chairs in the den. “Why are we rushing this? The guests are having a good time. Why cut their stay short?”

“Because if we don’t get them out while we can, it could cost us a fortune,” Matt argued.

Michael set his glasses down on the barista table and rubbed his eyes. “It’s already costing us a fortune. We can’t get outside to do any of the excursions the guests have prepaid for. Einstein here has already told everyone they’ll receive a full refund for any service they didn’t receive.”

Barrett growled. “It’s in the contract, asshole. Besides, it’s the right thing to do.”

“Yeah, so is not going out of business.” Michael stood and turned to the eldest Gideon. “Barrett, come on. Can’t we at least charge a percentage? It isn’t our fault Mother Nature decided to fuck us with this blizzard. Even the airlines don’t give refunds when it’s an act of God.”

“You’re talking to the wind, my dear brother.” Matt walked over and patted his twin on the shoulder. Besides the permanent grin on

Matt's face and the permanent scowl on Michael's, Barrett still had a hell of a time telling the two apart.

The twins loved to make it a game growing up. Only their mother and GG knew how to tell them apart.

"And why is that?" Michael looked at his twin.

"With the help of Chris, our surly brother pinned Sarah Emerson last night."

Wyatt joined in. "From the noises coming from the kitchen, I'd say they did more than pin her last night. She's a screamer, that one."

"So?" Michael shrugged.

Matt went on to explain his bullshit. "Don't you see it? With Chris here, Barrett finally has someone worthy to share his woman with. Our big brother is actually happy right now. He wouldn't give a shit if he refunded everyone's money and sent the rest of the guests away, as long as Chris and their little sub sticks around."

That's where Matt was wrong. Yes, Barrett wanted Sarah to stick around, for how long he didn't know, and he loved having Chris at the ranch. But the guests' safety was his priority, and everything else took a backseat, including his time with Sarah and Chris.

Barrett turned away and stared out the window at the complete whiteout outside, even at eight in the morning. In a matter of twelve hours, it had snowed almost a foot. He worried about Chris being out there in this shit, but they'd all grown up in Montana and knew how to traverse the weather. Still didn't mean he had to like that his cousin was out there as the relentless snow continued to fall.

If he'd been less concerned about burying his cock deep between Sarah's thighs and more concerned about the weather, he would have already cleared the ranch and talked Chris out of running errands for the ranch. The weather report didn't sound promising, and Wyatt was right. If they didn't get the guests out of there now, they'd have to wait until a break in the storm, which could be days.

Barrett grunted and spun around to start knocking on doors when the lights went out. "What the hell?"

“Don’t worry, the generator will kick in and bring the power back up.” Matt, always the optimist, spoke up.

“About that,” Wyatt slowly, reluctantly, stated. “The generator—well, it’s sort of gone. I had to sell it.”

“Wyatt, I swear to God I’m going to end you.” Barrett turned and clenched his fists to stop himself from wringing Wyatt’s fucking neck.

“I had to find some way to pay Strickler the rest of the money. We got almost fifty thousand for it. I sold it to *The Roadhouse* in Holston.”

Goddamn it. “That was a hundred-thousand-dollar generator, Wyatt.”

“Oh,” was all Wyatt said, finally understanding why the veins in Barrett’s temples were about to burst.

“Great, so we have a ranch full of guests, the power is now out, and we have no generator as a backup.” His eye started to twitch.

“Look at the bright side,” Matt chimed in.

Barrett clenched his teeth until he was sure a few cracked. “There is no bright side.”

“We’ll save money on the power bill.”

That was it. He didn’t care who he reached first. One of the Gideon brothers was going to lose his fucking head.

“Well, isn’t this cozy!”

The one man Barrett wanted to kill more than his brothers appeared in the doorway of the den. “Strickler, what the hell do you want?”

Strickler squinted into the darkness, giving him the appearance of a weasel, which fit him perfectly. Talk, dark, and not even close to handsome with his beady little eyes and an eagle nose, Richard Strickler compensated by dressing like a banker—which the Gideons no doubt paid for. Who wore thousand-dollar suits on a ranch?

“Barrett, always so pleasant to talk to you. I’m sure, even though I can barely see you, that you have a smile on your face.”

“Think again.”

Awkward silence thickened the room. Only then did Barrett smile.

“I came to talk to Wyatt.”

“I’m right here.”

“Good, if you can find your way out of this cave, we have a few more papers to sign before I can finalize the plans and get you your five-star rating. Maybe we can find a room with more light.”

Barrett went to the shelf that held the kerosene lantern. Each room had at least one. After striking a match from the box next to the lantern, he lit the mantle and cranked the fuel. The light spread across the room as he shook out the match.

“You’ll stay here.” He went to the other side of the room and lit the second lantern, grabbed it by the handle, and started toward the guest rooms. “And you’ll wait until I get back before you start in on feeding Wyatt any more of your bullshit.”

“Uh, why don’t Matt and I wake the guests.” Michael grabbed the lantern from Barrett, and together the twins hurried out of the room.

Barrett didn’t argue and instead turned to glare at Strickler. The man looked like he had something to hide. The way he shifted from foot to foot, never really meeting his gaze, told Barrett everything he needed to know.

He didn’t trust the son of a bitch any further than he could throw him.

“We’d hate to bore you with the details.” Wyatt gave a shitty attempt at a smile.

“It’s never stopped you before.”

His brother lost what little grin he’d summoned up.

Strickler took a step toward Wyatt as if banding together would make a shit bit of difference. “We were just going to go over some ideas for your new marketing strategy once you have your five-star rating.”

“Our old marketing strategy is fine.”

“Five stars,” Wyatt said and spread his hand, his fingers spiked

out. "Barrett, you promised to hear him out."

Strickler jumped in. "Think about it. With a five-star rating the ranch will attract a whole new level of clientele. You'll be able to charge whatever you want."

"We charge just fine."

"This is fine. That is fine. You see? This is why you need me. You lack vision, Barrett. You can't see the possibilities."

"And you will lose your ability to see at all if you insult me again."

Strickler visibly swallowed and stiffened.

"Let's just take this down a notch." Wyatt walked over to one of the chairs and sat. "Why not show him the mock-ups you showed me? Barrett, you're gonna love this."

He doubted it.

Strickler grabbed several thick folders from his briefcase and set them down on the table between them and opened the largest. Barrett spotted a spruced up version of the lodge and had to admit that it looked pretty damn good.

"With the new covered valet area out in front of the lodge, it keeps the weather off the guests. You brothers can take turns greeting everyone when they arrive."

"We already greet them," Barrett pointed out.

"The meet and greet doesn't count." Wyatt leaned forward and pointed at the ever-so-important five stars at the top of the flyer. "Guests have to be greeted within sixty seconds to qualify. I think we'll have to hire valets."

"They like the way we greet them now."

"Would you just listen?"

Barrett had already made up his mind, but so his little brother wouldn't pass out from anxiety, he gave him a curt nod and turned to Strickler. "Fine. What else?"

"We need to rip out the entire east wall and push it out about fifty feet to make room for a restaurant. We'll also need to hire new

kitchen staff.”

Some of the staff had been there since Barrett’s first memory. “No fucking way. This is the only job some of them have ever had. They’re family.”

Strickler shook his head. “It’s time to cut the umbilical cord. If you want the rating, we need top of the line. The staff you have now haven’t even gone to school for what they do.”

“They don’t need a degree to do a good job.”

“Maybe not, but they do to do a *great* job, and that’s what we need to get that five-star rating.”

Barrett stared at Wyatt. He could see adding a fresh layer of oil on the outer logs on the lodge, and God only knew how much the road leading into the ranch needed work. But replacing the staff was a deal breaker. “Are you buying into this bullshit?”

Wyatt blinked up at him, but said nothing.

Unbelievable. “This meeting is over. Strickler, pack your shit and get the hell out. You have until the close of business Monday to get us our money back.”

“Barrett, wait.”

He’d already spun around to leave the room. “Since none of my brothers have the balls to do it, I’ll do it. You’re fired.”

Strickler jumped up. “What? You can’t. We’re so close.”

“I told my brothers to fire your ass a long time ago. Instead, Wyatt chose to sell off our backup source of power to pay your outrageous fees. I’m done, Strickler. You have one hour. If you are still here, I will personally escort you off with the help of my shotgun.”

“Where is he supposed to go?” Wyatt hurried over to him. “Seriously, there’s like a foot of snow out there. The roads are all impassable until Gus plows them, and with as fast as it’s coming down out there, he won’t be able to keep up. Face it, we are all stuck here until the weather lifts.”

Strickler grinned and spiked his brow. The cocky son of a bitch then held out one of the thick folders. “Just look at the plans. I created

a folder for each of you. Read through it. If you still want me gone after you read through everything, I'll happily return your money and leave, no questions asked."

Barrett shook his head. He had bigger things to worry about, like how he was going to keep an entire lodge full of guests fed, warm, and calm as they rode out the storm with no power. Grabbing the folder, he then spun on his booted heel and marched out of the room.

Michael and Matt had all the lanterns lining the halls lit and giving off a warm glow. He ran up the stairs and into his room before Wyatt—or worse, Strickler—followed him.

After lighting the lantern in his room, he tossed the folder on the bed so he could change into warmer clothes. They'd need wood if they wanted to keep everyone warm. An enormous fireplace graced the main floor facing the bar, but it wouldn't do much to warm the upstairs. He'd have to dredge through the snow to all of the wall tents they used for glamour camping, or glamping as they called it in Montana, in the summertime and collect every last blanket he could find.

The twins had their hands full with the guests, and he needed Wyatt to stay with Strickler so the asshole didn't talk to any of the guests. That left Barrett to gather everything.

Figures.

"This sucks," he muttered, his mood vastly plummeting.

"So does waking up cold and alone."

He whipped around and ignored the slam to his chest at seeing her again. Her liquid brown eyes. Her crazy red curls. That sweet, sexy smile. The sight made the burden weighing him down a little less.

"Hey, stranger." Sarah waltzed into his room and glanced around. She had on the same thing she had on last night before he and Chris removed her clothes and took turns burying themselves inside that tight little body. She glanced at his clothes and frowned. "Going out to make a snowman and forgot to invite me?"

"I have to go get more blankets. The power is out."

“Oh? So that must be why the lights are off. I thought it was just to set the mood.” She walked over and slowly sat down on the bed, releasing a long breath after settling in.

Barrett laughed as his chest swelled with something he didn’t even want to think about. “Still wearing the plug?”

She nodded and shot him a sly grin. “It’s not so bad. At least it isn’t vibrating.”

He reached into his pocket and pushed the remote to turn it on. He and Chris each had one. She arched and grabbed the bed. “Holy shit. You’ve got to s–stop doing t–that.”

“But I love to see that gleam in your eye as it heats you up.” He clicked it up a speed, causing her to let her head fall back.

“Oh, my God. You are so mean. Where’s Chris?”

“Out, but he’ll be back soon.”

He saw the disappointment in her pretty eyes, and it excited him. She wanted another threesome.

He’d just have to take care of that solo this time.

“Are you getting wet?”

“You have no idea.”

“I’m about to find out.” Barrett walked over, shut and locked his door, and then turned to her. “Pull your pants down. Let me see how much you want me.”

She carried out his orders without hesitation and spread her knees while the jeans kept her ankles confined. Drops of her sweet juices glistened on her curls and made Barrett’s mouth water.

He dropped to his knees between hers and ran his tongue along her slick cunt, drinking up her intoxicating fluid. He then spread the soft folds of her flesh and fixated on the ripe little clit just waiting for him.

“Ah!” she cried sharply when his tongue flicked her, tasting her and teasing her. “You are so good at that.”

Dear God, she tasted even better today. He wanted to go slow, to savor her tight pussy and lap at her juices, but he couldn’t hold back.

Her scorching flesh tightened as he sank two fingers into her pussy.

“Oh, Barrett.” Her hips started to writhe. He sucked her clit between his lips and flicked it without mercy. She cried out and weaved her fingers into his hair, pulling him in tighter and fucking his face.

“Come for me,” he whispered against her moist flesh and then flicked against her clit. “Come on, Sarah. Let me taste it.”

“Keep going,” she whimpered. He clicked the plug to its highest setting, and she bucked in response. “Oh, God. Oh, Barrett. Just like that. Yes. I’m coming. Yes!”

Her cunt flooded, and Barrett greedily sucked up every last drop. He flicked and teased until she slumped back on the bed. Only then did he click the vibrator off and pull her pants back up.

“That was not fair.” She moaned as she pushed herself back up into a sitting position to refasten her jeans. “Why am I the only one who has to be tortured? What about you?”

“Seeing you flush after coming, knowing that all I have to do is click this little button, is torture for me. This is as much for my good as it is for yours.”

She frowned at him, clearly not believing him. “You’ve got me so hot and ready that I can barely stand it. How is that torture for you?”

“Because I’m not taking you every waking second. I’m holding myself back when all I want to do is bury my cock deep inside your tight little pussy. And I can’t stand knowing that you are enjoying that toy when it should be me taking that virgin ass.”

“So what’s stopping you?”

He kicked his lips up into a grin. “Control, my sweet sub. It’s all about control. Control over you. Control over myself. I’m controlling my want to fuck you right here, right now. And it’s torture.”

“To us both. Just promise me something, no more secret vibrations.”

“When?”

“This morning.”

He laughed and shook his head. Chris must have given her a little something to remember him by while he left the ranch to tend to a few things in town.

“You don’t like our little presents? They’re just a way to remind you who you belong to for the weekend and to keep you ready for us.”

She laughed and rolled her eyes. “Yeah, well your last little present had me ready to pull a full-on *When Harry Met Sally* moment at breakfast. Just how good is the range on that thing?”

He couldn’t help but grin, if ever so slightly, even though he didn’t want to. She had a way of doing that. “As much as I’d love to show you, I need to get some wood inside and start a fire in the fireplace downstairs.”

The way she bucked on the bed during his snack scattered the papers from Strickler’s folder. Barrett didn’t bother to clean it up. He didn’t even plan to look at it.

She picked up one of the papers. “What’s this?”

“Some bullshit marketing ploy by the ranch’s *ex*-PR rep. I was going to go over it with Chris when he got back.” He could always use the papers to start the fire. That was all they were good for.

Sarah picked up a few more and glanced at them. “Bullshit is right.”

Barrett stopped right before slipping his arm into his jacket. “How so?”

“This is supposed to be the building we are in now, right?”

“The lodge. Strickler wants to cover the front and provide valet parking. It’s all about the five-star rating.” He had no idea why he just told her that. She was a guest and should be out enjoying herself, not back in his room talking about plans on how to change the ranch.

But talking to her was so effortless, so natural, that it seemed ridiculous to not discuss this with her. Her laugh warmed the room, but the way she shook her head had him on alert.

“Five stars, huh? Good luck with that.”

“My thoughts exactly.” Barrett finished dressing and kept glancing back to see her still scanning through the material. “See anything interesting?”

She stood and went to the door. “It’s really none of my business, but if you want my opinion, whoever put those plans together is not telling you the whole story. They didn’t even do their homework.”

“Can you be more specific?”

“For a five-star rating you need a hell of a lot more than what he’s telling you. A workout room. Special access to all floors. A reception desk open so many hours a day. Bilingual staff.”

“We don’t have a reception desk, and we speak English and bad English. Does that count?”

Sarah held up another piece of paper and frowned as she tilted her head to study it. “What can you tell me about Strickler?”

“What’s there to say? His name is Richard Strickler, and I can tell you that he’s full of shit and hasn’t done a damn thing for this ranch.”

“So is your *ex*-PR rep here?”

He paused and looked at her. “Yes. Why?”

She shrugged. “What does he look like?”

“Like a fucking weasel in a ponytail. Why all the questions?”

She squinted and adjusted her glasses as she focused on one of the papers in her hand. A total distraction from his question, and he knew it, but she looked so damn cute he didn’t push it.

“Does he seriously think he’s fooling anyone with these bogus plans and flashy brochures? He even spelled ‘superior’ wrong in your rating.”

He grabbed the folder, pushed all the papers back inside, and then handed it to her. She obviously felt the same way he did about Strickler. He’d love to know what she thought of his plans for the ranch. “When you have a minute, look through this and give me your honest opinion. But, for now, I really have to get moving.”

“Give me two minutes.” She disappeared out of his room. Barrett was still standing there, staring at the doorway, when she returned

with a pair of heavy gloves and cute, fuzzy earmuffs. And that damn folder. “Okay. I’m ready. Don’t bother arguing. I’m coming with you.”

He could use the help, but he couldn’t ask her to do that. She was a guest. Guests shouldn’t have to do anything but enjoy themselves. “Sarah—”

“Stop, Barrett. You can’t do it by yourself. Let me help.”

He reached into his closet and dug around until he found a heavy coat too small for him. He tossed it at her before finding her a stocking hat. When he turned around to face her, he stopped cold at the sight.

The coat swallowed her so only her nose and eyes stuck out from the collar. Goddamn. He’d never thought a woman in a bulky coat five sizes too big for her would have him hard, but Sarah did.

He walked over and pushed the stocking cap down over her head and eyes. Instead of lifting it up to see, she tilted her head up and peeked out at him.

“How do I look?” Her smile lit up her eyes, even though the stocking cap had them hidden.

Kissing her soundly, he then nipped at her lips before pulling back. “You look like *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*.”

“Good. That’s the look I’m trying for. Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

“Then let’s go.”

Chapter 11

Sarah turned to leave, but stopped when she ran into Chris chest and stumbled back in surprise.

He smiled at her and reached out to hold her by the shoulders and stabilize her. “Well, hello there. Where are you going dressed like that? You aren’t still thinking of leaving, are you?”

Barrett stilled and waited for her answer. After their fun in the kitchen, they took their party up to her room. Instead of having sex, the three of them simply stretched out on the bed and just talked—something Barrett hadn’t done in a long time. He’d forgotten how wonderful it felt having a woman fall asleep in his arms, his cousin sandwiching her from the other side. It felt right.

It felt like home.

Sarah laughed and shook her head. “Hell, no. I’m having too much fun now. We’re just about to go out and have a snowball fight. Care to join us?”

“With a folder in your hands?”

She tucked the folder into the backside of her pants. “There. Hands free.”

“You are a feisty one, aren’t you?” He winked at her, and Barrett tensed.

Bringing Chris into the partnership as a third party was one thing, but flirting with Sarah right in front of him was another. The charming bastard. It made him start thinking about a backup plan for tonight. Chris could spend the night with someone else. Barrett didn’t know if he wanted to share Sarah any longer.

What the hell was the matter with him? He had no right to be

jealous. Sarah would be gone, as would the rest of the guests, as soon as Gus could get the plow up the road. She didn't belong to either one of them.

Which bothered the shit out of him.

"Was there something you needed, Chris?" Barrett didn't bother to hide the growl in his tone.

Chris's grin widened as he turned his attention to Sarah. "I just wanted to see our girl. How are ya, darlin'?"

What was with the southern drawl? Chris grew up right here in southwest Montana.

Sarah beamed as Chris pulled her under his spell. Her pretty brown eyes lit up, and she even physically swayed. How did he do that?

"Better now that you're here."

"I know how to make it even better." He pulled the remote out of his pocket, and Sarah's eyes widened. She shook her head just as he clicked it on.

"Ah, Jesus." She stumbled back and grabbed the dresser to stabilize herself. Chris clicked it to the next setting, and she sucked in a breath as she whimpered. "No fair."

"Hey, Barrett? I just got...through..." Matt stopped as he crossed the threshold into Barrett's room. He took one look at the flush in Sarah's cheek, at the remote in Chris's hand, and took a step back out. "Sorry."

Chris clicked the vibrator off and shoved the remote in his pocket, a sheepish grin on his guilty face.

"What," Barrett barked at his brother.

He stole a quick glance at Sarah before snapping his gaze to Barrett. "Donny and Gina made it in on their snowmobiles and said the road going out is a mess. Donny said until we can get Gus up to plow it, he wouldn't recommend attempting to drive it. At least we have half our kitchen staff here now."

Wonderful. Barrett muttered one of his favorite cuss words and

grabbed his gloves. He added that to the list of things he needed to do. If Gus couldn't make it up the road to plow it with the town's truck, Barrett would have to bolt the plow on the front of the snowcat. "Keep the guests happy. Sarah and I are going to get the blankets from the tents."

"And wood," she reminded him.

"Right."

"I'm coming with you," Chris stated.

Barrett didn't argue. He could use the help.

Matt looked back and forth between the men before resting his twinkling gaze on Sarah. Barrett tensed. "Look at you. Did we hire you or something?"

She tilted her head, and damn if the confusion clouding her expression had Barrett captivated. "I offered."

"Really?"

"Is that hard to believe?"

Matt laughed. "Actually, yes. The women I know would rather bitch about the cold than do something about it."

"Sounds like you need to get some new friends." Sarah turned to Barrett without another glance at Matt. "Ready?"

Barrett's spirit soared. Matt's charm could sway the most devoted woman. Seeing her pay no more attention to him than she would a complete stranger made a difference.

Matt noticed as well. Sarah followed Chris out of the room and started toward the stairs. Barrett slowed as he met the knowing gaze of his little brother.

"Be careful," Matt told him.

Barrett knew he meant more than just taking care of not getting stuck out in the snow. With a nod, he hurried down the stairs and caught up with Sarah and Chris as they reached the mudroom.

She secured her hat and earmuffs and nodded for Chris to open the door. When he did, the blast of frigid air hit them all.

"Wow," Sarah and Chris whispered in unison.

“Yeah, the temp has really dropped.” Shit. No way would the fireplace keep everyone warm.

Sarah shook her head. “No, it’s beautiful. Like a postcard or something. You should take a picture and use this for your Christmas cards.”

“We don’t send out Christmas cards.”

She stepped out into the snow and waited for him to lead the way. “Why not?”

Chris spoke up. “Spend thousands of dollars on impersonal cards that just get thrown out? It’s a waste of money.”

Barrett couldn’t agree more.

“It’s not always about money,” she countered. “It’s a small token to show the guests that you are still thinking of them. To you it may mean spending money you don’t want to spend, but to them it could be the deciding factor in whether to book another weekend at GR&L. You have to spend money to make money.”

She started to sound like Wyatt. “Are you in marketing or something?”

“Or something.”

She did an impressive job of keeping up with the long-legged men in the shin-deep snow. Sarah had to pick up her feet and tromp down to move, the snow already up to her knees. Barrett blew out a breath, and it swirled up above his head like a lazy smoke. “We’ll grab the snowcat and take it up to the group of tents.”

“Good,” Sarah said. “It beats walking through this shit. I hate the snow.”

“You picked the wrong time of the year to visit Montana, then.” Chris grinned.

“I’m thinking of relocating here,” she told them. When they both stopped and looked at her, she went on. “I love Montana.”

“But you just said you hated the snow,” Barrett pointed out.

“Sure, but there is a whole lot more to Montana than just the snow.”

When she gave him a knowing look, lust shot through him and heated up his core temperature. He glanced over at Chris, who had that same hunger in his eyes that Barrett knew had to be darkening his.

"I couldn't get up to the fields on the ATV, so we should check on the horses and cattle, too." Chris held Sarah's hand as he helped her over a large drift.

"Do you turn out your horses, or are they stabled?" Sarah asked.

Barrett and Chris stopped right before they reached the shop housing the snowcat. Barrett asked, "How do you know about caring for horses?"

"Don't look so shocked, cowboys. I grew up on a ranch in eastern Washington. Part of my chores was to make sure the horses were turned out so they'd grow their winter coats."

Barrett pushed the door open wide enough to get the snowcat out. "Yes, they have their coats. No, I typically won't stable a horse unless it's lame."

"Heated water?"

"Solar heated." He glanced up at the thick clouds. "Although today I doubt it'll be of much use."

"Do you have a basketball?"

He looked at her. "A what?"

"Basketball? Soccer ball? Volleyball? Anything like that?"

Instead of asking, Chris walked over and grabbed one of the basketballs off the floor. She took it from him and climbed up into the cab as if she'd always ridden in a snowcat. She then let out a slow breath and smiled as she noticed him watching her.

"Your fault."

"The plug?"

"What do you think?"

Barrett snapped his brow into a frown and thought about it. If it brought her discomfort he didn't want her to have to keep it in. "Listen, if it is hurting you..."

Grinning, she tilted her head as those stunning brown eyes assessed him. “Was I complaining?”

“Not at all.” He dropped it and cranked the motor until it fired off. With a shiver, he let out a breath. Chris shivered as well and climbed in on the other side of Sarah, pushing her to the middle where she belonged. “Jesus, it’s cold.”

“It’s not that bad, you big baby.” Sarah grinned as she wiggled her brows at him.

“Baby?” She did not just insult him, and he did not just find it hot.

Sending Barrett a flirtatious sideways glance, she lifted her brow in challenge. “You heard me.”

“I don’t know, cuz. I think she needs a lesson on what happens when she calls you a baby.”

She looked at Chris. “Is that so? And what if I call you one as well?”

He spiked his brow in challenge. “Are you?”

“Maybe. Maybe you are both nothing but big baby cowboys.” Oh, she was going to pay for that remark. It irritated and excited him at the same time. “You’re lucky I don’t have a ball gag on me.”

“You keep threatening to shut me up, yet you haven’t been able to.”

“Is that a challenge?”

She turned to him. “How about this. Since this coldblooded snowcat needs to warm up anyway, why don’t the three of us do a little warming up of our own? The first person to come loses.”

Chris laughed. “That plug is going to be our undoing.”

“Oh, probably. But the orgasm is the reward.”

“Then how is that losing?” Barrett asked.

“The first to give in then must give something up. And here’s the challenge...We must remain fully clothed. I definitely won’t make it if either one of you stick anything else in me. And neither one of you can flip the switch on the plug. Agreed?”

Barrett scooted closer to her on the large bench seat. His dick

twitched as the thought of the challenge coiled around his groin and bubbled in his balls. “And what would the loser have to give up?”

“Let’s see.” She contemplated her answer, and with just the way she smiled he wanted to take her, lay her down in the bench seat, and make her cry out his name. “Loser must submit to the winner. They lose control.”

Not just no, but *hell* no. “I don’t submit to anyone.”

“That makes two of us,” Chris added.

“If you don’t think you can handle it—”

Barrett jerked her into his arms and slammed his lips down on hers, forcing her mouth open and devouring her. Her tongue met his as they both challenged the other for control. That damn folder squared her backside, and he longed to run his hands around the roundness of her ass. Chris must have thought the same and pulled it out and tossed it aside.

“I can’t believe you brought that with you,” Barrett said.

“You never know when I’ll find an extra minute or two to get caught up on my reading.” She bit at his lower lip before running her tongue along the edge. Barrett laughed. “Could you get any sexier?”

She giggled and rocked her hips, pushing herself down against his hard erection. When she lowered her lips to his, she speared his mouth with her tongue and kissed him with a hunger that equaled, if not surpassed, his.

“Trust me, baby.” Chris ran his hands along her shoulders before sliding his hands underneath her thick coat. “You won’t get an extra minute or two for anything but attending to your men.”

“Sounds good to me,” she breathed and then moaned. Chris must have found a nipple to pinch.

“You have no idea how hard you make me,” Barrett groaned as his lips wrenched from hers so he could attack her neck. They had on too many damn clothes for him to pinch her nipples, so how did Chris do it? He couldn’t even get to them.

She reached down and cupped the bulge between his legs. “I think

I do.”

When she squeezed, he sucked in a breath. “No fair. I’m not wearing as many clothes as you are.”

“Are you whining?”

“I believe he is,” Chris said. “Sarah, baby, put those sweet legs on either side of Barrett’s. Let me have access to you.”

“Clothes stay on, remember?”

“I don’t mind losing. In fact,” he paused as he unzipped his jeans and pulled out his cock, “I think I’d rather enjoy it.”

“No fair,” she whimpered and licked her lips.

“I’ll give you a chance to back out of this now.” Barrett lifted her so that she straddled him. Grinding his hips, he dug his fingers into her jeans to hold her exactly where he wanted her.

“Ditto.” She rocked her hips, seemingly unaware of the way he’d slipped his hand down and started to unbutton her jeans. She was too transfixed on the way Chris stroked his cock and made it hard in his hand.

“I’m going to sit here and tease you, my lovely Sarah. Watching me as I get harder and harder, so close to coming, is going to torture you. You want my cock in your mouth, don’t you?”

“I want it in my pussy,” she breathed.

“Clothes stay on, remember?” Barrett reminded her of her own rule.

“Fuck the rule,” Chris growled. “Do you want me to fuck you, Sarah? Do you want me to thrust my cock so deep into your wet cunt that you scream out in both pleasure and pain?”

She shuddered in Barrett’s hands. “Oh, God. Yes.”

“I have to tell you,” Barrett stated as he rocked his hips and wedged his rock-hard bulge into the blistering heat between her legs. “You aren’t doing a very good job in this challenge.”

“That’s what you think.” She rocked her hips.

“I think the first thing I’ll have you do when I win is lie down on your back as I tie your wrists and ankles spread eagle.” Barrett nipped

at her ear.

“What? No ball gag? I’m shocked.”

“I want to hear you beg for me to fuck you, Sarah. I plan to torture you, my dear, to tease you until you cry out in frustration.”

“I’d like to watch that,” Chris growled.

She squeezed and rubbed Barrett’s erection through his jeans. “I’m already there, big boy. This plug is torture. And when I win, I plan to blindfold you so you can’t see what I’m doing.”

That sounded interesting. He bit at her neck. “Go on.”

“I’ll get you so close, on the verge of coming, and then I’ll pull back and wait.”

“Sounds like you’d be torturing yourself more than me,” he growled against her lips before thrusting his tongue into her mouth.

“I’d take that little remote away from you. I’d control when and where it went off. I may just have to take matters into my own hands if I get too hot.”

“Not on my watch, sweetheart.” He moved in.

Sarah met his kiss with demand and unrestrained hunger. She rocked her hips and made his job that much easier. He didn’t even have to do anything, she was that close to coming. The heat from her cunt had his cock so engorged he hurt. He smelled her arousal, and it drew him that much harder.

Carefully, he grinded his hips against her, releasing a button on her fly with each thrust. Not until he’d finished with the last button and slipped his hand inside her underwear did she let out a cry and look down.

“How did you—”

Her words were cut off by a sharp inhale of breath as he pushed two fingers into the slick heat of her pussy. The wet, silken channel fisted his fingers, pulling him in further. He used his thumb to slowly tempt her clit.

“How’s that, baby? Does that feel good?”

“No fair,” she whimpered and rocked her hips against his hand,

moving her body in counterpart to his.

“Come here.” He wrapped his free hand around her neck and pulled her lips to his, slanting against them and stabbing his tongue against hers in time with his fingers fucking her hole.

She moaned into his mouth and started to grind faster.

“That’s it, baby. Come for me. I love the way you scream when you come.”

“Barrett, you aren’t playing fair. Chris, help.”

“No problem.” Chris reached around and slipped his hand down the back of her jeans. She released a sharp cry. “It isn’t too crowded in there, is it?”

“Do that again.”

What he did, he repeated, and she rocked against Barrett’s hand faster. “You like that, baby? You like my finger joining that plug, don’t you?”

“Uh-huh.” She moaned again. “Oh, Chris. Oh, Barrett. Make me come.”

He loved the way she whispered his name as she drove ever closer to her release. “Your pussy is growing tighter, slicker. You’re close, aren’t you, Sarah?”

“So close.”

“So fucking hot. You want to explode, don’t you? You want to come on my hand. Come on, baby. Come for me.”

She weaved her fingers into his hair and fisted it tight as she rocked harder, frantic in her need for release. “Oh, just like that. Chris, faster. Yes. Oh, Barrett. I’m coming. I’m coming!”

She screamed and threw her head back as juices flooded down her channel, coating his hand. His mouth watered. He wanted to taste her. He’d die if he didn’t get just one taste of that sweet nectar.

Pulling back, he pushed her up to her knees then jumped behind her and licked her glistening pussy. The juices just kept flowing like a beautiful waterfall.

He couldn’t stand it. He had to have her, to bury his flesh inside

her. Moving to his knees, he undid his pants and pulled out his cock, and then rubbed it up against her tight pussy. “Do you want to be fucked, my sweet Sarah? Do you want my cock buried inside your wet pussy?”

“Oh, fuck me, Barrett. Please fuck me.” She pushed up against him, rubbing her cunt against his crotch.

Without another thought he sank his flesh into her and released a shudder. He then pulled out and repeated, slamming his cock deep inside her. Her ass hit the remote in his pocket and sent the vibrating plug into motion. They both stiffened.

“Dear Jesus, so fucking hot.” Chris groaned. Barrett leaned around to see Sarah’s sweet mouth surrounding Chris’s cock. “Just like that, Sarah. Shit. Yes, baby.”

“Harder, Barrett. Please. Oh, please. You’ve got to push harder. I’m ready to come again.”

He withdrew and slowly sank in deeper. No sub told him how fast to fuck. He kicked the vibrations up a notch. “How’s that?”

“Faster! Oh, Barrett. Faster.”

“My pace, baby.”

“Oh, shit.” Chris grabbed the seat as Sarah sucked his cock with a violent fervor. “Baby, you are going to make me come.”

She rocked back and forth, setting a faster pace than he wanted. But his cock had already started to crave the harder thrusts, the faster rhythm. “Damn you. Goddamn you, Sarah.”

“Harder!”

She set the pace, and he plunged deep, driving hard, holding her by the hips and slamming his hips against her. It was an assault on his senses, on his control, as he fought to hold back.

Sarah screamed as her orgasm crashed into her. Her pussy convulsed around his cock, and he shattered.

He hollered out her name and let his release take over. It consumed him as he pushed to ride it out, pulling another scream and shudder from his lover.

Chris stiffened, and Sarah drank down everything he gave her and eagerly sucked for more. Only after both their orgasms had ebbed did they all finally melt back in the seat.

“Holy shit,” she muttered and slid around to pull up her pants.

“You could say that again.” Chris redid his pants.

Barrett moved behind the wheel. “By the way, I win.”

She dropped her jaw. “No, you didn’t. We all came.”

“Ah,” he said with the raise of his finger. “But you came first. No arguing. Those were the rules. *Your* rules, to be exact.”

A beautiful flush rose from her neck and settled into her cheeks. She then folded her arms in front of her and stared straight ahead. “You broke the rules. I said we had to keep our clothes on.”

“They were on. You never said anything about them having to be fastened.”

“I still think you cheated. You can turn off the vibrator any time, cheater.”

“Now who’s being a baby?” Chris laughed when she threw the basketball at him.

Chapter 12

She hated to lose.

Chris cheated. He dug under her clothes. Both men did. That wasn't part of the rules. And Barrett then turned the plug on.

Double whammy.

"Are you still pouting?" Chris asked.

"Yes."

He had the most beguiling laugh. She shouldn't like it. It was just a laugh, after all. But something about it, the way it lit up those amazing blue eyes, sent her heart into arrhythmia.

"We won, fair and square." Chris's chuckle rumbled through his chest and warmed the entire cab.

"You cheated."

Barrett dropped his jaw. "We did not."

"We were just more creative than you," Chris mused.

"You were more *cheative*."

Chris shook his head. "*Cheative*? Really?"

She couldn't help but smile. "That's totally a word."

"Yes, dear."

Her heart slammed into her chest before pounding loud and deafening her for an instant. The three of them bantered like a real couple—or in this case, a real trio. A real girlfriend offered to risk her life to help her boyfriends. In turn, real boyfriends wouldn't be able to resist her, even in the cab of a snowcat.

But they weren't a real trio, or even a real relationship. This was all make believe, just like her last relationship.

Why did she have a tendency to get involved with unavailable

men? First Ryan, and now Barrett and Chris.

Last night she'd had more fun with her two cowboys than she'd ever remembered having in her life, but she also knew it wasn't real. Sunday would come, and they'd all say their good-byes. She'd thank the Gideons for a wonderful weekend and then go back to her boring life as an unemployed marketing aide with the propensity for sleeping with the boss.

She'd never be taken seriously.

None of that mattered now. Finding the thief who sent that family into financial ruins mattered. Justice mattered.

Catching him before he got away with doing it again mattered.

Sarah thought about her situation. She came to the ranch to get over Ryan. That and to see if she could get the jump on Lucky before her brother. It was the only way Norris would see her as a viable business partner and not just his little sister who couldn't hold down a job.

She wasn't cut out for the corporate world. Desk jobs. Paperwork. The nine-to-five. None of that appealed to her. She wanted to be out doing the work with her own two hands, not reading about it while sitting at a desk.

If she caught up with Lucky before her brother did, Norris would have no choice but to let her in on the family business.

Conning the guilty.

Now if she could just figure out the thief's identity. He'd changed his entire image, starting with his name, all the way to his physical appearance. She'd overheard Norris describe Lucky to Amber.

"The family described him as tall, skinny, with blond hair and beady little eyes. Like a weasel."

Like a weasel. Just as Barrett had described him.

She debated whether to tell Barrett about the real reason why she'd come to the ranch. If she told him about Lucky, about how the thief planned to do the same to the Gideons as he'd done to so many other families, would he believe her? Would he take her word for it,

or would he tell her to pack her bags?

Or worse, would he think she had something to do with it? Talk about shooting the messenger.

And what about Chris? What part did he play in the GR&L? He wasn't one of the four brothers, but he was a Gideon. Did he stand to lose anything if Lucky took the ranch? Maybe she should at least talk to him.

No. She couldn't chance it. Deep down she knew Chris would understand, but she didn't know how deep she'd have to dig. Would Barrett understand at all? Everything she knew about the man was all part of the adventure, all part of the contract. Did he mean any of the words that fell from his sexy lips? Did either of them?

Did she really know either of them at all?

Sarah's thoughts drifted back to the folder. She grabbed it and flipped through the papers until something caught her eye. Pulling the brochure out, she turned it over and read the back.

"What is that?" Chris asked and took it from her.

"Something the GR&L's PR rep gave Barrett."

Chris turned it this way and that, his handsome brow snapping into a frown as he studied it closer. "Barrett, this was printed at one of those twenty-four-hour places. This isn't what you send out, is it? The Christmas cards are one thing, but this is a terrible way to save a buck."

"That's Wyatt's department," Barrett growled, obviously not pleased with the comment. "We pay a shitload of money to get those professionally done. Those are the new ones Strickler made up for the ranch."

Sarah picked up another brochure, removed her gloves and ran her fingers over it. It not only looked cheesy, it felt cheesy. "Did you pay Strickler a lot of money to work these up?"

Barrett rolled his glorious eyes. "Wyatt sold our generator to *The Roadhouse* to pay for all of that bullshit paperwork you have in your hands. That's why we don't have any backup power."

She could tell Barrett didn't approve of the sale. A heavy guilt weighed down on her heart. She had to know but didn't know how to ask without outing her brother.

"My brother paid you for the generator, right?"

He looked at her and thinned his lips as he set his jaw. "Hardly."

Oh, no. "Don't tell me he conned you."

"He might as well have. The son of a bitch only paid half of what it was worth. Wyatt, my idiot brother, didn't know how much it was worth when he sold it to your brother. Oh, but I'm sure Norris knew what a steal he was getting."

Whew. Sarah let out a breath. At least she didn't have to try to find a way to explain what her brother did. "Norris is a good guy, Barrett. If you just tell him that you sold the generator by mistake, I'm sure he'll let you buy it back."

He laughed, the sound hollow and without an ounce of humor. "With what? My good looks?"

She gave him a sideways glance. He had the most beautiful profile. "I'd pay for that."

"Baby, you get my good looks for free." He flashed her a wicked smile, accompanied with a wink that had her own lips curling into a grin.

"Same here," Chris added, an equally devilish smile on his sensual lips.

"At least for the weekend," she added. They all lost their smiles, and the conversation died.

Barrett drove the snowcat up the road toward the tents. At least she thought it was the road. She couldn't see anything but white.

The snow had started to fall even heavier, and the wind had picked up, throwing them into the middle of a blizzard. The temperature gauge inside the cab registered a balmy twenty-four degrees. With that wind, it had to be close to zero out there.

Sarah found the humming of the snowcat's motor almost hypnotic. She stared straight ahead and, although she didn't want to,

couldn't help but wonder what Ryan would think if he could see her now, quite literally sandwiched by two incredibly sexy cowboys.

Would he scold her for taking risks? What about having sex with men she barely knew? What would conservative, hypocritical Ryan have to say about that?

Damn it. No longer her boss, her lover, or even her friend, Ryan still had a way to bring her down. And, just like that, she started to question her own judgment. Having sex last night was one thing, a spur-of-the-moment, lust-induced frenzy to propel them all into orgasmic ecstasy.

So what did having wild sex in the cab of a snowcat mean? Did it even mean anything?

"What are you thinking about? You have a weird look on your face."

Sarah blinked and turned to hide her expression from Chris. Damn Ryan and his memories. Here she sat in a snowcat with two absolutely gorgeous men who'd just fucked her into a blinding orgasm, and she had to think about her ex-boyfriend.

Barrett looked at her. "Sarah, baby, what is it?"

"Nothing," she lied.

"It's obviously something or you wouldn't look ready to either cry or kick someone's ass."

Chris reached over and squeezed her leg. "Talk to us so we can at least prepare for the direction you plan to go."

Chris Gideon, sexy as hell, a very gifted lover, and just as outspoken as her. Barrett Gideon, dominant, sexual, and diabolical with his hands. But were any of them friends? Would what they'd been doing together since last night be considered the start of a friendship? A fuckship? Nothing at all?

She needed Carol. Her friend would understand, but she came here to have a good time, not listen to Sarah ramble on about Ryan for the bazillionth time.

Sarah wanted to talk to them, wanted to share her desires, her

fears, and even her dreams. Instead, she remained silent and stared out her window.

“What was his name?” Barrett asked.

Whipping around, she snapped her jaw closed and stared at him. “How did you know?”

“Gail,” he answered.

Did he just call her by another woman’s name? Heat slapped her cheeks as she leaned toward the direction of kicking his ass. “Excuse me?”

He let out a long, drawn-out sigh and rubbed the back of his neck with his hand, but didn’t say anything more.

“Her name was Gail,” Chris explained. “The woman who broke Barrett’s heart.”

She watched Chris as he spoke and then turned to Barrett. They both looked so sad about it. “Tell me about her.”

Barrett let out another long sigh. “We’d known each other since college. When we started dating I thought we were getting pretty serious.”

“I never did like her,” Chris pointed out.

Barrett set his jaw. “Yes, Chris. I know.”

Sarah pulled the attention back to the topic and not the thick tension developing between the two men. “What happened?”

Barrett shook his head, clearly struggling to talk about it.

“Tom happened.” Chris spit out the man’s name like it was a bad word.

“Who’s Tom?”

“An asshole.” Barrett squeezed the wheel and clenched his teeth.

The other person. Sarah knew the feeling very well and shared the bitterness and pain in Barrett’s voice.

“Gail ran off with him without a second thought.” His jaw set as his tone grew cold. “But then he started drinking. He had a temper she didn’t realize until one night the son of a bitch beat her up and put her in the hospital. She left him after that.”

“And came running back to you, right?”

He nodded and thinned his lips. “We picked up right where we’d left off.”

“But she was never really back,” Sarah said.

“Which is what I kept trying to tell him,” Chris added.

Shaking his head, Barrett then lowered his gaze and released a breath that filled the cab with the sorrow he’d held inside. “She even told me she loved me, all the way up to when she left me to go back to the man who almost killed her.”

She swallowed tightly as tears sprang up, stinging her eyes. “Did you love her?”

“I thought she hung the moon.”

Was that a yes? What did that even mean? “And now?”

He swung that powerful, intense blue gaze to her. When it slammed into her, she sucked in a breath. He studied her for several seconds, raking his gaze across her face and leaving a searing trail. He then looked back out the windshield.

“What I think of her now doesn’t matter. She’s gone.”

“And that hurts.” She knew that from experience.

“Yes, it does.”

His honesty hurt as he spoke about a lost love. The raw emotion in his voice sliced into her heart.

Something else they had in common.

“Mine was Tiffany.” Chris held up his hand. “Now before you point out her profession, Barrett, let me get this out. The woman had a body built for sin.”

“And the heart to go with it,” Barrett muttered. Chris flashed him a glare. “Come on, Chris. She was a stripper who had clients on the side. You met her in Vegas, for Christ’s sake.”

Chris narrowed his hazel gaze on his cousin. “You just couldn’t wait to blurt that part out, could you?”

“It was one weekend.”

“A lot happened that weekend, cuz.”

Barrett laughed and shook his head. "Yes, including an annulment when you sobered up."

Chris stiffened. "You're an asshole."

Sarah agreed with Chris and took his hand to squeeze it. He glanced down at her and offered her a smile. "I believe you."

"It meant something to me," he told her before turning his glare to his cousin. "Even if my own blood doesn't believe me."

"Do you still talk to her?"

"Doubtful," Barrett answered for him. "I don't even think he learned her last name before taking her to an Elvis impersonator to marry them."

Chris lost all expression and lowered his gaze to his lap, and he pulled his hand back. "There's a kid."

Barrett straightened and whipped his head around, his eyes wide in shock. "What? You never told me that."

"Why would he when you discount his feelings like that? Seriously, Barrett. Chris has probably tried to tell you but then stopped since all you do is refer to the weekend he had with Tiffany as you do." She had no idea if any of that were true, but she could read people, and her read on Chris told her that his cousin's interpretation of that weekend hurt.

Barrett studied Chris. "Is that true?"

Chris nodded but said nothing.

Barrett stared straight ahead and after several awkward seconds, said, "I'm sorry, Chris. I had no idea."

"Yeah," was all Chris said.

To break the uncomfortable tension and pull the attention away from the conversation that obviously needed to happen between the men when they were in private, Sarah decided to tell them her story. It was only fair since they both shared his story with her.

"Ryan."

Barrett let out a sigh in relief, clearly pleased to talk about something else. "Is Ryan the reason you came to the ranch?"

“Something like that.”

“Is he still in the picture?” Chris asked.

“No,” she answered with certainty.

“How can you be so sure?”

The memory flashed into her brain, and she replayed it for him.

“He’s married.”

Barrett looked at her. “After you?”

“Before me. During me. After me.”

“Ouch.” Chris set his jaw.

“Yeah.”

Barrett slowed the snowcat as they pushed through some icy turns.

“Did you know he was married when you got involved with him?”

“Hell, no.” Had she known she would have never agreed to working all those late nights at the office that turned into late nights horizontal on his couch. “When I found out he tried to sell me some bullshit about them being on a break.”

Chris took her hand. “How did you find out?”

She laughed bitterly. “You’ll love this. Ryan asked to see me over my lunch hour. Me, being naïve and thinking when he told me he loved me that he actually meant it, jumped at the chance to see him during the day.”

“You didn’t usually see each other during the day?”

“We didn’t even see each other in public, not romantically. I thought he was just one of those guys who had a problem with showing emotions in public. Now I know it was so his wife wouldn’t find out.”

“Real nice guy,” Barrett growled and looked ready to spit nails.

“I walked into his office and found him and his wife having sex right there on the couch where him and I... You get the picture.”

“Why didn’t his secretary stop you?”

The memory slashed into her chest, and that familiar pain returned, dousing her in biting resentment and raw humiliation. So many beautiful female visitors during his lunch, including his wife.

How blind was she to not see that?

“I *was* the secretary.”

“Oh shit,” Chris and Barrett said in unison.

“Exactly. After exchanging a few words, we both agreed that it was better if I sought employment elsewhere.”

Barrett dropped his jaw and snapped his brow into a frown as he looked at her. “He fired you?”

“You got it.”

After shaking his head, he reached out and took her other gloved hand in his. “His loss, love.”

Her heart flipped at him calling her something so endearing. “Of course, asking him if his penis came in adult size didn’t help my cause.”

Both men laughed, long and hard. The sound echoed through the cab and brought a smile to her face. She even let out a little giggle.

“You did not.” Chris wiped at his eyes.

“I did, and right in front of his wife, as well as half the office.”

“Somehow that doesn’t surprise me. You definitely speak your mind.” Barrett chuckled.

She shrugged and tried to brush off the comment—yet another dig from a man who didn’t like the fact that she spoke her mind. And she actually thought Barrett was different.

She turned and stared out the windshield, and swallowed down the realization that she’d more than likely never be able to keep a man once he got to know her. “My tongue is both a gift and a curse, it seems. Too outspoken, Ryan called me. Obnoxious and annoying as well. Real stand-up guy.”

Barrett stopped the snowcat and turned to her, rendering her momentarily speechless. After removing his gloves he cupped her cheeks in his hands and brushed his thumbs under her eyes. The gesture made her skin catch fire.

Barrett looked long and deep into her gaze, the intensity so strong in his eyes that it stole her breath. “You, Sarah Emerson, are so much

more than you give yourself credit for.”

Behind her Chris squeezed her shoulders and scooted closer. “Don’t ever let anyone tell you any different.”

She couldn’t breathe. “I’m not obnoxious and annoying?”

Barrett smiled and kissed her lips as Chris trailed tender kisses along the back of her neck.

Barrett nipped at her lower lip before breaking the kiss. “Oh, you are that, but I happen to love your obnoxious and annoying side, among your other sides. But those are just two of about a billion of your traits I absolutely adore about you, my sweet Sarah.”

“And I wouldn’t change a damn thing about you, baby. From your wild hair all the way down to your pretty little toes. Trust me. You are one of a kind.” The heat from Chris’s kisses whispered chills across her flesh.

Why couldn’t she believe either one of them? They’d never had a reason to lie to her. Still she had a hard time believing them—the insults were always easier to believe.

Barrett kissed her left eyelid. “You are also kind.” He kissed her other eyelid. “And caring.” He then kissed the tip of her nose. “And beautiful.” He trailed kisses around her lips but never brushed his across hers. As he dropped words, he landed a kiss. “Adventurous. Hypnotic. Smart. Intoxicating. Friendly.”

“Did you just call me easy, bucko?”

“Did you just call me ‘bucko’?” He spiked his brow.

She scooted closer to him in the cab. “I don’t take kindly to name-calling. I may have to spank you this time.”

“I like the sounds of that,” Chris growled.

Barrett’s gaze intensified to a smoldering blue so dark it was almost black. He definitely liked the idea. “I’d like to see you try.”

“I know something I’d like to try,” Chris whispered, his voice like a thick steam.

Pulling back, she then turned to look up in his hazel eyes. “I’m all ears.”

Naked, raw hunger sparked in his expression. "I'll need more than your ears."

"So what parts do you require?"

"This." He licked at her lips until her tongue came out to greet his. "And this." He then reached between her legs and cupped the slick heat now throbbing for attention.

She met him halfway as they crashed into each other. It wasn't an easy kiss, or gentle. Fuck gentle. She couldn't get enough of either of them and knew she'd die if she didn't feel his touch on her skin again.

His kiss controlled her and had her ready to submit to whatever he wanted. It wasn't fair, the power he had over her, but she didn't care. Fairness disappeared along with her sanity.

Somehow he'd found a way under all her layers of clothing and now teased her nipples, pinching and twisting them between the calluses on his thumb and index finger. She nipped at his lips, tempting him, daring him to take her.

"Is that...the best you can do?" She clamped down on his ear.

"Are you going to stand for that?" Barrett taunted them as he continued to drive the snowcat, but she knew he had to be watching. She felt the heat from his gaze scraping over her.

In a swift movement that had a yelp escape her lips, Chris had her on her back. "You are being awfully demanding."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing at all. I'm just saying that I think I may have met my match in you, Sarah Emerson. Barrett and I may both have."

"Never had a woman stand up to you before?"

He chuckled and pinned her to the seat under his weight. Thank God for long bench seats. His hand had somehow found a way beneath her jeans and now tortured her clit with slow, lazy circles. "Never."

She panted, her tongue running along her lips, licking off the taste of him. He watched the action closely. Then, without warning, he captured her wrists in one hand and held them above her head. He

pushed his knee between hers and spread her legs open.

“Do you really want to challenge me?”

“With every bone in my body.”

“How about one more?”

He rocked his hips and pressed his erection up against her, dragging friction against her clit and sending her into a fury. She ground up to him, desperate in her quest for more.

No way would she let him have the upper hand, not this time. “Double or nothing.”

He quirked those damn sexy lips into a grin that had his eyes gleaming wickedly. “If I recall, I pulled myself out of the bet.”

“Are you going to pull out this time?”

“Not on your life, baby.” He then growled before taking her lips, a pure carnal, animalistic sound that sent quivers spreading over her skin. She pulled his shirts up until she felt the firm muscles beneath his flesh, the need to touch him too much to resist.

This time she had a plan. She’d take his cock into her mouth and bring him to the very edge, let him hover there, and then when he was about to scream for more, she’d pull back until he begged for her to finish. She’d own him.

When she tried to move, to buck and slip out from beneath him, he only pressed her further into the seat. “Not this time, sweetheart. We have all the time in the world, and I sure as hell don’t want it over as fast as it was last time. Stay still.”

Barrett joined in and held her down at her shoulder. She glanced up at him and the erotic look in his dark eyes had her ready to submit to them both once again.

She had to escape if she wanted to follow through with her devious plan, although as she glanced up into Chris’s wicked eyes, so dark and primal in their hunger, she started to doubt whether she really had the upper hand.

Like hell. She bucked and almost had him off her. Almost.

“I’m definitely going to have to restrain you,” he groaned and

pressed his hips into hers, rubbing his hard cock up against her aching clit. “You’re not obeying me.”

“Make me.” She wanted to do whatever she could to destroy his self-control like he had hers. Her juices dripped from her pussy and coated her panties. Damn it.

“I should have ballgagged you when I had the chance.” Barrett’s lips quipped up into a smirk as he looked down at her. “That would have shut you up.”

“You are all talk, Barrett Gideon. You too, Chris Gideon.” Even as she said it she knew the truth. Still, she bucked under Chris’s weight and almost broke free.

Almost.

Barrett grinned and stopped the snowcat. “Oh, yeah? Maybe I’ll just find something else to gag you with.”

She hid her smile at his threat. That was exactly what she wanted. She’d own one of them, at least. “Bring it on.”

Chapter 13

They'd cheated. Again.

Sarah kept her arms crossed in front of her as she stared straight ahead. How was she supposed to know that Chris would do something as sneaky as pull her jeans down and literally rip her panties from her body.

"Those were my favorite panties," she protested, not that it would have mattered. Chris had them both naked where it counted and had buried his cock deep inside her pussy, driving deep and hard, just the way she liked it, while Barrett pinched and teased her nipples.

She'd come in record time.

And it was all their fault.

"I'll buy you a new pair," Chris said.

"A sexy pair," Barrett added.

"Those were sexy." In fact, they were the sexiest pair she owned.

Chris laughed, and it only irritated her, as well as excited her—which only irritated her more. "Hardly. We'll go shopping at somewhere other than *Grandma-Panties-R-Us*."

How dare he insult her panties. "They're practical."

"They're ugly."

"That didn't seem to stop you from ripping them from my body."

With a flick of that devastating look, followed by his sexy crooked grin, Chris had her ready to submit to him again.

Damn it.

"Baby, I'd rip a bodice from that sweet body just to get to the creamy center."

That had to be a dig at her romance novels. She tightened her

arms around her and sank down in her seat even though the compliment threatened to make her smile. "How much further?"

"Just around this last corner." Barrett kept a careful watch on the road.

They turned the corner, and through the haze of the snow she spotted a grouping of wall tents, each one with its own stovepipe poking out the top. "Are those the tents?"

"Yep."

"They look more like cabins."

"They're glamp tents."

"Now who's making words up?"

"Seriously, that's what they call it. Glamping. It's like glamour camping. You should see the inside. They've got port-a-potty bathrooms, wood floors, and come fully furnished. It's like a private cabin. During the summer, those are used more than the lodge."

A sudden, brilliant idea came to mind. "Barrett, how many glamp tents are there?"

"Six."

Perfect. "Let's get them ready."

He turned and looked at her. "Come again?"

"Instead of taking the blankets out, we should bring the guests here. Think about it. The lodge has no heat source without power. We all know that fireplace isn't going to do more than produce a romantic glow and fill the main room with soot and smoke. Each one of these tents has a woodstove."

Chris's lips slowly curled into an easy grin. "And beds. What about food?"

Barrett nodded. "Enough to ride out the storm."

"And there are six couples, right?"

"Right."

Sarah had to admit, she loved her mind. "It's perfect."

Barrett grinned ear to ear and reached for her hand. She took it, and he squeezed her fingers with his. "It certainly is."

“We could stock each tent with enough wood for the night and even get the stove and lanterns going in each one so that when the guests arrive they are nice and toasty with a warm glow.”

“Sarah Emerson, you are absolutely brilliant.” Chris leaned over and planted a kiss on her cheek.

“It’s one of my many fabulous traits. The body may only be a seven, but the mind is a full-on ten, baby.”

“You don’t give your body enough credit. To me, it’s perfect.” Barrett pulled her gloved hand up to his lips and kissed it.

She watched the gesture and didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. They both sounded sincere, but then again, weren’t they supposed to? Was all of this, the compliments, the playful banter, the amazing sex, all part of their role? Or did they sincerely mean what they said?

She couldn’t think about that right now. She wanted to enjoy herself, and if she constantly questioned everything they said, she’d never have any fun. And, damn it, she was having fun, more fun than she’d expected.

She knew she should be focusing on looking for the thief and had even made that decision last night after Barrett and Chris had taken turns fucking her into orgasm after blinding orgasm.

It didn’t matter. She’d made her decision and had fully expected to follow through with it.

Then she saw them again this morning, and all bets were off.

She had no willpower when it came to these sinful Gideons. They controlled her more than she cared to admit. And she liked it.

They pulled up to the first tent, and Sarah hopped out after Chris. As soon as the frigid air hit her face, she sucked in a breath and lost all other trains of thought but getting the tents ready for occupants. Even the plug didn’t distract her enough.

They all ducked into the first tent and out of the bite of the wind.

“Do you know how to start a fire?” Barrett asked as he grabbed the kindling.

Chris looked at him. “Ask me that again and I’ll beat you to death

with two pieces of kindling.”

Barrett chuckled and turned to Sarah. “What about you?”

She looked at him and feigned innocence. “Sure. You rub two pieces of wood together, right?”

He grinned and gave her a shrug of those incredible shoulders. “Sorry. I keep forgetting how self-sufficient you are.”

“Damn straight.”

“Fine, you get this one ready. I’ll go do the next one. Chris, take the third.” The men walked out of the cabin and left Sarah to start the fire with nothing more than a few weak pieces of wet wood and nothing to light it with.

Me and my big mouth.

She looked around, found a box of matches on top of old newspaper, and got to work. Within minutes she had the fire going and fed it larger chunks of wood until she had it full. She then shut it down, and the warmth spread throughout the cabin.

Time to move on to the next one. As she passed the tent next to the one she just left, she hollered out, “I’ll be in the fourth one.”

“I’m already in the fourth one,” Barrett hollered back.

“And I’m in the fifth one,” Chris yelled. “You are falling behind, sweet Sarah.”

She ran up to the fifth tent, fighting knee-high snow, and poked her head in. Damn it. He’d already started to ball up the paper and shove it into the stove. Not wanting him to better her, she hurried to the last tent just as the men both walked out of theirs. They stopped when they spotted her going into the tent.

“Bet I can get my fire started before you get your asses over here.”

“You’re on.” Barrett jumped into a run, followed by Chris, and she darted into her tent to get started. Balled paper, check. Kindling, check. Matches...

Where the hell were the matches?

No. No. No. No. The other tents had matches next to the

newspaper. Did she pick them up and set them somewhere? Now in a panic that she'd lose out to them three times in one day, she frantically searched everywhere for those damn matches.

A rattling of wood inside a little cardboard box caught her attention, and she swung her gaze up to the entrance where Barrett stood with a box of matches. "Missing something?"

"Did you...How did you do that?"

"I didn't do anything. I figured a self-sufficient woman such as yourself would have already rubbed her sticks together. Since I didn't see any smoke coming from your stove, the only other conclusion is that you didn't have matches."

"Give me those." She'd be damned if she let him come in and save the day. After starting the fire and getting it nice and hot, she stood and brushed off her hands. "There."

The glowing warmth spread throughout the tent and took off the chill, but not by much. Perfect. For what she had in mind, they'd be generating their own heat.

"Great. Now let's go load up the guests."

She nodded toward the fully covered bed and walked into the back room of the tent. Barrett and Chris followed without question. She removed her clothes, layer by layer, until she stood before them in nothing on top but her bra. Both Barrett's and Chris's eyes darkened as they watched her nipples peak beneath the satin.

Damn, it really was cold. She couldn't help but release a shudder.

Chris stepped forward and reached for her. "Cold?"

"Yes, but I have an idea of how to fix that." She dug under his layers, peeling them away piece by piece until he stood naked from the waistband up.

"Does it involve us removing more clothes?"

"It involves us removing more than that."

She let out a shiver as Chris's heated gaze traveled down her body and stopped at where the butt plug rested, invading her the way she wanted him to.

Barrett shook his head as if disappointed. "I don't know. You haven't been very submissive today."

She'd show him just how *unsubmissive* she planned to be. "I'm never very submissive. You knew that when you pinned me."

"That's why I pinned you. Now get on the bed before I throw you on it."

She did love a good challenge. Instead of obeying, she crossed her arms under her breasts and thrust out her chin. This shouldn't turn her on, something as simple as bantering, but damn if her insides hadn't started quivering. The twist of passion enveloped her channel and liquefied it, sending her juices flowing.

"I double-doggy dare you."

"I do love those double-doggy dares," Chris growled.

In a split second, he had her in his arms and then tossed her onto the bed. She landed with a bounce and a surprised gasp. Her breath then caught in her throat. No way would his dominance turn her on. His overwhelming sexuality did not have her wet, ready to submit to anything.

"Get your pants off," Chris demanded in a hungry growl.

"But my boots."

Barrett joined in. "No excuses, Sarah. You want to make demands? Then we get to make a few of our own."

"Fine," she whispered, almost frantic to know what they'd demand of her next.

"For starters," Chris said, "I want you naked. Now."

No objections there. She scrambled to remove her boots and kick her jeans off. He'd already literally ripped her panties off her body, so she didn't have to worry about that layer. Her last item of clothing, her bra, she removed with shaky hands and tossed it aside.

Barrett took a step toward her. "Very good. Now turn over, baby. Let me get that plug out of you."

He eased the plug from her rear, and she cried out from the pleasure/pain. Nothing that hurts should feel good, she reasoned.

“There,” he rasped and smoothed his hand over her backside. With his fingers he mixed her juices around, coating her already saturated pussy, as well as her rear entrance. “You are nice and loose for us, sweetheart.”

Without mercy, without hesitation, he inserted two fingers into her ass and moved them in and out, stretching her, burning her, as Chris kicked off his boots and the rest of his clothes. They then switched positions and Chris eased his fingers into the depths of her pussy while pushing his thumb into her ass.

“I don’t think I’ve ever felt you this wet, baby. Are you ready for us?”

Us? “At the same time?”

“At the same time,” Barrett answered and replaced Chris.

Chris moved around and flattened out on the bed. “Come here, baby. Straddle me and rest that sweet pussy above my cock.”

She did, arching her back and pressing against his solid erection. Chris reached over to the side table, opened the drawer, and pulled out two condoms, tossing one to Barrett. After sheathing his cock, he rested it against her entrance.

When he didn’t thrust his flesh inside hers, she whimpered in frustration. “What are you waiting for?”

Barrett answered her by easing into her tight rear, steadily pushing, not stopping until he buried his cock deep inside her ass.

It burned. Oh, dear God, how it burned. He stretched her virginal flesh, brushing over highly sensitive nerves and bringing new meaning to the word *pleasure*.

“Relax, baby. Push out for me. You can take me. Come on, my sweet Sarah. Take all of me. That’s it. Just like that.” He hit brand-new nerves, and she jerked against him.

Chris then slowly pushed his cock into her pussy, and she bucked, the feeling of being so full overwhelming her senses.

Barrett grabbed her hips to hold her still as she slowly moved out and Chris buried himself all the way inside. “Oh, don’t do that. You

do and it'll be over before it started. Jesus. So hot. So tight. Dear God, baby. You're killing me. Is she killing you, Chris?"

"I've died and gone to heaven. That's exactly what this is, baby. Sweet heaven."

A furious, concentrated burning took over and blinded her. And she thought it couldn't get any better than the toy. The pleasure, the fervent arousal, consumed her, setting her on fire.

She bucked again, needing more. So much more. Barrett's cock pulsed as he pushed back inside her, Chris pulling out. They took turns filling her, rendering her helpless but to give in to her body's frantic desires. Heat blazed across her flesh as Barrett eased out and slowly sank back into her ass in turn with Chris stretching her pussy.

Barrett dug his fingers into her hips. "Sweet Jesus, Sarah. I'm dying. It's so much more than I imagined. Ah, my sweetheart. So good."

"She's close, Barrett. Her cunt is fisting my cock like there's no tomorrow. I'm not going to last much longer."

"You want more, baby?" Barrett asked her and smoothed his hand over her ass.

"Oh, Barrett. Please. More. I need more." Sweat broke out all over her body as pushed and twisted to accept them in. They kept her just out of reach as they moved at a more deliberate pace.

"You'll get more, baby. My sweet baby. I promise you. I'll give you everything. All that I am. Just take me. Just like that. Oh, fuck yeah."

"Take me, Sarah." Chris rocked his hips and buried his cock. "Jesus, fuck. You've got me too close, baby. Ah, shit."

Wicked, carnal pleasure tore through her, her cries mixing with theirs as the pace quickened. "Please. Oh, God. I need you. Both of you."

Chris reached up and pinched her clit, and she screamed. "That's it, baby. Scream for me." His hips moved faster and faster, driving his flesh in and out of her, his breath quickening.

Barrett moved in time with Chris. Her climax swelled like waves during the perfect storm. When the first wave crashed, she threw her head back and screamed, the intensity of her orgasm so furious bursts of lights exploded behind her closed lids.

“Yes!” She rocked her hips in rhythm with theirs, forcing them in and out faster, harder. With his fingers, Chris circled her clit in time with his thrusts and kept her orgasm at its peak.

Barrett gave her a tap on her ass. “Scream, baby. I love to hear you scream our names as you come. Scream for your Doms, baby.” His throaty groan echoed throughout the tent.

Chris slammed deep into her cunt and her orgasm came back with a vengeance. “Chris! Yes! Oh, Barrett! That’s it!”

“My sweet Sarah.” Barrett growled and pumped over and over, keeping them both moaning and crying in their release.

Chris joined in, stiffening and hollering her name. He finally fell limp, and she leaned down to his chest, too weak to hold herself up. It was then that she felt him trembling. Or maybe that was her.

“Holy shit,” Barrett groaned and slowly withdrew from her before collapsing next to them on the bed. “We are going to end up killing each other at this rate.”

She shivered as she fell to the bed between the men. Chris wrapped his arms around her and pulled her tight before kissing the top of her head. Barrett curled in behind her.

Sarah giggled. “I could think of worse ways to go.”

Barrett laughed, and the sound made her smile. She loved his laugh.

Chris kissed her forehead. “I couldn’t agree more.”

“We should get dressed,” she said after shivering again. “There’s still a lot to do before the guests arrive.”

“Sarah, *you* are a guest.”

Did Barrett have to be so quick to remind her? “Fine, before the rest of the guests arrive. I’ll stay here and make sure everything is set for when they arrive.”

“You can’t stay up here alone.” Chris sat up and reached down to toss her clothes at her.

“I can and will.” She placed her hands on her hips and ignored the clothes now sitting on the bed next to her. Besides, with her already here, she’d be able to get a good look at each and every guest. Hopefully she’d get *lucky*.

Literally.

“Stubborn,” Barrett muttered and shook his head. After they all stood and dressed, he turned to her before flicking his gaze to Chris. “Fine. You stay here with her. Stick in this tent and watch the stove. This will be ours. It has a tricky flue, and I want to monitor it.”

This will be ours. His words rang in her ears, and damn if it didn’t have her breathing in shallow gasps. She glanced at Chris and suppressed a shudder. It would be like playing house, which had her feeling nervous and silly at the same time.

She walked with Barrett to the snowcat and grabbed the folder out of the cab while Chris stayed behind to work the fire. With a quick glance up at the temperature gauge, she shook her head. “It’s getting colder.”

It had dropped to twenty degrees. Barrett glanced up at the digital readout and thinned his lips. “I know. That’s a good thing for the snow. If it drops much lower it will be too cold to snow.”

“Do you think these tents will keep everyone comfortable?”

He shook his head. “I doubt it. It’s only going to get colder as the sun goes down. It will keep them from freezing, but not much else.”

She watched as he snapped his brow into a frown. This weather had him worried. Because of that, it now had her worried, too. He already had so much on his shoulders. Adding the burden of keeping six couples, plus their third party, happy until he could get them out might be too much.

“Barrett, if you think it would be safer in the lodge...”

He grabbed the radio mic from the dash. “No, it will get even colder in there. At least with the tents we can keep the woodstoves

stocked and ward off the chill. It probably won't get any warmer than about fifty-five or sixty degrees, but it will keep everyone from freezing."

"Who are you calling?"

"My brothers," he answered before bringing the mic up to his lips. "This is Barrett. Does anyone have their radio on?"

"This is Matt. How's it going out there?"

"We're moving the guests to the tents."

"This is Wyatt, and I just have to say, are you insane? It's freezing out there."

Barrett rolled those glorious eyes and then looked at Sarah. "No shit, Wyatt. But each tent has a heat source that will keep the guests warm until the power comes back on."

"This is Michael, and I think it's a great idea. Some of the guests are already complaining that it's too cold."

"What's the temp inside the lodge right now?" Barrett held perfectly still as he asked.

"It looks like it's about forty-five degrees. It's dropping quick."

He closed his eyes and muttered a curse. Sarah wanted to reach for him, but with them standing on either side of the cab, he stood too far away.

Chris walked up behind her and wrapped his strong arms around her, pulling her into him. He then leaned his cheek up against hers, warming it. She snuggled into him and secretly wished for the power to stay out, at least for a couple more days.

"Chris, make sure the stoves stay lit."

"I'm on it." He nibbled at Sarah's neck, and she twisted in his arms to protect her flesh.

Barrett let out a long, tired sigh. Chris loosened his hold on Sarah and stood up straight. "Cuz, the stoves are already started. By the time you get the guests up here the tents will be warm. It'll be fine. I'll make sure of it."

Barrett didn't look like he agreed with Chris. He kept his

handsome brow tight in a frown. He brought the mic back up to his lips. "I'll be down as soon as I can. Get the guests ready. I want them all settled by dark."

"This is Matt. I'll get Gina and Donny to put stuff together food-wise to last the night, something more than canned beans and potatoes. Something easy to reheat on those woodstoves."

"Sounds good. It shouldn't take more than two trips to get everyone up here. Get the other snowcat warmed up. I'm on my way." Barrett set the mic back on the dash.

He closed the cab, and the three of them went inside the tent. The chill in the air bit into Sarah's flesh, and not in a good way. She tried not to shiver, but one escaped, and both men saw it.

Barrett turned and took her hand. "I'm sorry this hasn't turned out to be the weekend you wanted."

"Are you kidding? This is better." And it was. Who wanted to spend the weekend in a stuffy lodge when they could rough it out in a glamp tent? She liked the idea of staying here. Of course, staying with her two favorite cowboys did have something to do with that.

Chris smiled and kissed her nose. "Somehow I knew you'd say that."

"At least the guests will be warmer up here." Barrett squeezed her shoulders.

"Maybe they'll find a way to make this fun." Sarah set the folder down on the table and looked around. "Not to mention the fact they will be cohabitating with their ménage partner. I'm sure they won't get bored."

The Gideon Gods sandwiched her, instantly warming her. If she got to spend the night inside the tent next to these two men, she'd never feel so much as a chill. In fact, if they had a repeat of last night, she'd burst into flames.

She couldn't wait.

Barrett kissed her soundly. "I'll be back as soon as I can. Try not to get into any trouble while I'm gone."

She lifted her chin and brushed her nose against his jaw. “Hmm. Can I get into trouble when you get back?”

He laughed and smacked her backside. “I have to go check on the horses before I head back to the lodge. Be good.” He glanced over her shoulder at Chris. “Take care of her.”

“We’ll be here when you get back, cuz.”

“Oh!” She brought her finger up as she remembered. “The basketball. Put it in the water trough. It will stop the water from freezing over. It’s a little trick my grandpa taught me when I was a kid. We didn’t have the money for heated water troughs, so we improvised.”

Barrett’s lips quirked. “Impressive.”

“Baby, you ain’t seen nothing yet.”

Chris leaned in to kiss her and lingered as he nipped at her lips. “I can’t wait to find out what else you improvise on.”

“That makes two of us,” Barrett growled and rubbed his hand along her shoulders.

She turned and glanced up into his hypnotic eyes. “Then hurry back.” She nibbled on his lower lip before pushing him toward the door.

Looking over his shoulder, he winked, and a flash of arousal burst inside her. Why would something as simple as a wink have her suddenly so hot, burning with need?

“Remember, you belong to us tonight to do with what we please. You lost. Twice.” After delivering a devastating grin, he slipped out of the tent and left her there to contemplate what exactly the night would entail.

“Trust me,” Chris said. “When we wins a bet, we definitely expects payment.”

She could hardly wait.

Chapter 14

“Make sure you get those containers tied down.” Chris pointed at the stack of containers housing the food Gina and Donny packed for the guests. He shivered and pulled his collar up to protect his exposed neck. Damn, it was cold.

Michael nodded and went to work to follow his cousin’s orders. The second round of guests had already been loaded into the snowcats, and they now waited to be hauled up to the glamp tents.

Since Barrett was a pleasant shade of blue when he returned with the first round of guests, Sarah made him stay inside their tent and warm up a few shades while Chris retrieved the last group.

He climbed into one of the snowcats and grabbed the radio mic. “You ready, Mikey?”

“It’s a bit crowded, but—Hey! Watch the hands.”

Giggling filled the radio waves.

“Uh, Michael?”

“Lead the way. I said stop it. Rachel!”

He laughed and shook his head. Only his prudish youngest cousin would have a problem with a beautiful woman groping him in a crowded snowcat. Michael’s twin, Matt, on the other hand, would have welcomed having a woman like Rachel on his side, her slender hands wandering over to his leg and sneaking up.

His mind drifted to Sarah. She had the prettiest shine in her eyes when he or Barrett said something charming that made her smile.

Which had him scratching his head. Chris could charm the rattle out of a snake, but Barrett didn’t know how to be charming. Matt was the charmer amongst the Gideon brothers. Barrett was the hard-ass

that drove the women away.

When did everything go ass over tea kettle? He hadn't been away from the GR&L for *that* long.

But, then again, if he'd been around, he would have never let Barrett get as buried in Gail's bullshit as he had. Chris had always had a way of weeding through the shit that clouded Barrett's vision, ever since they were kids. Gail definitely fell under the bullshit, can definitely do without, category.

The fact that the bitch had stomped on Barrett's heart really pissed Chris off, but he was angrier at Barrett than Gail. Why the fuck did Barrett allow that psycho close enough to do any damage? He should know better.

His thoughts drifted to Sarah. Now there was a woman he'd definitely lose his sanity over.

"Are there going to be showers?" a woman from the back asked, snapping him out of his thoughts.

Was she kidding? "These are glorified tents. There won't even be running water."

"What? Two thousand dollars to stay in a tent?"

Chris rolled his eyes. Barrett was right. Everyone expected more than what the dollar allowed. "Apparently."

"I demand a refund."

Of course she did. "You'll have to talk to Barrett."

"The one following the little redhead around like he's in heat?"

Chris gripped the steering wheel tighter. They'd both been following her around like they'd never had pussy before and would never have pussy again. "That would be the one."

He clenched his teeth and pushed on the gas to get to the tents faster. Darkness had already set in. The snow blew around and created absolute whiteout conditions. He had to safely get the guests to their tents, and dealing with bitchy guests didn't put him in a good mood.

He pulled the snowcat up to the first cabin, where the Spanglers were assigned to stay. "Here's your stop."

“Really?”

“Come on, Ang. Carol returned her pin, so it’s just you and me.”

“It certainly hasn’t been anything like what I thought it would be,” Angela Spangler remarked, her nose so far in the air she poked holes in the cloud cover.

“We’ll be sure to receive compensation for our trouble, my dear. I’ll make sure of that.”

Chris gritted his teeth. This weekend was going to end up breaking the ranch. He just knew it. From what Barrett had told him, Wyatt’s plan with Strickler had better come through or the Gideon brothers were going to lose the ranch and end up moving in with him.

Not just no, but *hell* no.

“Gideon, you may deliver my bags.”

Chris looked at him. “This here is a self-service ranch, sir.”

Murray Spangler, the pompous senator or congressman or some bullshit from a southern state Chris had no desire to remember, stiffened and thrust out his surgically-altered chin. “Excuse me?”

“Get your own damn bags.”

His wife seemed even more offended than the senator. “I beg your pardon?”

Chris just wanted to empty the cab and get to the last tent to see Sarah. Barrett may have her captivated now, but Chris had a power over women his cousin didn’t have, and he planned to use it fully tonight.

Spangler’s eyes flashed. “If I don’t receive a full refund on top of compensation for dealing with the absolute disaster you call your business, you will hear from my lawyers.”

Chris chuckled and shook his head. This just kept getting better and better. Not only were his favorite cousins losing their shirts by refunding the excursion fees, but throw in a lawsuit and they’d definitely have a hard candy Christmas next year.

“Have a great evening, Mr. and Mrs. Spangler.”

Senator Spangler slammed the door and spun around to march up

the path Barrett must have dug for the guests to walk to their tents without getting snow in their boots. Damn that stubborn man. He'd be on his deathbed and still feel like he had to lift a hand to help someone else.

"Aren't they a piece of work," the two males in the back both said in unison. Chris nodded in agreement. Greg and Joey, if his memory served. Regulars at the ranch from what Barrett had told him.

Greg continued, "No wonder Carol returned their pin. I wouldn't want to spend time with them, either."

The female partner they'd chosen for the weekend snuggled in between them. "I don't know what their problem is. I'm having the time of my life here. I'd pay another two thousand just to stay longer."

"If the weather doesn't let up, you may get your wish for free." Chris stopped the snowcat at their tent and nodded at the door. "Enjoy yourselves."

"Oh, we will."

The men escorted their lady out of the snowcat, grabbed their bags, and helped her into the tent, the way true gentlemen acted. At least chivalry wasn't dead, not with Greg and Joey, Chris reasoned.

Chris pulled the snowcat up and parked it next to the last tent. He stepped out and hunched his shoulders to protect his face from the bite of the wind as he grabbed the two bags he brought. One for the clothes, which he didn't care if he grabbed or not.

It was the other one, the large black duffel bag, that he eagerly snatched up and slung over his shoulder before heading his way into the tent with Sarah and Barrett. Toys of every shape and size graced the inside of the bag, and Chris couldn't wait to test Sarah's reaction to each and every one of them.

Unzipping the tent, Chris then stepped inside and immediately let out a sigh of relief. The tent welcomed him with a warmth that hugged him. The warm glow of the lantern added an entrancing feel and deepened the hunger he'd had since leaving sweet Sarah.

“Welcome home, dear.” Sarah smiled up at him as she sat at the table in nothing more than a pair of long john bottoms and an oversized sweater, and a large pair of big, fluffy socks. She had her hair tied up in a giant ball of curls on top of her head, and damn if she wasn’t close to the most appetizing thing he’d ever seen. After closing the folder in front of her, she adjusted her glasses.

“Where’s my kiss?”

Sarah’s grin widened as she stood and went to him, wrapped her arms around him, and stood on her tiptoes to kiss him. It was subtle, not at all arousing, yet as soon as their lips met, neither pulled back. Chris hugged her into his arms, dying to taste her.

Sarah’s kiss held a hunger that equaled his. He tested his theory by licking her lips open and meeting her tongue with his. She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned into him.

After several wonderful seconds, she hummed and pulled back. “Wow. That was some kiss. You must have missed me.”

“I’ve got other ways to wow you even more.”

A distinctive growl came from the other male sitting in the room. Chris glanced over to see Barrett’s cool gaze on him, his jaw tight, his teeth clenched. Despite wanting to hold on to Sarah, Chris stepped back and allowed her to go back to her other Dom. Barrett had enough shit going on without challenging Chris for the alpha role at the moment.

Sarah went to Barrett’s side. She even ran her hand across his shoulders as she passed him before taking her seat at the table and pulling her leg up to rest her chin on her knee.

Damn, that was a sexy pose.

“So, back to the plans.”

Barrett glanced up at Chris. “Have a seat. You need to hear this.”

Chris kicked off his boots and joined them at the table then glanced down at the scatter of colorful brochures and makeshift blueprints. “More of Strickler’s shit? Is that what this is?”

“This,” Barrett said and picked up one of the brochures, “is why

we no longer have a generator to power the lodge.”

Sarah pointed at a picture of the lodge that Chris had already studied earlier. “So you don’t think it’s paying for the rating.”

“Rating my ass,” Barrett growled. “Strickler is trying to pull something, Chris. Look at the bullshit he wants us to put in. Covered valet. A bathroom in every guest room. That alone is going to cost a fortune.”

Sarah grabbed a paper with lines and figures scattered in a pattern. “Don’t forget the kitchen and dining room renovations.”

“How could I forget?”

Chris watched whoever spoke. When neither one continued, he prodded. “How is any of that considered bad? It’s all about the rating, right? Don’t you want to get your name out there?”

Sarah handed him the plans. “Take a closer look. See here? You can’t just remove a load-bearing wall and add a couple of posts in its place. Instead of tearing down the wall, I’d cut out archways and leave the centerpieces in so that it supports itself. And it creates a nice touch. You could even have a room right here for private parties. But for what he says the costs would be, along with being able to start the construction before the ground thaws, all points to him not doing his homework. You can’t guarantee a five-star rating. There are certain amenities you have to have to even qualify.”

Chris leaned in closer to study the plans. “I heard Michael talking to Wyatt about some of this, actually. Strickler told Wyatt that he had these plans drawn up by an engineer and confirmed by a general contractor. They told him you all could start the inside renovations right away, but the outside construction would have to wait until spring. Wyatt bought it, but I don’t think Michael did.”

“Good for Mikey.” Barrett stood and went over to the stove, shoved a few more logs in, and then refilled his coffee cup with steaming liquid from the kettle on the top. He then rejoined them at the table. “I always knew he had a solid head when it came to Strickler. He didn’t trust that bastard any more than I did.”

Clenching his teeth, Chris stood and jerked a cup off the hook before helping himself to a cup of coffee. Barrett drove him crazy at times, always digging at his younger brothers with little comments like how Michael was better at this, or Wyatt better at that. Not once did he ever consider his brothers equals.

"Doesn't matter now," Chris stated as he stood next to the woodstove and sipped at his coffee.

"Why's that?" Barrett raised his brow.

"He's gone."

Sarah grabbed Barrett's cup and sipped at it. He didn't mind. Hell, he didn't even seem to notice, as if they were a normal couple sitting at the kitchen table sharing a cup of coffee together. It tugged at Chris. He wanted that, to sit at the Sunday morning breakfast table, sharing a cup of coffee and talking about whatever headlines graced the papers.

Sarah set the cup down in front of Barrett. "I thought the road out of here was impassable."

"Donny gave him a ride out on his snowmobile. There was a car down on the highway waiting for him. Carol insisted on leaving as well, so Matt gave her a ride on another snowmobile."

Sarah lifted her head. "Carol left?"

Barrett stood. "The roads are plowed?"

"Apparently," he said as an answer to both questions. Sarah looked hurt that her best friend would leave her. Barrett just looked pissed.

"Then why the hell are we still here?" Barrett grabbed his coat off the back of the chair. "Chris, get the snowcats fired off. We can get the guests down to the road and have cars waiting for them to take them to the airport."

Sarah snuck up and wrapped her arms around Barrett's waist. She looked up into his eyes and tilted her head. Damn if he didn't relax his shoulders as he studied her face. And was that a smile Chris spotted tugging at the surliest Gideon's lips?

Since when did Barrett smile?

“These people paid for an adventure, Barrett. Don’t take that away from them.”

He dropped his coat to the floor and then rested his hands on her shoulders, caressing them gently, lovingly. “This isn’t quite the adventure they were looking for.”

“It’s still an adventure.”

“And you’re okay with roughing it out here without Carol?”

She nodded. “As long as I have you two with me.”

Chris walked over and set his coffee on the table. “She’s right. Let’s let this ride out. The guests may find that they like the switch in scenery.” He moved up behind Sarah, sandwiching her between him and Barrett. “I know I do.”

Barrett’s eyes darkened as he looked down at Sarah. “How about you? Are you in for a little adventure?”

“You know I am.”

Chris grinned at Barrett. “Then let the games begin.”

Chapter 15

Sarah couldn't believe this was all really happening. She felt them both, extensions of each other, cousins who knew how to share their women.

Barrett lifted her chin and took her lips, the hunger from his kiss transferring to her. She parted her lips, accepting his kiss, trembling from both fear of the unknown and excitement for the exact same thing. Behind her Chris ran his lips along her neck, sprinkling kisses and stroking his tongue against her sensitive flesh.

"You're shaking," Chris whispered against her neck, the heat from his breath caressing her skin.

"Scared?" Barrett looked at her with lust clouding his gaze and darkening his eyes.

She nodded.

"Words, Sarah."

"I am," she answered, barely audible. "But please don't stop."

"Why be scared, baby?" Chris ran his hands along her shoulders.

She didn't know the answer to that, only that, for some reason, it felt different this time. Deeper. Stronger.

Barrett grinned that crooked grin that made her knees wobble, and she gave in to the pleasure. He removed her glasses and set them down on the table. He then looked over her shoulder to his cousin still devouring her neck with wicked precision.

"You brought the bag?"

Chris pulled back. "I did. Is there anything in particular we should use on her first?"

That didn't sound good, and yet it had her flushed, hot, anxious to

see what, exactly, they planned to use on her first.

Barrett took her hand and led her into the next room where the bed sat, patient and waiting. “Remember our bet?”

How could she forget? “Yes.”

“Time to pay up.”

Oh, God. The thickness in his voice had her trembling. She closed her eyes.

“You may start by lying down on the bed, stomach down.”

“But—”

Chris captured her mouth with his, cutting her off and licking at her lips until she opened to him. He then broke the kiss. “No arguing.”

Barrett stood there and waited. Chris nodded for her to take the bed. She looked at them both before moving over to the bed and sitting on the edge.

Barrett’s gaze narrowed. “Lie down, Sarah.”

“What are you going to do?”

“You agreed to submit to us,” Chris said.

“But,” she whispered, fear seeping into her conscience.

“Do you trust us?”

She looked at Chris and then Barrett. “Yes.”

“Then lie down,” Chris ordered.

With a deep, shaky breath, she did as instructed and turned to stretch out on the bed, stomach down. She couldn’t see what the Gideons were doing, which made her even more nervous.

“Chris.”

Barrett said his cousin’s name, and Sarah heard footsteps then the quick hum of a zipper being released. The sound ripped a chill up Sarah’s spine. Without words, the men gently undressed her, taking their time running their fingers up and down her bare skin and leaving a searing trail wherever they touched.

“Give me your left hand.” Barrett appeared to her left and held out his hand.

She hesitated.

Chris appeared to her right. "Trust us, Sarah. You have to trust us enough to know we'd never let anything happen to you. With us, you'll always be safe. If you can't trust in that, then we are wasting our time."

She breathed out roughly. "I'm not sure of much of anything right now other than if we stop, I'll die."

Barrett narrowed his gaze. "So you're sure?"

"What did I just say? Of course I'm not sure. Please, Barrett. Don't ask me questions like that." She held out her hand for him to take.

His lips quirked up into a grin. "Fair enough."

"I just love how she is so honest," Chris added.

Barrett wrapped a satin cuff around her wrist and clicked it into place. She was so shocked at seeing the cuff that she didn't realize Chris had done the same thing to her right wrist until she heard the distinctive metallic click.

"Wait. I never agreed to be restrained."

"You set the rules," Barrett reminded her. "You lost the bet. Are you backing out?"

"Hell no." Damn it. Being tied up should piss her off, not excite her. But just being at a level of helplessness she'd never experienced had her breath sawing in and out of her lungs in anticipation.

Barrett undressed. She couldn't look away as he pulled his rigid cock out of his pants. It bobbed right at lip level, a tantalizing drop of crystal pre-cum taunting her. She licked her lips.

Distracted by the sight of Barrett's enormous erection, she didn't know where Chris had disappeared to until she felt the flick of his tongue against her clit. She jerked and cried out, but the restraints held her in place. His wicked tongue traveled up and down her slit, taking her juices and spreading them clear to her rear entrance.

"Jesus, Sarah. You taste like paradise. Sweet, savory paradise. Get up on your knees."

She did.

“I’m going to explode if you don’t relieve some of this pressure.” Barrett groaned as he wrapped his hand around his cock and slowly stroked. “I won’t even last five minutes buried in your sweet body. Do you want to suck my cock, my sweet Sarah?”

She opened her mouth and released a breath. “Oh, God, yes.”

He moved in, and she tightened her lips as she sucked him inside her mouth. A rough groan escaped Barrett’s lips when she flicked her tongue over the engorged head. He reached up and fisted her hair, directing her pace.

“You drive me fucking crazy with that sweet, hot mouth.” Barrett squeezed the base of his cock and thrust his hips, driving the head to the back of her throat. “That’s it. Take it. Take all of me, baby.”

The thick veins of Barrett’s cock throbbed against the restraint of her lips. She dragged her tongue along the underside of his erection, and he shuddered as he groaned. Knowing she pleased him, that she had him close to erupting, sent her into a frenzy as she sucked his flesh.

It could have something to do with Chris. Wicked, playful Chris, slurping and teasing her with that diabolical tongue of his. He lapped and flicked at her clit, licking her slit from top to bottom, but it wasn’t enough. She needed more, so much more.

And then Chris pulled her clit between his lips and attacked as he slipped something cool into her tight back entrance. As if that didn’t have her on the verge of a blinding orgasm, whatever he’d filled her rear with started to vibrate.

Oh, no. Not again.

She screamed at the intensity of the assault. Tightening her mouth on Barrett, she sucked with enthusiasm, matching Chris’s sharp pierce as he flicked her clit and gently drove the vibrating toy in and out of her ass.

“Holy shit. Oh, just like that. Oh, yeah. I’m going to shatter, baby. You’ve got me ready to come. Oh, fuck. Swallow me, Sarah. That’s

it. Oh, Jesus. Yes. Yes!”

Barrett powered his erection deep into her mouth as his seed, thick and hot, shot down her throat. He jerked and lost his rhythm, but Sarah didn't slow down. She didn't ease up at all. Chris had her so close. One more lick, one more thrust of the vibrating toy, and she'd join Barrett in orgasmic ecstasy.

But then Chris removed the toy and slid out from underneath her, and then Barrett backed away. She tried to move, to reach out to either one of them, but the damned restraints held her in place, imprisoned on the bed.

In a daze, she watched as Chris moved underneath her, his engorged cock nudging up against her slick entrance. When did he undress? She looked to Barrett, saw that he, too, had undressed, and let out a shaky breath.

This was really going to happen. Again. This time with her in restraints.

“Relax, Sarah.” Chris's voice soothed her, but did nothing to ease her nerves. The flare of his sheathed penis pushed past her barrier and stretched her flesh. She flinched and tensed when Barrett moved into position behind her, wasting no time to push two fingers, slippery and wicked, into the depths of her anus.

“I'm going to take you here,” Barrett growled and scissored his fingers. “While Chris fucks your pussy, I'm going to fuck your sweet ass again.”

“Please.” She couldn't make sense of the sensations racing through her. She was desperate, begging for them to do more than tell her what they were going to do. “Oh, please, Barrett. Stop talking and just fuck me.”

“Your wish...”

“Is my command,” Chris finished for his cousin and drove his cock deep into her pussy, impaling her with his swollen flesh.

“Oh, God!” Sarah fought to breathe and struggled against the restraints. Chris pulled out just as Barrett pushed the head of his

sheathed cock against the tiny puckered hole, pressing inside.

She screamed. Oh, dear Lord, how she screamed. She felt every inch of Barrett's cock slipping inside her slowly, burning her with a dark pleasure she didn't know existed.

"Almost there, baby. Just relax. Stay still." Barrett dug his fingers into her hips to hold her in place.

And then, just when she thought the invasion couldn't get any sweeter, Chris forced his cock back into her convulsing cunt as Barrett held her still, his cock buried deep inside her ass.

It was too much. She couldn't stand it. Thrashing, she bucked against them, the combination of their hard flesh filling her more than she could bear. Chris continued to work his cock inside her pussy inch by burning inch.

"Hold still, baby." Barrett slowly pulled back before burying himself back inside her. "Holy fuck, Sarah. So tight. So good."

She wanted more and tried to force Chris's cock to enter her faster, harder, as Barrett started to work his cock in and out of her ass in a gentle, rocking rhythm.

"More," she whimpered. "I need more."

"Demanding little minx, isn't she?" Chris thrust inside her pussy as Barrett pulled out, the two working in perfect time to drive her ever closer to insanity.

"Both. At the same time." Sarah cried out, begging them to break her of this torment, to grant her release just hovering out of reach.

When they gave in to her pleading wish, she took a breath to scream, but the way they thrust in perfect time, hard and powerful, had her bucking wildly, consumed by an animalistic drive for climax.

"Did you just growl?" Barrett slammed into her backside while at the same time Chris drove deep into her cunt.

"I believe she did." Chris cupped her breasts and pinched her nipples. Sarah quickened her movement, frantic now in her search for release. With each thrust, each stretch of her flesh as her body welcomed her lovers, her orgasm built inside her, twisting around her

womb and driving her movements.

Soon all three moved together in rapid, hard thrusts. Barrett reached around and barely touched her clit, and she shattered.

Her bones exploded with her orgasm, leaving her limp and helpless but to have her men pull wave after wave of her release out of her. She couldn't move and didn't have to. Barrett and Chris knew exactly what to do to keep her orgasm at its peak, blinding her as the vibrations wracked her body.

"Sarah," Barrett groaned as he stiffened and filled the condom with hot, sticky semen. Chris gave one final thrust and shuddered as his orgasm overtook him, his grunts echoing in the air between them.

After an eternity, she collapsed to Chris's chest, panting, wondering if she'd ever recover. Barrett slowly withdrew before removing the cuffs from her wrists and lifting her off Chris. She crumpled to the bed, unable to do anything else.

"Sarah, baby, you're trembling." Barrett pulled her into his arms, holding her against him. She curled into him and let out a whimper.

She never knew it could feel like that. Aftershocks still rumbled through her, clenching her insides and flooding her cunt with the juices of her own release.

In-fucking-credible.

Burying her face against Barrett's chest, she tried not to think about her life outside of the ranch, away from the men she'd fallen in love with in a matter of twenty-four hours. Soon enough this would all end, and the thought brought tears to her eyes.

Her throat tightened, and she swallowed several times as another violent shudder ripped through her.

"Stay with me," she whispered. "Both of you." *Love me. Don't ever leave me.*

"Always." Chris kissed the top of her head and pulled the down comforter up to tuck around her right side.

Barrett tucked it in around her left. "We'll always be with you, our sweet Sarah."

Chapter 16

Barrett whistled as he stirred the beans and franks. It may not be glamour food, but it would keep the masses fed and warm. His GG used to make it for them all the time, and the brothers loved it. Chris would be over for dinner more often than not as his dad worked and GG babysat.

God, how he missed that man. Barrett could talk to him about anything and know he'd never be judged. GG knew the trials and tribulations that went along with running the ranch.

He'd be able to counsel Barrett on the tightness in his chest whenever his thoughts drifted to Sarah. Ever since meeting her at the meet and greet, she'd found a way to consume his every thought.

What would GG say about that? He'd never had a negative thing to say about Gail, but deep down Barrett knew the man didn't like her. Would he like Sarah?

How could he not?

It didn't matter. GG was gone. Barrett let out a long sigh and continued to stir the food over the woodstove.

"That was a deep sigh."

Barrett glanced over his shoulder at his cousin, who hadn't moved from the table as he studied the brochures and plans Sarah had scattered over the surface. After a quick glance to insure their sweet lover was still napping peacefully, Barrett brought his attention back to Chris.

"So what are your thoughts on those plans?"

Chris dropped his gaze down to the papers. "Honestly? I think they look great. If you can get away with renovations for this cheap,

you should jump on it.”

“But that’s just it. Nothing comes that cheap. Strickler is up to something. Sarah doesn’t buy into his bullshit, and neither do I.”

“Why? Just because she says so?”

“Exactly.”

“And you’re just going to take her word for it.”

Barrett didn’t answer and didn’t have to. Chris had already jumped to his own conclusion. He saw it in his cousin’s face. And, damn it, Chris was usually dead-on with his instincts.

“How well do you know Sarah?”

Well enough to know if she left him after this weekend he’d spend the rest of his life looking for her. “She read the plans, Chris. She caught on to Strickler a hell of a lot faster than me or any of my brothers.”

“Or maybe she already knew about them. Maybe she’s here to get closer to one of the Gideon brothers so she can report back.” He eyed Barrett knowingly. “Maybe she’s gotten a lot closer than anyone expected, even her.”

He growled and clenched his teeth. “She’s not in with Strickler.”

“How do you know?”

He didn’t, not for sure, but he knew how to read people, and Sarah Emerson was someone he trusted. With everything.

Even his heart.

Barrett glanced back at Sarah when she whimpered and muttered something about hating to lose a bet. It made him smile, and he started to contemplate what she’d lose on their next bet. When he looked back at Chris, he lost his smile when he saw how keenly his cousin watched him.

“Oh, no.”

“Shut up, Chris.”

“Barrett, what are you doing? You’re taking this a little too seriously, cuz. You’re going to end up hurting her. And you.”

Barrett stopped stirring and looked at him. “What are you talking

about?”

“I see the way she looks at us. She’s already fallen in love. We can’t let that happen and you know it. If we break her heart, we’ll not only have Norris up our ass, but Brett, too. And don’t even get me started on Amber. She’s the one who scares me more than her two men.”

“What happened to finding more than being a third party?”

“I didn’t think you’d actually do anything about it. Seriously, this time yesterday Gail cut out your heart and fed it to Tom with a triumphant smile on her conniving face. Today you’re all about Sarah. It isn’t her you want, Barrett.”

“That is where you are wrong. She is exactly who I want.”

“Bullshit. She is just the rebound girl to help you get over Gail, and I say good for you. But you have to make sure she understands this is all part of the act, and that it ends tomorrow when you send the guests back home.”

He didn’t want Sarah to leave. Not after the end of the weekend. Not ever. “I’m thinking of asking her to stay.”

“You’d better think again. Jesus and Christ, Barrett. You can’t do that and you know it. This needs to stop. Now. You aren’t ready to be back out there. Look at all the mistakes you’re making. You’re being careless. Hell, we both are.”

“I’m not being careless,” Barrett argued, even though he knew he was and didn’t give a fuck. For the first time in his life he’d put himself and his happiness first. It wouldn’t be the last time.

Chris looked over his shoulder and then back at Barrett. “We didn’t use a condom with her today in the snowcat. Barrett, we’ve never lost control like that. What the hell is going on?”

Barrett thought about the snowcat. He took her from behind and buried his dick deep into the depths of her pussy, stroking her until he spilled his life inside her, and then again not more than an hour later. He’d been so hungry for her that after he’d tasted a single drop of her intoxicating juices, he couldn’t think about anything but fucking her.

He hated the turn in this conversation. He stirred the beans faster in the hopes they'd heat up already.

"What makes her so different? Seriously, cuz. This scares the shit out of me. I'm actually thinking about sticking around. What the hell?"

Barrett wanted to attack his cousin and lash out at him until he understood the passion filling his heart. As soon as he saw the stilled expression on Chris's face, the fear in his wide, hazel eyes, he didn't have to.

"You're in love with her, too. Aren't you?"

Chris shook his head and closed his eyes as he pinched the skin above his nose. "Shit, cuz. What the hell are we going to do?"

"Shit."

"Yeah," Chris agreed. "Now what? Are we fucking screwed or what? What if we catch something?"

He was clean. Chris was clean. He had a sneaking suspicion Sarah hadn't had a whole lot of lovers in her past. The risk of them catching anything from each other was remote. But the threat of disease was only the half of it. What if their careless romp in the cab resulted in Sarah getting pregnant? That thought scared the shit out of him. He didn't mind the thought of fathering a child. He welcomed the idea, actually. The image of Sarah's body growing ripe with his child made him smile.

He quickly dropped his grin. Having a kid running around the ranch, stumbling across men and women sharing love in, at times extreme, circumstances, couldn't happen. No child should witness what went on at the GR&L. It would shock the poor kid right into therapy.

"Barrett, this is Michael. Do you copy?"

Grateful for the distraction, Barrett grabbed the radio off the hook. "Go ahead."

"I just got off the phone with the power company. You're going to love this."

He doubted it. "I'm waiting."

"They say they didn't have any record of the power being out at the ranch. Because we are on our own power grid, we aren't considered a priority. It could be days before they get a technician out to see what the issue is."

Son of a bitch. Did it say *Fuck Me* across his forehead?

"Anything else?"

"I just checked in on the Spanglers in Tent 1. They said they want to speak with the GM. They weren't happy."

"Oh, them." Chris shook his head.

Barrett looked at Chris. "What's their gripe?"

Shrugging easily, he leaned back in the chair and took his own damn sweet time answering. Barrett clenched his teeth and almost dumped dinner over his cousin's head.

"I made them get their own bags. That, and they're all bent out of shape that Carol returned their pin and left. I think she was pissed that we pinned Sarah and not her."

"I didn't want Carol." He wanted Sarah, morning, noon, and night. He wanted to bury himself inside her, lose himself in her, and never come back. With Sarah he could be himself. No pretenses. No masquerade. He didn't have to pretend to have a good time with her.

He didn't have to pretend at all.

It had been so long for him that he'd forgotten how much fun it could be to just forget about the burdens of the world and be himself. Then again, Sarah made everything fun.

"Cuz, we are in serious trouble. We can't both be in love with her. *One* of us can't even be in love with her. That's not how this works."

"You don't think I know that?"

"What if she loves us back? Both of us. Not bullshit lust that quits after the honeymoon is over, but real. Undeniable. Unrelenting."

Barrett held Chris's stunned gaze as the revelation sank in for them both. Who would she choose? Would this be the end of their friendship? Their kinship?

“What if we didn’t ask her to choose?” Chris asked, apparently reading Barrett’s thoughts.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Of course she’d have to choose, and Barrett would lose out. Again.

“We already share her, and it’s good. Damn, it’s great. It doesn’t have to end on Sunday.”

Barrett lost the smile that had snuck onto his face. He didn’t bother denying the reasoning behind his cousin’s suggestion. It made perfect sense. It was something they both wanted.

But did Sarah want that?

He had to know. Barrett had somehow fallen in love, and in a matter of twenty-four hours. *Real* love. He was so sure he loved Gail. Worshipped her, even. No woman had even come close to the pedestal Barrett had placed her on.

But then he met Sarah Emerson, and all that changed.

The feelings he thought he had for Gail didn’t compare to the feelings he had for Sarah, and he hated that he couldn’t stop comparing the two. With Gail, he felt a flame. With Sarah, he felt an inferno so hot it could melt the world.

Gail is gone. He realized right then and there. She’d been gone for years. Barrett, to her, was no more than a means to get what she wanted.

No more.

To Sarah, he stood front and center. Both he and Chris did, and it felt amazing, like the weight of this life and the next had lifted. He knew he’d never have to worry about her running into the arms of someone else.

“Something smells good,” an angelic voice sang from behind them. The two men whipped around and stilled as Sarah walked out from the back room in an oversized long john top and nothing else, stretching with her hands so high over her head it hinted at a peek of her sweet pussy. She then lowered her hands, and both men released a disappointed sigh.

She found her glasses on the table and slipped them on. After pulling the band out of her hair, she combed her curls as best she could before piling her mane back on top of her head and securing it in place.

She walked over and glanced down into the pot. “Are we having Cajun for dinner?”

The men looked at her. In fact, neither one of them could pull their collective gaze from her. Barrett couldn’t speak for his cousin, but he didn’t have the power to look away. Sarah Emerson, no makeup, looking every bit at home in a glamping tent, casually glanced over her shoulder as she turned to the food, those giant, liquid, brown eyes focused in on him.

And then on Chris. She grinned and flirted with them both. His chest swelled, and whether he liked it or not, she had him in her grasps. He knew better than to fall for a guest. Love skewed priorities. Love caused a person to lose focus.

Love hurt.

“It’s burning,” she explained and took the spoon from Barrett to stir the food. “You know? Blackened, as in Cajun style? Never mind.”

She scooped some beans out of the pot and tasted them, the gesture of watching her mouth surround the lucky spoon tensing every muscle in Barrett’s body and sending surges of lust straight to his balls.

“Mmm. That’s good. So creamy and hot. I’m starving.”

Only Sarah could eat something as simple as canned beans and franks and find a way to make it sound like lobster. Barrett’s mouth watered for more than the food.

He took the spoon back and removed the pot from the stove, his gaze never leaving hers.

Her pretty brow crinkled into the cutest frown. “What are you doing? I’m hungry.”

“So am I,” he rasped, thick hunger heating his tone.

She lifted her brow and curled the corners of her mouth into a

sensual smile. “Why, Mr. Gideon, wasn’t it you complaining that we’d end up killing each other?”

“What a way to go,” Chris said and stood to join them. “This time it’s my turn in that sweet ass.”

* * * *

Sarah lay naked on the bed, her wrists bound, her belly up. Her Gideon boys rustled around, whispering to each other, plotting against her. She heard words like *vibrator* and *tickler*, and just the thought of what they’d do with the toys had her body quivering.

She knew she should at least make some sort of attempt at a protest, but the idea of having Chris and Barrett touching her, pleasing her, had her pussy tingling in anticipation. This shouldn’t be exciting her, lying naked, the crisp, cool air kissing her flesh, waiting for God only knew what.

“Where should we start?” Chris asked.

“I know where I want to start.”

The heated lust thickening Barrett’s voice sent a fresh set of cool chills peppering her skin. Tension coiled around her womb, tightening like a vise and liquefying her desire. His gaze burned as it pinned her to the bed. Blistering juices drenched her pussy when his impossibly gentle touch caressed her skin as he ran his finger up and down the flat of her belly.

“Baby, I need you to hold still.” When he reached between her legs and spread something cold and slippery all over the outside of her pussy, she jerked and pulled back. “Sarah, it’s just aloe. I’m going to have Chris shave you. He has the steadier hand.”

“What?” She struggled again, this time with more conviction. She didn’t want a bare pussy. On a dare she’d shaved her vagina back in college. When the hair started to grow back she’d never had anything itch so bad in her entire life. “I don’t want you to.”

“It isn’t a matter of what you want, sweetheart. As your Masters,

it's what we want."

"How's that fair?"

"No one said it was fair," he told her. She tensed but then let out a shuddering breath when his fingers opened her lips and started to play with her clit. "How's that feel?"

"Like torture. Come on, Barrett. Do you really think that distracting me will work?"

"I think it already is. Chris?"

The first of several slow swipes of the razor started. It didn't hurt as she'd feared. Chris had a very gentle touch. With Barrett lazily circling her clit, it really did keep her distracted enough to not jump out of the restraints and kill them both. She forced her eyes closed and focused on Barrett's touch, not the fact that Chris now had the razor removing the hair covering her vaginal entrance.

"How's that?" Chris asked.

"That's perfect." He traced his fingers along the highly sensitive, bare, and smooth skin.

Every cell in her body screamed with pleasure at the feeling of him touching her. She had no idea a shaved pussy could heighten the sensations like that. She felt her own juices coating her lips, something that she'd never felt before. It was highly erotic. Swirls of sensation coiled around her body as Barrett continued his lazy assault on her clit.

And then he stopped. She whimpered and lifted her hips, seeking out his finger once again. He had her so close. One thrust of his finger. One little flick against her clit and she'd shatter.

Instead of returning to where she needed him most, he lifted a peacock feather in his hand and smiled down at her. It wasn't a tender smile. It was fueled by the hunger and ardent need she saw in his eyes.

"You've not been very submissive today." He stroked the feather sexually, teasing her by touching it the way she wanted him to touch her.

“Haven’t we already been over this? I’m not the submissive type.”

When he nodded at his cousin, Chris lifted his hand and hovered it above her pussy. He then looked back at Barrett and waited.

“You will obey us or you will be punished.” Barrett lowered the feather and traced first her left nipple, then her right. She gasped and writhed at how it tickled.

“You keep saying that.” She wouldn’t be turned on by this *Dom/sub* act they had going, she told herself. No one served as her Master. No one owned her.

He nodded again at Chris, and before Sarah took another breath, Chris’s hand came down and a sudden, light slap smacked against her bare pussy. She stilled and widened her eyes, first at Chris and then Barrett. He grinned and arched his handsome brow in triumph.

Oh, no, he didn’t.

Sarah fought against her restraints. She’d break through them, damn it, and when she did, they’d both pay for thinking they could first shave and then spank her pussy.

“Again.”

“You do and you’ll lose your hand,” Sarah bit off and twisted to break free of the restraints.

When the blow landed, the slight sting rocked her body. Arousal shot through her system, swelling her clit and tightening her nipples. Another gush of hot juices drenched her cunt as her body betrayed her words and gave her away.

She should not be enjoying this. Spankings were not pleasurable. The spanker didn’t leave the spankee moaning and begging for another. Her hips came up, exposing her pussy to Chris, silently pleading for more.

“Damn it, Chris. Do that again.”

Barrett had never looked more like a Dom to Sarah than at that moment. He removed his shirt and unfastened his jeans before pulling out his rigid cock to stroke it. He nodded at Chris, who nodded back.

Another blow landed, and Sarah writhed on the bed. She stared at

the flesh in Barrett's hands, licking her lips. She wanted that in her mouth. Now.

"Do you want to suck my cock, Sarah?"

She nodded.

"Words, baby. You know I demand words."

Fuck words. Lifting her hips, she taunted Chris with her pussy. From the way he fixated on her cunt, she knew she had him. "Eat me, Chris. I know you want my pussy. Look how wet you make me."

"Enough," Barrett ordered. "You will only address us with our permission."

"Then gag me," she countered and dropped her gaze to his enormous cock.

"Witch." He slipped his cock past her lips, easing into her mouth until the blunt tip hit the back of her throat. "That's it, baby. Take it. Take all of me."

She tightened her lips around him and started to move, sucking him with fervor. Chris, wicked, carnal Chris, had snuck a finger into her pussy and began to stroke.

"Easy. This isn't a race." Barrett fisted her hair to slow her down, but she fought him and increased her pace. "Sarah, baby. Slow down."

Chris spanked her pussy again, and she arched up, sucking Barrett's cock in desperation. One more. Just one more strike and her clit would explode.

And then he did.

And then she did. She screamed and devoured Barrett's flesh as her orgasm hit her hard. Chris dove down and lapped at her cunt, drinking up her juices, and she screamed again.

"I can't stand it," Barrett groaned. "Chris, let her milk you, goddamn it. I need to fuck her."

Chris didn't hesitate to switch positions with Barrett. He powered his erection into her mouth and let out a guttural groan. "Jesus, Sarah. Suck me hard, sweetheart. Just like that. Yeah."

Barrett sheathed his erection before sinking his rigid flesh between her thighs. Without the hair around her entrance Sarah felt every vein, every pulse of Barrett's sheathed cock as he pushed inside her. She cried out, pushing up with her hips to open herself up to him.

He thrust hard, impaling her with his rigid flesh and drawing a growl from her. She sucked Chris hard, flicking her tongue along the engorged head until he pulled out.

"I'm not going to last if I don't take her now." Chris opened the top drawer of the table next to the bed and pulled out a condom. "I'm going to take that sweet ass, Sarah."

Good. That was exactly what she wanted. She cried out when Barrett pulled out and buried his cock deep inside her cunt once more. "Oh, my sweet Sarah. So good. So fucking good, baby."

"Take me, Barrett. Oh, baby. Please fuck me." She tried to reach up and wrap her arms around him, but the stupid restraints stopped her. She was helpless but to rock her hips and nothing else.

Barrett quickened his pace and fell forward, crashing his lips down on hers without breaking his rhythm. He nipped at her lips, her jaw, her neck. She, in turn, did the same.

He drove in and out of her at a frightening pace, pushing them higher. Higher. Harder he thrust until they both whimpered and pleaded with each other to break the sweet torment.

With her exposed pussy, it left her clit vulnerable. The roughness of Barrett's pubic hair brushed up against the swollen nerves, over and over, faster and faster. With a final thrust insanity hit as her world exploded around her.

"Sarah. Baby. Yes!" Barrett stiffened and jetted hot semen into the condom, intensifying her orgasm. She screamed and writhed as she rode out her climax.

"Son of a bitch." Chris pushed his dick back into her mouth. She sucked hard as wave after wave crashed into her. He pumped his hips, fucking her mouth. "Yes, that's it. Oh, hell yeah. Oh, my God. Fuck me with that mouth. Yes!"

Chris spilled his life down her throat, and Sarah swallowed before licking and sucking to milk him dry.

And still she wanted more.

Panting, not quite sated, Sarah remained still as Chris and Barrett stared down at her. She pulled against the restraints and huffed.

“That didn’t go quite as planned,” Barrett mentioned.

“The night is young, boys.”

They both grinned, and then each took a wrist and released it. Sarah sat up and patted at the bed on either side of her. They both sat. Barrett turned her toward him by cupping her cheek. Chris rubbed her shoulders and scooted closer, warming her.

“You’ve got to be getting sore, baby.”

She was, but she wouldn’t let that stop her. “I’ll recover later. Right now, I want what I’ve been promised. Now, are you going to give it to me, or am I going to have to take it?”

Barrett grinned and winked. “Demanding little thing, aren’t you? Have I taught you nothing?”

“You taught me that when I see something I want, I should take it. And I want you beneath me, Chris behind me. I want to feel you both inside me at the same time again.”

Barrett undressed and stretched out on the bed. “Your wish...”

“Is my command,” Chris finished.

And they started all over again.

Chapter 17

She overdid it. She *so* overdid it. First with Barrett, then with them both, then with Chris, then with them both again. Finally, after Barrett had fallen asleep, Chris and Sarah had made slow, tender love until the sun came up.

And now she could barely move.

With Barrett and Chris sound asleep, one on either side of her, sandwiching her in, she debated whether to cuddle back under the covers and drop her quest. She wasn't supposed to be at the ranch looking for Lucky anyway. Maybe she should take Carol's advice and leave Lucky to Norris. After all, he was being paid to track him. Sarah wasn't.

But she couldn't sleep, not with everything moving around in her mind. Slowly so not to wake the men, she slipped out of the bed and quickly dressed, her teeth chattering the entire time. Damn, it was cold.

After dressing she went to the stove and stuffed it with the rest of the wood inside the tent. As soon as that burned down, they'd need more. She made a mental note to say something to her men when they woke up.

She stopped as she thought about that. Were they her men? She wanted them to be, but she also knew reality and its cruel truth. Men like these Gideons didn't fall for women like her. Period and the end. She didn't live in the fairy tales of her brother, his woman, and his other half.

Tying up her boots, she then grabbed her coat and carefully unzipped the tent so as to make as little noise as possible. She stepped

out and zipped it back up, and then turned and squinted as she took in an enormous breath. The air nipped at her, but it felt great. The sun, peeking above the horizon, reflected off the white snow and temporarily blinded her.

Her eyes adjusted, and the further she moved away from the tents, the faster she moved. She pulled her cell phone out of her coat pocket and dialed Carol's number. It rang several times and then went to voice mail. She dialed again with the same results.

It didn't make any sense. Why would Carol leave without saying anything? The ranch had great cell service. She could have at least called. And the fact that she left with Strickler bothered the hell out of her.

Sarah pulled her earmuffs out of her jacket and put them on and then her gloves. The sun shined bright in the cloudless blue sky, a clear indication that the storm had passed.

Or had it?

Something ate at her. Why would Strickler, the ranch's *ex*-PR rep, be pushing so hard for a five-star rating? People who paid for weekends at a couples' retreat specializing in multiple partners didn't care how many stars the ranch had. They came looking for a good time, and the ranch delivered. As the PR rep, he should have known that.

She turned and looked back at the tents, all sitting neatly in a row, smoke lazily rising out of the chimneys. With the snow covering the ground, the trees, and even the roofs of the tents, the entire scene looked like it came straight from a picture. She didn't know all the ins and outs, but she had a sneaking suspicion tents, even glamping tents, would never qualify as five-star abodes.

She thought back to the plans. They focused on the lodge and only the lodge. Even then they weren't very detailed.

Even though it would give her away, she decided the time had come for her to call her brother. He knew how to read into situations like this. She pulled off her earmuffs and brought her phone to her

ear, dialed, and held her breath.

“You’d better have a really good reason to wake me up early on a Sunday, sweet pea.”

Sarah thinned her lips but didn’t say anything. She hated that nickname, but since she needed his help, she knew better than to piss him off—especially since she did wake him up.

“Norris, don’t be an asshole,” Amber said, her voice muffled in the background.

“Yes, dear. So, Sarah, tell me how your weekend went.”

“It’s been great. Better than I could have imagined.” *I fell in love.*

She decided to keep the rest of her comment to herself and wasn’t about to share any details. “Listen, Norris. I need you to do some digging on a PR rep by the name of Richard Strickler.”

“What are you up to?”

“I’ll tell you as soon as you find out more about this guy.”

Norris sighed hard and grunted as he must have gotten out of bed. “This had better be worth it.”

“Did she find Lucky?” Amber’s voice sounded in the background.

Sarah stiffened as all her senses slowed. Did her brother and his girlfriend know the real reason she’d come to the ranch? “What did she just say?”

“Uh, nothing.” Norris mumbled something after moving the phone from his mouth, but Sarah still heard it. “Damn it, Amber. She didn’t know.”

“Give me the phone. Yes. Yes, Norris. Now!” Sarah heard a scuffle, and then Amber’s voice came on the phone.

“Hey, sweetie. Is everything okay?”

Sarah didn’t know what to say. They knew why she’d come to the ranch. In fact, based on Amber’s question, they’d expected her to. That hurt, knowing her own family had pulled a con on her.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Sarah, my dear, I love you, and you know that, so I feel I can be truthful here. You are the world’s worst liar. Positively dreadful.”

Amber's English accent even made insults sound good.

"Thanks a lot."

"If we told you that you were going to the ranch with a cover, you would have blown it. I know it. You know it. It was better to just have you go to the ranch as yourself."

"But how did you know I would go after Lucky?"

"Because you're an Emerson. You do love a good challenge."

You could say that again. Sarah thought of Barrett and Chris and then smiled.

"Now what's this about Lucky? Did you find him?"

She let out a huff, and her breath swirled above her in a delicate cloud. It sucked that her brother would hide something like this from her, but it made sense. She really was the world's worst liar. And right now, she didn't matter. If she followed her hunch and it turned out that she did find Lucky, then she'd kiss her brother for not trusting her.

Like that made *any* sense.

But if she could help that family from Colorado and help the Gideons before Lucky struck again, she'd be a hero.

"I think I found Lucky. I don't know if it's him for sure, but I've asked Norris to check into the ranch's ex-PR rep. He came here this weekend to deliver these bogus plans that look like a six-year-old did them. And get this—the power went out yesterday, and then he left. Do you think there's any connection?"

"Power outages raise eyebrows, which is why they aren't typically done for a con. But I wouldn't put anything past Lucky. He seems the type to pull out all the stops, especially on a score like the GR&L. Norris is busy typing away on his laptop, and from the look on his face, he's either found something interesting or he's constipated."

Sarah laughed and then covered her mouth when it echoed through the trees. She didn't want anyone else to hear her out here talking about a potential con artist until she knew for sure. "What did he find?"

"I'm not sure, but he's now motioning for me to give him the phone back. No, you'll just have to wait. I'm not done talking to her. Damn you, you bully."

"Just give me the phone, woman." Norris laughed when Amber called him a name. "Ouch! You have sharp little teeth. Just you wait until I get you—"

"Could we just focus, please?" Sarah didn't want to know what her brother planned to do with his girlfriend after they got off the phone. No doubt it would include the third in their trio, Brett.

"Sorry, sis."

"Did you find out anything about Strickler?"

"Only that there is no Richard Strickler, at least not one who'd fit the bill as a PR rep."

Her heart flip-flopped. "So I did find Lucky?"

"Maybe. What's this about the power?"

"It went out yesterday morning around eight, probably due to the storm."

"Negative. The power company has no reports of any outages in that area. I just checked."

"You can do that?"

"Oh yeah. They have this cool website now that you can plug in the address and it not only tells you whether the outage has been reported but also tells you when they'll have a technician in the area to fix it. The ranch isn't on the list."

That didn't make any sense. She turned toward the lodge but of course couldn't see it from where she stood. "Norris, did the family give you a physical description of Lucky?"

"They did more than that. They gave me Carol."

All the blood in Sarah's veins slowed to molasses. "Are you cheating on Amber?"

"No, you dimwit. Carol Dewitt came with the job. The family hired me *and* Carol. When we found out that we were both after Lucky, we decided to join forces."

She couldn't believe it. Carol? A PI? Shock, anger, and betrayal all fought for the dominant emotion. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"She asked me not to. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I haven't heard from her since yesterday afternoon. Do you know where she is?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing."

"She's not at the ranch?"

"No. She left yesterday." Sarah paused as she started to piece it together.

"Alone?"

Her heart hit the pit of her stomach. "With Strickler."

Norris remained silent. When he did make a noise, he growled deep in the back of his throat, which was never a good thing. "That bitch. I can't believe it. She was in on it the entire time. I should have known when she said she'd been following Lucky since Colorado that something was up."

Instead of Sarah feeling sorry for herself for not figuring out the connection sooner, anger burned in her senses. If she ever saw Carol again, she'd let her know exactly what Sarah Emerson thought of people who conned the innocent.

"What do you want me to do?"

"When can you get here? We need to regroup."

Sarah glanced down at her watch to see her time with her men quickly ticking away. "Can I just have—"

"You're up early."

She turned to see another Gideon walking toward her. Same black hair. Same mesmerizing blue eyes. Same large build.

Just how much had he heard?

"I have to go," she whispered into the phone before closing it to hang up on her brother. She swallowed and forced a sense of calm as she asked, "Just how many of you are there?"

His grin made her smile. They all shared that same crooked grin that made them sexy as sin.

He tipped his hat at her. "Wyatt Gideon."

“Sarah Emerson.” She held out her hand.

“It’s always nice to meet one of Barrett’s subs.”

Her world cracked, and she heard it. She felt it. Still, she couldn’t be upset that there had been others before her. It was the thought that there’d be others after her that had her on the verge of collapsing from the truth.

Wyatt grinned, unaware of the pain his comment had caused. He glanced around. “Looks like the storm finally broke. Good thing, too.”

She pushed her pain deep and feigned interest in the conversation. “Why’s that?”

“We’ll be able to get everyone out today. You can go back to your life, and we can go back to ours.”

Sarah ignored the pinch of disappointment that attacked her senses. It was Sunday after all, and according to the contract she signed, she would check out by noon today. She glanced at her phone, and her heart sank. How could it already be nine? That only left three hours before she lost her Gideon cowboys’ undivided attention.

She sighed and traced the trees with her gaze. Would she ever see these trees again? Would she ever feel the warmth and safety of falling asleep wrapped in Barrett and Chris’s arms again? Had she realized how little time they had left, she would have stayed in bed with them longer.

Would either Barrett or Chris remember her in a year? A month? A week? Or would she be just another satisfied guest leaving the ranch with a smile?

“Can I ask you a question?”

Wyatt shoved his hands in his pockets. “Sure.”

“How often do you have retreats here?”

“It started out just a couple times a year. Word got out and we moved it up to every quarter or so. Now we have a retreat at least once a quarter.”

“And do you all participate every time?” She tried to sound

disinterested as she prodded.

“Why not ask me what you really want to know? You want to know if Barrett and Chris participate in every retreat.”

She colored and smiled as she kicked at the snow around her boots. “Yes.”

“Both of them?”

She nodded as she kept her head down.

“When Chris is in town, he usually does. Barrett, always.” Wyatt glanced over at the tents. “But he’s never been an active partner before.”

“What does that mean?”

“He pinned you.”

“So?”

“He doesn’t do that. Barrett is the one who is usually pinned, not the other way around. He teaches the couple how to please each other and only participates to demonstrate how to do something.”

Sarah dropped her jaw as shock plunged through her body. “You talk about him as if he’s some sort of instructor.”

Wyatt blinked at her and lifted his brow. “That’s what he is, Sarah. That’s what we all are, even Chris when he’s here. We don’t open the ranch to these retreats just to have a fuckfest, pardon the French. The client comes first, so to speak. That’s what these weekends are all about—making sure the clients are satisfied when they leave. It isn’t like we actively participate in all the ménages that happen, but we will if the clients don’t choose each other or if they aren’t having fun.”

That didn’t make any sense. Barrett sought her out, as did Chris. He’d pinned her. So had Chris. They both focused on her and only her. Neither one made it sound like she should have been with anyone else.

But Chris did point out some of the other guests to her when they sat at the table that first night. And Barrett hadn’t looked very approachable while he stood scowling at the bar.

“Sarah, I know you like Barrett. Chris, too. Maybe too much. That’s why I’m telling you this. I’m not trying to be an asshole, but you need to know the truth.”

She swallowed thickly. “And that is?”

“Those boys are simply playing their role as your instructors. They are teaching you how to enjoy yourself so that you can take the lessons you’ve learned and apply them to a real lover outside of the ranch.”

“You’re wrong,” she whispered, the dread slowly creeping in like a dense fog. No. *No. No. No. No.* It couldn’t have all been an act. No one was that good.

“Have they pulled the whole ‘me Dom, you sub’ routine? Those two usually reserve that angle for the more challenging clients. You aren’t the first client to mistake their devotion as sincere. They are both very good at their job.”

Wyatt smiled kindly, and it broke her heart. She knew that smile. It was the same smile her friends wore whenever Sarah talked about Ryan. The same smile Norris wore whenever she talked about wanting in on the family business.

The pity smile.

Realization slapped her across the face and caused her heart to plummet to the dark depths of her sorrow. This entire weekend, everything that made her fall head over heels in love with two men, was all part of their job. She knew that, and that was what made it all the more humiliating.

She wanted to be angry. She wanted to unleash on Barrett. On Chris. Even Wyatt. It didn’t matter who. She wanted all the Gideons to know just how cruel their little role-playing could be.

“I suppose I should thank you for correcting my ridiculous assumption.”

“I’m really sorry that I had to be the one to do it. It’s Barrett’s job to make sure he keeps a strict line between business and pleasure since he pinned you first, and he failed. He crossed the line with you,

Sarah, and what's worse, so did Chris."

Not wanting to shed a single tear over this—after all, it was her fault for assuming either one of her weekend lovers had any feelings for her—she turned and headed back to her tent. She needed to gather her things before she left with the rest of the guests.

As she approached the tent, she heard Barrett's booming laugh, and it felt like a dagger shredding her heart. With a deep breath and a hard swallow to push her emotions down deep, she unzipped the tent and walked inside.

Barrett looked up from the woodstove and grinned wide, the gesture lighting up his eyes and making this all the more painful. He stood and pulled her all the way in before zipping the tent behind her.

"There's my girl."

"Don't," she whispered before she could stop herself.

He immediately stiffened and rested his hands on her shoulders as he studied her, concern flickering in his gaze. "Baby? What's wrong?"

She couldn't do this. Now that she knew with certainty that this was all an act, she couldn't do it. She had to get away. From Barrett. From Chris.

From the ranch.

"I have to go."

"Sarah?" Barrett wouldn't release the grip he had on her shoulders. "What is it?"

She didn't want to feel any worse than she already did. Instead of admitting her assumption, she simply smiled and shrugged out of Barrett's grasp. "I just have so much to do this week. I want to get a jump on it. I'm going to call a cab and have them take me to the airport."

Chris frowned as he stood up from the table and approached. "Why are you in such a rush to get out of here?"

"I'm going to try to catch an earlier flight out."

"But why?"

“Come on, beautiful.” Barrett reached for her. When she shied away, he stiffened. “Sarah?”

“You’re only mine until noon,” she said and smiled through the pain. “There are so many guests you have to get down to the road. I don’t want to be in the way.”

Chris grabbed her hand, and when she tried to pull away, he held her tighter. “I think we could manage.”

Sarah looked at him, and it broke her heart. Those hazel eyes would forever be burned into her memory. “Do you really want me to stay?”

“Stay until the rest leave.”

“Then what?”

He grinned. “Then I’ll take you wherever you want to go.”

“Shut up, Chris.” Barrett reached for her once more, compassion filling his expression. “Talk to me, baby. What’s got you ready to kick someone’s ass?”

She glared at him, and he recoiled. *If you only knew.* “The weekend is over, Barrett. I need to get back to my real life. You can stop pretending to be concerned about my well-being.”

“Who said anything about pretending?”

“Exactly,” Chris added, but said nothing more.

Sarah grabbed the bag she had leaning up against the wall of the tent and shoved all of her belongings into it before zipping it closed. “I’m ready.”

“Sarah, *goddamn* it, talk to me.”

“You were a very good instructor, Barrett Gideon. I’ll be sure to provide positive feedback on the client satisfaction survey.”

Her words wounded him. She saw it in the way his brow pulled together into a frown. “That’s all this weekend was to you?”

“Of course,” she lied, convincingly, she’d hoped. Norris would be so proud. “What more could it have been?”

He didn’t answer, and his silence hurt more than anything he could have said. He looked to Chris, who wore an equally pained

expression on his face.

“Thank you both for being such great instructors. You taught me how to love.” Her voice cracked, and she turned from them before the tears welled up in her eyes.

“Sarah,” Barrett said, then stopped.

“Why don’t you let me take you to the airport,” Chris offered and stood up. “Barrett will have his hands full with all the guests.”

Barrett and Sarah stood there, staring at each other. After an eternity of silence, Sarah turned away. “That’s great, Chris. Thank you.”

“I’ll take the Eldorado since we already have transportation arranged for the rest of the guests. Do you want to drive us down in the snowcat?”

Sarah slowed her motions as she waited for Barrett to say something to stop her. But he didn’t. Instead he grabbed his coat and slipped his boots on.

“Let’s go.”

Chapter 18

Barrett could barely breathe from the vise squeezing his chest like a malignant fist, growing, eating away at his very being. Why did she want to leave? What had changed from the loving woman he'd made sweet love to all night to the cool woman now sitting next to him? And why the fuck was Chris okay with all of this?

"Are you going to tell me the truth?"

Sarah blinked up at him, those wide brown eyes full of raw emotion, of undeniable pain. He knew her, knew when she hurt. And damn it, something had her hurting like hell. Chris, the callous son of a bitch, just sat there staring straight ahead and didn't say a goddamn word to talk her out of leaving.

She glanced down to her gloved hands as she wrung them in her lap. "I already told you."

"And I call bullshit. I know you, baby. I know when something has you tight as a drum."

"You only know what you've been able to learn in two days, Barrett. That's hardly enough to go on."

Goddamn it. He really hated her stubborn streak right now. Usually it turned him on, made him hotter than a two-dollar pistol, but right now it only pissed him off.

He pulled the snowcat up to the lodge and kept it running.

"Oh, good. Looks like Gus came through and got the driveway plowed. I'll get the rig warmed up." Chris jumped out and ran inside to get the keys to the Eldorado.

Sarah sat next to Barrett, and they both stared straight ahead to avoid looking at each other.

“Will you at least answer a question for me?”

She stiffened but nodded.

“Will I ever see you again?”

“Probably not.” She closed her beautiful eyes, and a telltale tear streaked down her face. She reached over and opened the door.

“Don’t do this. Don’t leave, not like this.”

She smiled through her tears, and his gut clenched.

“I have to. It was great, what we had, but it was all make-believe. We can’t live forever in this fantasy.”

“Why not?”

“Because I want both of you. That’s how good you two are. You made me fall for you both.” She laughed and wiped at her eyes. “I’m sure this isn’t the first time you’ve had to drop a weepy girl off after the weekend.”

The angst clawing at his guts flooded to his veins and pounded in his head. Why couldn’t he breathe? “Sarah, please. Don’t leave. We can talk about this.”

“Good-bye, Barrett.” She closed the door, and Barrett felt a void rip through his soul unlike anything he’d ever experienced. And he thought Gail’s dismissal would be his undoing.

Losing Gail was nothing compared to the thought of never seeing his sweet Sarah again. He sat in the snowcat until Chris pulled the Eldorado away and the taillights disappeared down the driveway.

Then he let out a cursing howl that shook the trees.

He’d failed her. Sarah Emerson, determined, defiant, needed a man who stood up to her, who took heated pleasure challenging her as much as she challenged him. A man who wouldn’t let her slip through his fingers. A man who’d swallow his goddamn pride and fall on bended knee to declare his undying love for her to make her stay.

He’d failed on all accounts.

Would Chris fail her as well?

* * * *

“Are you warm enough?” Chris reached forward and adjusted the temperature. Maybe he could sweat the answers out of her since she refused to talk to him, despite his many attempts.

Sarah turned it back down. “I’m fine.”

“Hardly.”

Ignoring his jibe, she turned and glanced out the side window. The further they drove out of town, the lighter the snow became. “Looks like the storm pretty much stayed hovering over the ranch.”

“Until this morning,” he muttered. “Now it’s following us.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“That your attitude is about as welcome as that storm.”

She crossed her arms under her breasts. “Screw you, Chris. You don’t have to be such an ass.”

“Don’t I? What else do you want me to be, Sarah? Do you want me happy that you’re leaving?”

“You certainly jumped at the chance to drive me.”

He tossed her a glare. “Now why do you suppose I did that?”

“Because you couldn’t wait to get rid of me.”

“Bullshit!” He gripped the steering wheel tight as he clenched his jaw. Damn Sarah and her pride. It pissed him off. He loved her defiant side on any other occasion, but right now he found it irritating and arousing at the same time, which pissed him off even more. “I’m not stupid, so don’t feed me a line and expect me to believe you.”

She shook her head and turned away from him, her arms tight in front of her. “I don’t give a shit what you believe.”

“That’s where you’re wrong, sweetheart.”

“Don’t call me that.”

“I can call you whatever I want for another forty-five minutes, baby. I’m still your Master until noon.”

She whipped around and even bared her teeth. Now that look was interesting, if a bit scary.

“Just stop it! We aren’t at the ranch, and you most definitely are

not my Master. Why are you doing this?"

The shine of fresh tears in her eyes wretched at his gut. He let out a breath and pulled his attention to the road as they both drew in several breaths. He hated seeing her so upset.

After several minutes passed, Chris turned to her. "Talk to me, baby. Tell me what's really got you so wound up?"

A tear streamed down her pretty cheek, and he hissed in a breath. "I just need to get away from you. You and Barrett."

Jesus Christ, that hurt. Was he that bad to be around? He swallowed thickly. "Why?"

"Don't make me say it."

"I'm not going to drop you off until you do. Sarah, baby, I need to know what's wrong. I can't help if I don't know what the problem is."

She thinned her lips as she narrowed a burning glare at him. "You're the problem, Chris. You and Barrett."

He recoiled, her words like a sucker punch to the gut. "What the hell did we do?"

"You're both very good at your job."

And then it clicked. "You seriously think this was just another job to us?"

"Wasn't it?"

Ah, hell. No wonder she thought he and Barrett were about as worthy as the gravel scattering the roads. "Maybe at first, but—"

"I don't want to hear any more."

"Like hell, lady." Chris growled. "You are going to listen to me."

"Say another word and I jump out of this rig."

That he didn't doubt, especially when she put her hand on the door and started to open it.

"Okay, okay. Not another word." Damn crazy woman.

Who had him just as crazy. Hell, he was just as close to jumping out of the rig, she made him that nuts.

Another thing he absolutely loved about her.

Maybe he should just tell her. He'd only told one other woman in

his life that he loved her—the mother of his child. And he hadn't seen her in almost three years.

After Tiffany, he never wanted to love again. It just wasn't worth it. Until Sarah.

He should just tell her. Taking in a breath, he then released it when he chickened out. What a goddamn coward.

For several minutes, he worked up the courage to tell her. He turned and took a breath, and then slowly let it back out.

She'd fallen asleep.

"Sarah," he started softly, so not to wake her. "I want to tell you something." He turned to her again to see she hadn't stirred. "This isn't easy for me to admit. Barrett thinks it's all a big joke, my weekend with Tiffany. I don't fall in love easily, but when I do, it's like an avalanche in my heart. I fall hard. I fall fast."

He turned to her again. She still hadn't stirred. She looked so peaceful that he just watched her as he drove her to the address she handed him. "I think it happened in the snowcat, but I can't be sure."

He hated to ramble, but as long as she stayed asleep, he could say what he needed to say and not fall over his words. "I love you, Sarah Emerson, more than life. Barrett is just as crazy about you. We don't want you to leave."

She hummed and curled into a little ball as she slept. Poor girl. He and Barrett exhausted her. It would take her days to recover.

And the men even longer.

"I—uh—just wanted you to know that. If you would have stuck around long enough, we would have been able to show you." He sighed as he pulled up to the house she'd asked him to drop her off at. Reaching over, he nudged her awake.

She sat up and blinked, first at him and then the house. The disappointment in her pretty eyes couldn't be denied. "We're here."

"That we are. Do you want me to get your bags?"

"I've got them." She opened the door and paused when he leaned over to take her hand.

“There’s something I want to tell you.”

“You’ve said enough, Chris. Good-bye.” And she closed the door.

* * * *

For the rest of the day Barrett busied himself with the task of getting the rest of the guests off the goddamn ranch. He couldn’t get them out of the glamping tents and down to the custom Hummer limos fast enough. The sooner they were gone, the sooner he could forget this weekend ever happened.

First Gail. Then Sarah. His luck with women really fucking sucked.

Chris returned and helped the rest of the Gideons load the luggage into the limos, oblivious to the turmoil twisting around in his cousin’s gut.

Only after the last limo pulled out and only the Gideons remained did Barrett finally turn to him. He wanted to break Chris’s neck for being so nonchalant about losing Sarah. But then again, Chris wasn’t the one in love with her.

Or was he?

Chris was acting even cooler than normal, which meant he was trying to hide something. Barrett knew him better than he knew his own brothers. Ever since they were both in diapers, he and Chris shared a bond he didn’t share with anyone else.

So he knew when Chris had something to hide. “Did you get Sarah to the airport okay?”

Chris shook his head. “She asked me to drop her at a bus station.”

“And you did?” The vein in his temple throbbed. When Chris grinned, Barrett wanted to rip out his guts. “Well?”

“Of course not. She wanted to go see her brother up there in Holston, so I drove her there. It didn’t take too much more time, and she even offered to pay for the gas.”

Jesus and Christ. “You didn’t make her do that, did you?”

He turned and walked into the lodge. "Damn, it's cold in here. You know, you should really think about getting propane heat, at least in the lodge. The Spanglers had a good point. Guests don't want to pay two thousand dollars to sleep in a tent."

Goddamn it. "You took her money, didn't you?"

"Would you calm down? She offered. Besides, gas prices are astronomical. If it's got you that upset, you can mail her a check."

Barrett was pissed enough to kill. "Chris, you'd better talk to me, damn it."

Chris slumped down in a chair next to the giant fireplace and picked up the poker, turned from Barrett, and jabbed at the barren fireplace. "Looks like we'll have to start a new fire. I can't even find an ember in here."

"Chris, if you don't take this seriously, so help me, I will end you."

His shoulders appeared to deflate as he stared into the fireplace. "What do you want from me, Barrett? She wanted to leave. It wasn't like you did anything to stop her."

Barrett growled deep in the back of his throat. No, he didn't do a damn thing to stop her. He just let her go. The best thing to ever happen to him and he just watched her walk away.

"Neither did you. Jesus, Chris. You practically rushed her out of here."

"It was my only chance," he said quietly.

"Chance for what?"

Chris suddenly stood and straightened, the concern and care in his demeanor gone. Determination set in his expression as his gaze hardened. "The reality of it is, she was a guest. We blurred the line between fantasy and reality. She signed a contract to spend the weekend here at the ranch and receive instruction on how to better her love life. I think we taught her quite a few things she'll find useful with her next lover."

He didn't want her to have a next lover. He wanted to be her lover

from here to eternity. Why didn't he stop her?

Chris turned away. "Maybe it's for the best."

"What's for the best?" Wyatt jumped into the middle of the conversation.

"Sarah left." Chris knelt down at the fireplace and wadded up paper.

Wyatt knelt down as well and stacked kindling on top of the paper. "Well, of course she did. All the guests left."

"And that makes Barrett a cranky boy." Chris grabbed the matches and lit the paper.

Bullshit. That made Chris just as unhappy. Barrett saw it in his cousin's sad eyes.

"Why? She was just another guest."

"That's where you're wrong," Barrett snapped.

Chris stiffened. "Barrett is just pissed that she left."

"So are you," he challenged.

Wyatt continued to stack kindling on the burning paper. "When is he not pissed?"

"I'm right here," he growled. "Quit talking about me like I'm not."

Wyatt glanced up at him. "Are you really that upset that she's gone? It isn't like we lead the kind of lifestyle that caters well to being in a relationship. I thought that's why you let Gail string you along for as long as you did."

Michael walked over and placed his hand on Barrett's shoulder. "I have to agree with Wyatt on this one. It's better for business if we aren't tied down."

Barrett snarled and turned from his brothers, straight into Chris's face. They exchanged knowing looks and turned away from each other.

Neither one of them wanted to hear that. Barrett wanted his brothers to support his want to have Sarah with him. He expected them to be on his side. Instead, they all tried to convince him that

living without her was for the best. He knew Chris felt the same. "I love her," Barrett admitted aloud for the first time.

Chris walked over to Barrett and rested his hand on his shoulder as he addressed the rest of the clan. "So do I."

Michael spiked an ebony brow. "Both of you? And did you two know that you'd both fallen in love?"

They looked at each other and gave a curt nod.

"Oh, shit." Wyatt stood up quickly and widened his eyes. "Why didn't one of you tell me? Oh, shit. *Shit. Shit. Shit.*"

Barrett frowned at him. "What difference does it make now? We weren't enough to make her want to stay." *Story of my life.*

"I may have had something to do with her leaving."

Barrett eased around a chair, his muscles tight, his senses on full alert. Chris joined him as they slowly started toward Wyatt.

"Care to elaborate?" Chris rasped.

Wyatt slowly backed away from them. "I had no idea you two actually liked her, let alone loved her. I thought it was all part of the role you were playing."

Barrett barely pulled in enough of a breath to speak. When he did, his voice rumbled through the room like thunder even though he kept the volume down. "What role? What the fuck did you do, Wyatt?"

"I told her that you two were her instructors and that you were both only doing your job."

"And she believed you?" He didn't want to admit to the hurt that clutched at his chest. He thought she trusted him. How could she give in to doubt that easily?

Unless it wasn't doubt at all. Maybe she really did only come to the ranch for a *fucking* good time. Maybe he was nothing more than the tool she needed.

It didn't matter. She was gone, and he was alone. Again. He and Chris stepped away from each other.

Wyatt went on. "Listen, man. I heard her talking on the phone this morning, all secret like. She said something and then asked what she

should do. If you ask me, she's hiding something."

Barrett didn't like one goddamn word that fell from Wyatt's lips. "When was she on the phone?"

"This morning, like I said. As soon as she saw me, she said she had to go and hung up. If you ask me, I think she was talking to her boyfriend."

"No one asked you," Chris growled.

And Barrett knew better. Sarah didn't have a boyfriend. She didn't even have any viable candidates.

Unless he really didn't know her, like she'd said.

It didn't matter. She left, so he did whatever he did when the women in his life up and left him. He worked. Chris would disappear back to his shack in eastern Montana and sulk until he got over her, just as he did after what's-her-name from Vegas.

"Michael, grab Matt and do a quick check around the perimeter. Maybe it's just a downed power line. Find that and we can call the power company to get our power back up."

"Barrett?" Michael looked at his brother, sympathy in his eyes.

Barrett Gideon wanted no one's sympathy. He ignored the agonizing twist in his chest as he turned from his brother to hide his expression.

He just needed to work and power his way through the pain. It got him through every breakup with Gail, and it would be what he needed to patch up the shredded muscle he called his heart. Maybe Chris would stick around long enough for them to share a drink later and laugh about it all.

As if on cue, Chris joined in. "Wyatt, start working on the schedule for the next couples' retreat. They've been lucrative, so why not move them up to twice a month."

Barrett nodded at Chris in thanks.

"Are you sure?" Wyatt waited for Barrett to answer.

"Damn straight. Get Strickler to get us that goddamn five-star rating so we can start advertising it."

Wyatt watched Barrett with keen eyes. “Shouldn’t we talk about this?”

“Talk about what, Wyatt? There’s nothing to talk about. I’m the fucking GM, so do what I say.”

He flinched, and the younger Gideons all exchanged glances. Barrett labored his breathing, but didn’t apologize even though he felt like a pile of shit for screaming at them. It wasn’t any of their fault Sarah left.

It was his.

Wyatt stepped forward. “But Sarah—”

“Is gone!” Rage mixed with blind fury consumed him and fueled his actions. He slammed his fist into the bricks encasing the fireplace, and the unquestionable snap of bones reverberated through the main room. An explosion of pain rocked his system, and he staggered back.

Great. Just fucking great. Now he had a broken hand to go with his broken heart.

Everyone fell silent. Only the sound of the pops and cracks from the wood as the flames licked them into embers filled the room as he held his hand, cringing in agony. He drew in several breaths to try and pull some of his anger back in and not puke from the excruciating pain.

His brothers looked at him as if he’d lost his mind. He turned away from them before he lost it completely.

Maybe he already had. Chris didn’t say a word as he led Barrett out of the room and to the mudroom. Barrett kept his expression carefully hidden as he allowed Chris to take him out of the house and into one of the vehicles. When he glanced up to make sure Chris was taking him to the hospital and not to drop him off a cliff, Barrett sucked in a stunned breath.

Chris’s eyes were filled with tears.

Chapter 19

Three weeks later...

Sarah sat at the computer, staring at the screen, focusing on anything but not throwing up again. She swallowed as her stomach twisted and informed her that it had other ideas.

“Do you want another cracker?” Amber lifted the box of soda crackers and shook them. “I heard it is supposed to ward off the nausea.”

Sarah shook her head and immediately regretted it. She closed her eyes and breathed in and out slowly until the nausea passed. Only then did she open her eyes to see Amber watching with concern on her pretty expression.

“Are you going to tell him?”

“Which one? I don’t even know who the father is.”

“Does that really matter? They both deserve to know.”

“I don’t know. I don’t want either of them to feel responsible.”

Amber took a seat next to Sarah and scooted her chair closer so she could lay her head on Sarah’s shoulder. “Sweetie, they *are* responsible.”

“So am I,” Sarah countered and swallowed again. She grabbed the box of crackers and pulled one out to munch on it in the hopes it would, indeed, ward off the nausea.

“You know, there are options.”

She pushed away from Amber and stood to get away. “There are no other options.”

“It could be a false positive, you know. You did have that burrito

for lunch the other day. I once had lunch at an all-you-can-eat in San Diego sushi bar and seriously thought I was either going to die or give birth, I ate that much.”

“It’s not a false positive.”

“Are you sure? It was a big burrito.”

“Am, I skipped my period, and my boobs are killing me.”

“Did you pee on that little stick?”

“Actually, yes.” She bit into the cracker and chewed. “Twice.”

“Oh, shit. Are you at least going to tell Norris?”

“And risk him killing them? Not on your life.” Another violent wave of nausea hit, and she held her breath as she closed her eyes. She slowly released the breath as she imagined herself wrapped in her sexy cowboys’ arms, Barrett threatening to gag her as she challenged him in any way possible while Chris whispered delicious words that had her ready to submit to them.

It helped. Somewhat.

“What’s wrong with you?”

Sarah jerked her eyes open as Norris walked into the room, his skeptical brown eyes directed on her. She darted her gaze to Amber and gave her a slight shake of her head. Amber huffed but said nothing.

“Nothing,” Sarah lied and smiled through another wave of nausea.

Norris narrowed his eyes and tilted his head as he studied her. “You’re green.”

“I have the flu.”

“No one else is sick.”

Sarah started to sweat. “I must have caught it from someone else.”

“You haven’t gone anywhere.”

“You don’t have tabs on me twenty-four-seven.”

“I know you never leave the house. You haven’t left since Chris dropped you at my doorstep. In fact you’ve barely moved away from that computer since you got here.”

“I’m trying to find a lead on Lucky.”

“You leave that to us.” Amber pulled the keyboard from Sarah’s hands. “In your condition, you have bigger issues to worry about.”

Sarah widened her eyes, and Amber slapped her hand over her mouth when she realized what she’d said.

Norris stilled as color crept up his neck. He labored his breathing as comprehension sank into his expression, hardening it to stone. “You’re pregnant.”

She couldn’t even say the word, let alone admit it. Instead she nodded, and Barrett’s voice echoed through her head.

Words, Sarah. I demand words.

“Yes,” she admitted in a shallow voice.

“I’m going to kill him. That son of a bitch. He’s dead. He’s more than dead. He’s going to wish that I’d killed him.”

“She doesn’t even know which one did it,” Amber commented before smacking her hand over her mouth once again.

“What!” Norris looked ready to kill.

Amber jumped up and stopped him from leaving the room by placing her hands on his chest. She looked up into his eyes. “Baby, look at me. Look at me! This is not your fight.”

“The hell it isn’t. She’s my baby sister. I’ll do more than kill them both. I know a few pig farms around here. They’ll never find the bodies.” Norris had grown redder than a fire engine and looked ready to carry out every threat. He clenched his teeth and tensed until every vein in his neck popped out.

“Brett! I need you.” Amber called out for her other lover, and tall, blond, and handsome Brett Fields came running in. He saw Amber struggling to hold Norris back and joined in the fight. Together they had him restrained, but barely.

“What the hell is going on?” Brett grunted as he almost lost his grip. Norris pushed at Brett, but with them both like linebackers, it didn’t do much more than irritate Brett.

“Calm down, Norris. What’s got you so tight?”

“The Gideons.”

Brett stared at him and waited. When Norris didn't elaborate, Brett shrugged. "Which ones?"

"Chris and Barrett."

"Are you pissed that they pinned your sister? Don't look so surprised. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out. She went to the GR&L to get over what's-his-name."

"Ryan," Amber and Sarah said in unison.

"Yeah, that guy. Anyway, they call it a couple's retreat for a reason. Sarah went there solo. They were simply doing their job."

Sarah recoiled and dropped her gaze. Knowing they'd had unprotected sex made her want to kick herself for being reckless, but the fact that what they'd shared—what she *thought* they'd shared—was nothing more than the two playing their role tore her apart. Tears stung her eyes, and she blinked to pull them back in.

She'd always hated those stories about secret babies and how the woman held it over the man. She had all the power. It wasn't fair to the man, and she sure as hell wouldn't do that to Barrett and Chris. Despite them only serving as her instructors, they'd both had a part in her getting pregnant.

When she told them, and she *would* tell them, she'd give them a choice on how involved they wanted to be in the baby's life. After all, the baby they'd created was just as much theirs as hers. She had no right to keep that from them. Chris already had one child he never got to see. She refused to take another from him.

Her heart fluttered at the thought of those two going to Lamaze classes with her. They'd be in the delivery room with her, holding each of her hands and telling her how much they loved her as she brought their child into the world. They'd raise their baby together and live happily ever after.

As a trio.

She squeezed her eyes tight as the tears threatened to break free. Her heart twisted as her chest constricted. Another wave of nausea hit, but she knew it had nothing to do with the little being growing inside

her.

She knew the truth. Living in the real world, fairy-tale endings like that didn't happen. More than likely one or both of them would send her a check every month and wish her the best of luck.

"Job or not, they got careless. Those son of a bitch prick bastards got her pregnant. On top of that, they hurt her. Just look at her."

All gazes turned to her, and she had no choice but to look up as they all watched a telltale tear stream down her face. Norris turned even redder.

Brett shook his head and hardened his expression, looking close to joining Norris in killing Barrett and Chris. Amber just looked at her in sympathy.

Norris snarled. "I'm going to kill me a few Gideons. No one makes my sister cry." "No, you're not." Sarah stood, and as she approached her hotheaded brother, he stopped fighting and waited. "You'll help me get Lucky before he drains Barrett and his brothers like he did your client. All of you are going to help."

"I'm not doing anything to help him." Norris crossed his arms in front of him.

"Then do it for me," Sarah pleaded. "This baby is a part of him, too."

"We'll get a DNA sample."

"No, we won't. This baby is both Barrett's and Chris's. Together."

Norris snarled again but said nothing.

"By refusing to help me, you're refusing to help your own niece."

He pushed away from Amber and Brett and glared at Sarah. "That's a dirty trick, sweet pea."

She shrugged. "I've learned from the best."

"How do you even know it's a girl?" Brett stared at her stomach as if it would start blinking a neon sign with the sex of the baby.

"I just do."

"I've read about this," Amber joined in. "When the mom refers to

the baby as a boy or a girl, they're usually right."

Norris shook his head. "But the thing looks like a grain of rice right now. You can't tell the sex of the thing until like the third or fourth month or something."

Sarah turned to Norris. "The *thing* you're referring to is your niece. I'm ready to throw up at the drop of a hat. I'm starving all the time but can't eat. I'm peeing every hour on the hour, and I'm hormonal. Do you really want to push me? Now, are you going to help me save her daddy's business, or am I going to have to do it alone?"

Norris stepped back slowly, as did Brett. Even Amber widened her eyes at Sarah's sudden growth of a spine.

"I have a feeling you'll have enough to do raising a child on your own. I'm in." Brett gave her a nod.

Amber smiled. "Me, too. But you won't be raising the baby on your own. Barrett will step up, as will Chris."

Seeing the hope in her eyes gave Sarah hope.

"They are good guys, Sarah. Before you write them off as nothing more than sperm donors, talk to them."

"I don't share Amber's blind faith," Norris growled. "I'm in, but we do this my way. I'll get Lucky, save the GR&L—for you, not them—and get my clients their money back. I'll even take down Carol as an added bonus."

"Good. I never liked her. Anyone that has that much ass fat injected into her lips can't be trusted. It takes *talking out of your ass* to a whole new level."

Sarah laughed at Amber's comment. Her family, how she loved them. "So you'll all help me?"

Norris smiled for the first time since walking into the room. "For you and my little niece, I'll steal the moon if I have to. Whatever it takes."

"I love it when you are so protective," Amber purred and wrapped her arms around Norris's waist. Brett moved in behind her and

sandwiched her between her men.

“I was the first to offer my services.”

“That you were. My heroes.”

Brett leaned in and buried his face in her neck as Norris went for the ear. Amber moaned when Norris’s hand disappeared beneath her T-shirt.

That was Sarah’s cue to leave.

Chapter 20

Chris sat in the high-back chair and stared at the flames licking the logs, consuming them without mercy, turning them to nothing but ash. He knew the feeling. Falling in love did the same thing to him.

Barrett sat in the matching chair across from him, the same solemn expression on his face, the same lost look in his eyes as he stared at the fire. He absently rubbed the cast covering his hand.

Chris had tried to call her cell at least a dozen times, each time stopping on the last number so the call wouldn't connect. He was such a chickenshit.

Why couldn't he just talk to her? He'd never been scared of anything, especially women. Why her? Why now?

He knew why. He'd never been head-over-heels, barely-able-to-breathe-without-her in love before.

He watched as Barrett rubbed at the cast on his left hand "Why don't you take one of the mountain of pain pills the doctor gave you?"

Barrett shook his head and Chris knew why. The pain he had racing through his system couldn't be dulled by drugs or alcohol. Only one thing could fill the painful void in his life. In his soul. Same as Chris.

Sarah.

The fire popped and cracked, filling the otherwise silent room with signs of life. He'd kept it dark, the only light from the fire dancing on the walls, just the way he and Barrett liked it these past few weeks.

"I don't think we should tell him, not yet. Look at him. He's a mess."

“But if we don’t tell him he’s going to blow a gasket.”

“He’s going to blow a gasket anyway, Matt. Maybe we should tell Chris and let *him* tell Barrett.”

“Do you seriously think it will make a difference who tells him, Wyatt?”

He listened to the Gideon brothers murmuring behind him and released a long breath. With a flick of his gaze, he looked to Barrett. The sooner they could get rid of Matt and Wyatt, the sooner they could get back to sulking.

Barrett stood and turned to face them. “Tell me what?”

“Nothing. We’ll just come back later.” Wyatt practically cried his response.

Matt dropped his jaw before snapping his mouth closed and clenching his teeth. “It’s far from nothing. You’d better tell him before Michael finds out and they gang up on us. With Chris here, you know he’ll take Barrett’s side and we’ll really be screwed.”

Chris stood as well. “So you’d best speak now before we find out on our own.”

Wyatt darted a nervous gaze between Matt and Chris. Finally, when Matt took a breath, Wyatt shook his head vehemently.

Matt started to speak. “It’s—”

“It’s about money,” Wyatt cut in and visibly swallowed as he darted his gaze to Barrett, waiting for his reaction.

Odd. Why would Wyatt want to talk to Barrett about the ranch’s finances? Wasn’t that Michael’s role? And why were both brothers looking ready to either puke or pass out?

Chris’s suspicious nature went into overdrive. “What about money?”

“Well, we’re sort of um...we don’t have, uh...”

“Spit it out before I beat it out of you,” Barrett growled, and Chris believed him. He still had one good hand.

“Go ahead.” Matt crossed his arms and nodded at Barrett, though speaking to Wyatt. “Tell him what you did. I can’t wait to see that

vein in his temple throb.”

Barrett had started to turn red. “If one of you doesn’t tell me what the fuck is going on, I’m going to kill you both.”

“Strickler disappeared,” Wyatt blurted out. “With our money.”

* * * *

No. No. No. No.

Barrett drew in a deep breath and held it until his lungs burned. It worked to calm him enough that he no longer wanted to tear his kin limb from limb. “And the rating?”

Wyatt paled. “Mystery guesting is required for a five-star rating, but he promised me he had that covered. Someone by the name of Carol was his inside source at the Hotelstar Union.”

“Carol,” Barrett ground out and shot a glare at Chris, who muttered a curse. “How do you like that?”

“He said it was guaranteed.” Wyatt threw his hands out at his sides.

“Meaning what, exactly?” Barrett didn’t know if he wanted to know the answer. Something told him whatever the answer turned out to be would give him more than a migraine and send the vein in his temple into a frenzy.

Wyatt swallowed hard and snapped his gaze to Barrett. “I checked into the rating system after he disappeared. They’ve never heard of a Richard Strickler, and they don’t have anyone by the name of Carol working as a mystery guest.”

“You should have checked into everything *before* paying him a quarter of a million dollars.” Barrett’s gut clenched and twisted as his fury damn near choked him. He gripped the back of the chair to stop him from jumping across the room and squeezing his brother’s goddamn neck until he turned blue.

“Barrett, this is bad.” Chris set his jaw and looked at him.

“I know it’s bad!” Barrett drew in several breaths to ease the

pounding in his temples. “Wyatt, please tell me you’re joking.”

“But he promised a thousand percent return on the money! We could pay off the ranch and buy new solar panels for the water troughs. All of our money troubles would be solved.”

Barrett knew his brother had a good heart. He meant well. But, so help him, he was going to rip that goddamn heart out of Wyatt’s chest and shove it up his ass.

“It’s not too late.”

A thousand lasers attacked his heart at the sound of the voice. He stiffened and looked at Chris, whose eyes had widened as he focused on the entranceway between the foyer and the main room at the sound of a familiar voice.

“Sarah,” Chris breathed out the heaviest sigh of relief. And Barrett felt it. Damn, how he felt it.

Slowly, carefully, he turned to the entranceway. All the blood in his veins simultaneously froze and then shattered from the shock.

Sarah Emerson.

He wanted to smile. To cuss her out for putting both him and Chris through torture. To pull her into his arms and never let her go now that she’d returned.

But he didn’t do any of that, mostly due to the giant standing behind her, his hands protectively on her shoulders. He stood and quickly hid his cast behind him as Sarah walked in with her brother and a female with a large black bag in her hands. Matt and Wyatt backed away from Barrett and Chris, a jointly concerned look on each of their faces as they kept glancing between Sarah and the men who loved her.

Stunning. That was the only word he could think of to describe her. Her crazy red curls, her liquid brown eyes, that beautiful smile. Everything about her held him prisoner as she approached him.

“Hello, boys.”

He watched her expression carefully. She smiled, but the shine didn’t reach her eyes. The corners of her lips shook as she fought to

keep her composure.

God, he'd missed her. He'd been to hell and back just thinking about her. He couldn't *stop* thinking about her. Her warmth. The sound of her laughter. How she loved to challenge him and that wicked glimmer in her eye when he challenged her right back.

He missed the way she said his name. How she screamed it in the height of her climax. How she whispered it in her sleep. He missed the feel of her body. Her lips. Her very essence. It was all he and Chris talked about these past three weeks.

Damn her. In the time since they'd been apart, she'd found a way to affix her soul to his, and, no doubt, Chris's. He didn't know where his ended and hers began.

"Sarah."

Her lower lip quivered, but only for a split second. If he didn't know every inch of her by heart, he would have mistaken it to be just a quick movement and nothing more. But he knew better.

She couldn't hide the pain in her expression, the sorrow clouding her pretty eyes. Seeing that pain, knowing he had to be the reason for it, cramped in his heart.

"Sarah," Chris whispered and took a step toward her.

"Sorry to break up the reunion." Norris cut in and stepped in front of Sarah, blocking her from Chris's approach. Chris stopped and let out a breath.

Norris nailed the oldest Gideon with such a violent glare as he crossed his arms that Barrett took a step back. Nothing good ever came from a man looking at another man like that.

He looked ready to rip Barrett to shreds, and he shared that murderous look as he turned on Chris. What did they do? Sarah left them, not the other way around.

"Norris, you promised," Sarah's sweet voice sounded from behind her mammoth of a brother. Both Barrett and Chris matched him in size and strength, but from the look in his eye, not in mutual hatred. And he had a disadvantage with one hand covered in a cast, although

Chris looked ready to protect Barrett if it came down to it.

They'd never had a beef with Norris Emerson. So why the sudden sworn enemy act?

The little vixen with hypnotic green eyes and long black hair waltzed over to Norris and wrapped her arm around his. "Norris, I warned you that if you stepped an inch out of line I'd have your balls on a platter by breakfast. Don't make me follow through with my threat, love. I'm Amber, by the way. So nice to meet you."

Barrett stood there and stared at this tiny thing with an English accent easily dragged Norris away. He still had no idea why Sarah had returned or felt the need to bring reinforcements with her. When he turned to look at her, the way her face contorted before she turned away ripped the air from his lungs.

Barrett swung his confused gaze to Chris, who nodded in return.

"Sarah, sweetheart. What's going on?"

"Not your concern, Chris." Norris thrust out his square chin. "This involves the Gideons who own the ranch, not the one who stops by to enjoy the benefits without consequences."

Chris stiffened. "What the fuck do you mean by that?"

Sarah walked up and rested her hand on her brother's behemoth arm. "Norris, please. Chris is as much a part of this ranch as the others."

"She's right," Barrett agreed without hesitation.

He audibly growled as his dark eyes assessed Chris and then Barrett. "Fine. Just stay the hell out of my way. All of you."

Amber looked at Norris. "Where should we set up?"

"The business office." When no one moved, Norris turned to Barrett and narrowed his ruthless gaze. "You do have a business office, don't you? Or are you as careless in business as you are in your personal life?"

That did it. He had no idea what Norris meant by that, only that he'd meant it as an insult. No matter what the reason, Barrett didn't deserve to have Norris invade his home and treat him like a piece of

shit.

But Chris started in again, beating Barrett to it. “What the hell is going on?”

“Not the sharpest tool in the shed, are you?”

Brother or not of the woman they loved, Barrett refused to allow Norris to talk to Chris like that. He doubled up his one good fist and took a step toward him. Sarah, his sweet, sinful Sarah, stepped between them and put her hands on his arms.

He immediately calmed. Her touch always had that power, not just to soothe, but to instantly heat him. Just like that his entire body hardened, his dick swelling with a sudden, demanding need.

“You need to listen to my brother.” She flashed him a glare close to matching the viciousness in her brother’s eyes. But then Chris walked over, and her gaze softened as she kept her focus on him. “He has information about Strickler, information you need to hear.”

He’d never seen this side of Sarah before. Something in her had changed. She seemed softer in her appearance. Her rosy skin glowed like an angel.

He’d always found her beautiful, but something about her at that moment had him captivated, unable to pull his attention away. He reached up and touched her cheek, amazed at how soft her skin felt.

She closed her eyes and leaned against his touch. When Chris touched the other side of her face, she shuddered against their touch.

Then in her next breath, she jerked back as if they’d burned her. But then her eyes flooded, and she turned from them both.

He couldn’t take his eyes off her. Something had changed, something he couldn’t place. And her emotions were all over the place. She acted as if...

Nah.

Barrett dismissed that thought. She would have told him if she were pregnant. And for some reason, the thought of him not being a father bothered the hell out of him. He wanted a family. He’d realized that when Gail told him she was pregnant with Tom’s child. From that

moment on he couldn't stop thinking about what it would be like to father a child.

And how would Chris feel about it if it were true? He already had a kid, apparently. Would he want another?

Chris turned to Norris. "So what's this all about?"

"Business office," Norris repeated.

Barrett widened his stand, ready to go toe-to-toe if he had to. No one pushed him around. "Not until you tell me what is going on."

"Fine. You really want to know? Here it is. Nice and simple. I'll use small words so you'll understand."

Barrett doubled up his fist. Fuck it. He was going to kill Norris. Before the night ended, the man would be nothing but a bloody pile of flesh and bone. His need to hurt Sarah's brother pulled him forward toward his target. Chris took a step in unison with Barrett.

Sarah spoke up and drew both of the men's attention to her. As soon as Barrett looked at her his rage settled into a simmer. Chris slowed as well.

"Strickler's name is really Lucky, at least that's how he's known in the game."

Chris frowned. "Game? What game?"

"He's a con artist. You've been conned, Gideons. All of you have. There is no five-star rating."

Barrett slammed his glare into Wyatt and held it there. "Tell me something I don't know."

Sarah then darted her gaze to Norris, who nodded at her to continue. She drew in a deep breath and dropped the bomb. "We've been tracking him. He led us here, to your ranch."

Barrett stiffened and jerked his attention to her, searching for the truth. She looked at him, unfaltering, and waited. Comprehension slowly sank in like lava moving down the mountainside, boiling in his veins and setting his suspicions on fire.

"What the hell?" Chris tilted his head as Barrett watched him struggle to understand. Slowly, painfully, the comprehension sank

into Chris's expression. "You knew about this?"

Sarah nodded.

"And you never..." Chris visibly swallowed and shook his head. "Not once. You had all that time with us and you never thought to bring it up?"

"I'm sorry, Chris."

He shook his head and stumbled back. "Jesus Christ. How could you, Sarah? How could you do that to Barrett? To us?"

No way. No *fucking* way. The truth hit Barrett with a wave of nausea so intense he had to swallow several times to stop from puking. "You knew. You knew he was going to do this, and you never said anything."

"That isn't the whole story."

"But it's the truth."

She didn't deny it, and his last thread of trust he had in her snapped like a brittle twig in high winds.

"I...I'm sorry."

A hardness took over, encasing his heart. He'd trusted her. He'd fallen in love with...what? A con artist? A liar?

One in the same.

That thought clawed at his gut like a feral beast. He was an idiot for falling for her little act. No more. She'd fooled him once, but he'd never let her close enough to fool him again.

Sarah's lower lip trembled, and he almost gave in. But then he saw the utter lost look of devastation in his cousin's eyes, and it hardened his heart. The thought of what she did, lying to them just to get close enough to track Strickler, or Lucky or whatever the hell he was called, damn near broke him. Hell, it damn near broke them both.

Fuck that. It did break him. He'd never trust another woman again. From this day forward he'd play the field, just like Chris, and send the women packing as soon as he started developing the hint of any feelings.

He couldn't deal with this right now. As he always did, he pushed

his feelings deep into the black abyss he called his soul and focused on work.

Norris sighed and pinched the skin between his eyes. “Let’s solve one problem at a time. First Lucky, then you three can deal with your issue.”

They had an issue? Well, aside from the obvious—she’d lied to them and came back to rub it in their gullible faces.

Amber stepped forward. “Let’s go over what we know about Lucky.”

“He won’t be so lucky if I get my hands on him,” Chris growled.

“You can have what’s left of him,” Barrett added.

With a pleasant smile, Amber set the black bag on the floor at her feet as she looked at Barrett and then Chris. “Once we get the money back, you two can do whatever you want with him.”

Chapter 21

Michael burst into the room just then, his gaze narrowing in on Wyatt as soon as he spotted him. “Where’s the money?”

Wyatt shook his head. “Michael, I—”

Without warning, Michael threw a punch and connected it square on Wyatt’s jaw, sending him stumbling backwards. He charged and grabbed Wyatt by his shirt collar, and connected another punch, this time to Wyatt’s cheek.

Barrett nodded for Matt to grab his twin before he killed Wyatt. Matt held Michael back, just barely.

“I’m sorry, Michael. I thought I was doing the right thing.”

Michael looked ready to kill Wyatt. Chris could relate. “Can the bullshit, Wyatt. Tell me the truth. For once. What happened to all our money? Checking. Savings. Even the two CDs you didn’t know about. Gone. I just got a call from the bank. We’ve got checks bouncing left and right. The bank just put a freeze on all our assets. What did you do?”

“It wasn’t just me!” He pointed to Matt, not hesitating to sell out his own blood.

Matt’s jaw dropped. “You coward. I told you not to give him those deposit slips.”

Michael turned redder than Chris had ever seen him. He looked more like Barrett than his twin at that moment. “Are you insane or just fucking stupid?”

“Congratulations,” Norris growled. “You’ve given Lucky a golden ticket into all your accounts.”

Barrett muttered a curse and shook his head as he lowered his

attention to the floor. "Goddamn it. We've been conned. I can't believe it."

"What's wrong with giving him deposit slips? It's just money coming in." Matt's irritation echoed in his voice and shocked the hell out of Chris.

Chris stepped back, surprised at Matt's sudden change in attitude. At the first sign of trouble, Matt would usually be the first one to find a way to stick his head in the sand and ignore his problems. He'd been that way since they were kids.

Norris barked out a curse. "Unbelievable. How in the hell have you guys kept this ranch afloat? It's a good thing you have Sarah on your side. I'd just as soon let you go under."

Chris blinked and glanced over at Sarah, barely restraining his want to rush to her, pull her into his arms, and never let her go. He looked away and forced himself to keep his attention on anything but her.

Barrett didn't do as good a job. He made his want to rush to her side no secret and even acted on it. Until Norris stepped between them and even snarled at Barrett. "Try touching her, Gideon. I dare you."

"And who's going to stop me? You?" Barrett took another step.

"Perhaps you boys can simply whip them out and measure," Amber quipped. "Honestly. We'll never get a bloody thing done with all the pissing matches going on."

All the men hung their heads, even Matt and Wyatt.

Damn. She was good.

Norris went on with his explanation. "He used the deposit slips to create his own checks—he just needed something with your routing and account numbers. More than likely, he wrote checks from one account to another, one to the other, and so on, so it looked like you had more money than you really did. He then wrote checks to himself and drained all your overinflated accounts, leaving you not only broke, but in the hole with the bank. It's one of the oldest games in the book and Lucky's MO."

“Looks like Lucky struck again.” Amber shrugged and ran her fingers through her long hair. “I just hope you won’t have to declare bankruptcy like the last family he hit.”

Chris reached for Wyatt, fully intending to kill him. Sarah jumped in front of him and, deceptively strong for her size, stopped him. He pushed her away before realizing what he’d done, not willing to trust another thing from her, including her touch.

She staggered back, her eyes wide as they swelled with tears.

Norris grabbed Sarah and pulled her to him, his cold glare on Chris. “Do that again and I will kill you, *Gideon*. Do you understand me? You will never, ever touch my little sister again. That goes for the both of you. You’ve done enough damage.”

Chris cringed but didn’t deny it. He couldn’t. He saw the pain in Sarah’s eyes, the stunned look on her pretty face. Instead of facing her, he turned away to look at his dysfunctional family.

Barrett shook his head. “I failed.”

Oh, shit. He knew that look in his cousin’s eyes. He blamed himself for this. “No way, cuz. Do not put this on you.”

“GG left me in charge. We’ve lost everything.”

“We’re finished,” Matt whispered and released Michael before sinking down in a chair, now as pale as Wyatt. “Broke. That’s it. It’s over.”

Chris could barely see straight. Between his need to kill Wyatt and the blow of Sarah’s betrayal, he only saw red.

“You’ve sent this ranch into bankruptcy, Wyatt.” Chris had to swallow several times to stay in control. If he weren’t so preoccupied with Sarah, if he weren’t so hell-bent to stay between her legs, he would have picked up on what Strickler had up his sleeve. On Sarah’s involvement, whatever that was. If GG were still alive, he wouldn’t have let it get this far.

If only, if only.

“I’ll find a way to get the money back.”

“Bullshit!” His hands ached from the way he kept his fingers

curled so tight his short nails dug into his palms. He almost drove his fist through the wall, he was that pissed. Barrett and he could have matching casts.

None of that mattered. GR&L was ruined. The ranch had been in the family for three generations. If GG weren't already in the ground, this would have put him there.

"Chris, calm down." Sarah tried to reach for him, but he jerked away. Never again would he let her melodic voice comfort him, or her soft touch soothe him.

Or the promise of her love blind him.

Sarah shifted, her gaze more determined as she reached over, grabbed Chris's hand, and held it in hers. "Stop being such a prick. I'm here to save your ass, but the way you're acting makes me want to knock you on it instead."

He tried to take his hand back, but she squeezed his fingers in hers. Hard. When she pinned him with a glare that made her look like she wouldn't hesitate to break his hand if he tried to pull it back again, he let her keep it.

"I can still fix this." Wyatt, always looking for an angle, still had his head so far up his own ass he couldn't see the writing on the wall.

Chris shook his head and felt much calmer than he expected. He refused to believe it had anything to do with Sarah's hand in his.

Chris spoke up. "You can't fix this, Wyatt. Your precious five-star rating won't do a damn thing for the ranch. Don't you get it? It's what Barrett has been saying all along. People don't book weekends at a Montana ranch to be waited on. They come here for an adventure."

Sarah spoke up. "That's why I came to the ranch."

"You came here looking for Lucky," Chris reminded her, not bothering to hide the bitterness in his tone.

She squeezed his hand. *Really* hard. He winced when a few of his knuckles popped. "I came here looking for an adventure. I may have come here looking for Lucky, but I didn't find him. I found you and Barrett."

Damn her. *Goddamn* her. How did she do that? The resistance he'd built around his heart wavered. But then he thought about their current situation and how she'd had a hand in it. That thought drove the barrier back up around his heart with a painful vengeance.

"No offense, Sarah, but you really have no idea what's going on. None of you do." Wyatt didn't win any points with that comment.

Chris tried to step between them, but Sarah pushed him aside and challenged Wyatt without a second thought. Oh yeah, she was pissed.

"Is that so? And I suppose you do?"

Wyatt colored but didn't say anything.

"You don't, but you should. After all, you're responsible for the PR for this ranch, aren't you?" She bunched up her fists and brought them to her hips.

Oh yeah. Definitely pissed.

"Yes," Wyatt answered in a small voice. "Not that it's anyone's business."

Norris stiffened as he moved toward Wyatt. "That's where you're wrong. This *is* my business. I know a thing or two about the right way to pull a con. Lucky's good, I'll give him that. A bit old school, but still good."

"Your point?" Wyatt growled.

"My point is, I'm better."

Chapter 22

“She’ll want to see me. Trust me.”

Was that Barrett?

“You’re a Gideon. Why would I trust any of you?”

That was definitely Norris.

Sarah blinked awake and sat up. She glanced at the clock and dropped her jaw. She’d been asleep for hours.

Damn, being pregnant really took it out of a girl.

She jumped off the bed and threw open her door. Wyatt stood there next to her brother. They both turned and looked at her. She tried to not look disappointed that it wasn’t either Gideon she wanted to see.

“Hey, Wyatt.”

“Hey, Sarah.” He stepped toward her, but Norris pushed himself between them. Wyatt stopped and looked at Norris, then Sarah.

“Give it a rest, Norris. Your bodyguard act is really starting to wear on me.” She pushed him aside and stepped into Wyatt’s arms.

And burst into tears. Damn her hormones, but it felt so good to be held by a Gideon again, even if it wasn’t one of the ones she wanted. His smell, so familiar, yet different, teased her memory. And the way he hugged her—it wasn’t like a lover. It was more like a big brother. It made her want to never let go.

She finally broke their embrace when she regained her control and invited him into the room. With a glare at Norris, she slammed the door in his face.

Wyatt looked around and nodded. “I’m shocked that Barrett put you up in this one. This is his room.”

She stopped and traced the walls with her gaze as she wiped the tears from her eyes and cheeks. Vivid memories of how Barrett had snacked on her flesh and driven her into a wild orgasm right there on that bed had her flush with excitement.

“So it is. Why is that such a big deal?”

“Barrett never lets any of the subs into his room. He must really have it bad for you. And the way Chris was ready to go through your brother to get to you...They both have it bad.”

She closed her eyes against his comment. She didn’t want to be just another one of the subs. She wanted to be a lover—their only lover. Their wife. The mother of their child.

At least she got to be the last one. One out of three wasn’t that bad.

“Why are you here?” Sarah looked at Wyatt.

He stared back. “Are you going to tell them?”

She stilled. “Tell them what?”

“Sarah, it’s obvious that you’re pregnant.”

Her jaw dropped clean to the floor. “How did you know?”

“I didn’t, not until now.”

Now she was pissed. “That was a dirty trick.”

“Do you know which one it is? The father, I mean.”

She shook her head. It didn’t matter to her. They were both the father. They’d all created this child together.

“Why haven’t you told them already?”

“I’m waiting for the right time.”

He shook his head and let out a long sigh. “There is no right time. Barrett has lost everything, Sarah. *Everything*. And Chris is at a loss on how to help.”

“We can still catch Lucky. Norris said his trail is still warm. Amber is really good at tracking. She’ll find him. She’ll get your money back.”

He laughed but didn’t have an ounce of humor in his tone. “You don’t get it. That isn’t what has Barrett ready to give up and Chris

ready to join him. Neither one of them are the same man since you. They both sit in the dark and just stare at the fire. I've never seen either one of them like this. I thought their infatuation with you was just so Barrett could get over Gail, and Chris just played along. Now I know better. Had I known how they really felt, I wouldn't have driven you away."

The sadness in his voice shocked her. Wyatt looked so lost, so gloomy. Those stunning blue eyes swirled with such pain it made her ache.

"What can I do? They don't love me, Wyatt. It was all part of their role."

Wyatt brought that striking gaze to her. "If you believe that, *really* believe that, then you are just as blind as they are. Love them, Sarah. I know you do. Tell them. They both need saving a hell of a lot more than the ranch does."

"What about you? How would you feel if Barrett and Chris and I...If a miracle happened and we all did end up together, would you and the others be okay with that?"

He laughed as he went back to the door and rested his hand on the knob before turning to her. "Sarah, you've always been their girl. It was never to fulfill a contractual obligation."

"What about you?"

He glanced back over his shoulder. "What about me?"

"Have you ever fallen in love with a guest?"

He laughed. "A guest, no."

"But you've been in love."

"Love doesn't pay the bills. It doesn't put food on the table or keep the lights on. Love doesn't do anything but leave you broken and bitter. Seeing Barrett and my cousin go through this only reaffirms my belief."

She stared at him, stunned into silence. What happened to him to make him so bitter about love?

She wanted to be angry, but instead she only felt sadness.

Sympathy. Who could live like that?

A knock at the door and then Norris's voice from the other side broke them of their intense conversation. "Wrap it up, boys and girls. It's time to move. Meet me downstairs."

Sarah kept her gaze on Wyatt. "You won't tell them, will you? About the baby, I mean."

He opened the door and turned to look over his shoulder. "If you want to pull the secret baby thing, that's your choice. It's a shitty thing to do, but it's your choice."

"I'm not doing that. I told you that I'm just waiting for the right time. Let's get your money back and save the ranch. Then I'll tell them."

"And if we don't save the ranch? Then what? Will you tell them then? Or will you just leave again?"

She swallowed down the reality of the situation. Despite what he thought, she knew the truth. Barrett didn't stop her. Chris gave her an escort. Bottom line, they both just let her go. If they'd loved her, they would have stopped her.

"Let's go." Wyatt thrust open the door and stormed out.

She waited until she heard him pound down the stairs before keeping a safe distance behind him, following him into the business office. Everyone had gathered there, all the Gideons and Norris and Amber. When she walked into the room, everyone looked up—everyone except the sets of eyes she wanted to see.

But they felt her. Both Barrett and Chris stiffened and kept their gaze focused on the papers on the round table in the center of the room. She walked in and over to Amber, keeping a safe distance from them.

Matt watched her carefully, his gaze narrowing as he listened to Wyatt whisper something into his ear. He then gritted his teeth and joined his twin and stopped, his gaze never leaving Sarah.

"What's got you so pissed off?" Michael asked Matt.

Matt turned and shot Sarah a glare meant to burn her on the spot.

She dropped her gaze to her socked feet. Where were her shoes?

She looked up and then over to Barrett and Chris. They both had their gazes on her, but when she caught them looking at her, they both quickly looked away, and their dismissal hurt more than the pain of knowing she'd never be anything more to either of them than the mother of their child.

"What are you two up to?" Norris asked as he looked at the twins.

Michael continued to watch his brother. Matt nodded. Michael frowned. Matt widened his eyes and stared at his brother. Michael then dropped his jaw. Matt narrowed his eyes and gave him a slight shake of his head. Michael lifted his brow. They seemed to have an entire conversation without ever talking.

Amber stood up from behind her laptop. "I've heard of this. It's called twin talk. They can read each other's thoughts at times. They even have their own language. You boys are driving me to drink. Is there any whiskey?"

"I'll take a tall glass, no ice." Norris tapped at the keys on his own laptop. He didn't even bother looking up as he barked out his order.

Wyatt moved to the door. "I'll get it. Anyone else?"

The rest of the Gideons spoke up.

"I'll just bring the bottle," he said and disappeared out of the room. He then returned with a bottle of Jack and a handful of glasses. After filling them, he handed them to everyone, including Sarah.

She looked down at the amber liquid and sighed. If she drank it, she could hurt the baby. If she didn't, she'd have to explain why. She looked over to Barrett, who pushed his drink away. With a relieved sigh, she did the same. Chris drank his and then grabbed his cousin's to consume.

After taking a long drink, Norris turned back to the plans. "I've had tracers on your account. Once Lucky struck, I knew he'd made his move. I traced the withdrawals back to his account."

Michael stiffened. "How? You don't have access to our account."

"Now why do you think I paid Sarah's fee for the weekend via

wire transfer? Wire transfers aren't as safe as you think. I had your routing number and your account number. It was easy to piggyback on that transfer and have open access to everything. Why else do you think I sent her here? I needed a way in."

Sarah glanced over to Barrett and then Chris. Both of their spines went ramrod straight as they jerked their attention to Norris.

Barrett spoke. "You sent her in as bait? Did she even know that you set her up?"

Norris shook his head and went back to the plans. "She knows now. So, as I was saying, if we dangle a better deal in front of him, he'll be too greedy to turn it down. He's feeling awfully cocky now that he thinks he's gotten away with another scam."

Barrett wouldn't let it go. "But she didn't know about it ahead of time?"

Norris lifted his gaze to Barrett. "I said I needed a reason in. Are you a little slow?"

Sarah knew that look on Barrett's face, that hardness in his eyes. He was on the verge of exploding.

"You used her," Chris growled, an equally inflexible look on his face.

"She understood the reasons behind it."

Sarah went to her men. She knew both of them well enough to know when they'd reached their boiling point. When she put one hand on each of their shoulders, they both relaxed in their chairs and labored their breathing in unison.

Chris then shrugged out of her touch and leaned forward. "Tell me about the better deal."

Barrett reached up and held her hand with his. They both watched Chris. He had to be hurting.

Sarah stepped back. Her lips trembled, but not from sadness. She was done with Chris dismissing her, tossing off her touch as if she were nothing more than an annoyance.

Her hormones took over, and she let them have full force. Barrett

knew better than to intercede and even stood up and moved away from the imminent blow up.

She spun Chris around in his chair and nailed him with a finger poking at his chest. He'd hurt her, almost destroyed her, by thinking the worst of her.

By damned, it stopped here.

"On your feet."

He looked at her, shock and something else swirling in his eyes. "Excuse me?"

"Unless you want me to kick your ass while you're sitting down, get on your damn feet. Now."

"Sarah—"

She poked his chest again. Hard. "Now."

"I'd listen to her. I don't think she's fooling around."

"Shut up, Barrett."

Barrett chuckled as his response. "This ought to be good."

Chris slowly rose to his feet in front of her, and everyone else spilled away as he did. Ice lurked behind that hazel gaze as it grew to a glare. She hoped that she knew him well enough, knew that it would thaw as soon as she admitted her feelings to him.

Sarah pulled in a deep breath as she stared into the depths of his eyes. She wanted to run away and hide as those eyes bore into her soul, but her hormones were in full swing and fueled her words.

If he didn't love her, then fine. He could go back to his life as an alpha male. Dom Extraordinaire. But she'd be damned if she allowed him to treat her like another one of his subs.

She'd still have Barrett, and she knew he'd take on the world to love and protect her. But she wanted them both. She'd fallen in love with them both and to only have one felt like half of a whole.

She had to crane her neck to look into his eyes, but that didn't deter her. She poked his chest furiously. "How dare you, Chris Gideon."

"What did I do?" He stared back at her, taken aback at her sudden

rage. To tell the truth, so was she.

All of the disappointment of her men not stopping her from leaving, not coming after her, came back with a vengeance. The hurt and betrayal of how easily they'd both dismissed her tore at her heart. The knowledge that they were quickly becoming enemies instead of lovers had her close to collapsing.

Everything exploded at once and erupted as she attacked him. "You are running scared. You can't handle one little woman who stands up to you. I refuse to obey you, and that is more than you can handle. Everyone else in this world follows your every command, and I won't, and that terrifies the hell out of you."

"Sarah—"

"I'm not done!" she screamed and poked his chest again. This time he stumbled back. "Not every woman you fall in love with is going to cut you out of her life and keep your child from you."

He frowned at her but said nothing.

She marched forward and continued her assault. "You are being a big, selfish baby, Chris Gideon, and I, for one, refuse to raise two of you. Now man up or I'm raising this baby without you."

"Wow," she heard Matt mutter.

"You don't think she will?" Michael asked him.

"Oh, I'm sure she will, but I've never heard threats like that come from a woman. It's like she's channeling Barrett or Chris or something."

"Well, she is carrying a little mini Gideon in there. Maybe he's doing it."

"It's a little scary if you ask me." Wyatt joined in on the commentary. "And now there will be another Gideon running around."

"That's even scarier," the twins said in unison.

"It's a girl," Sarah corrected and let out a weak shudder, all of her frustration gone.

"It's a baby." Barrett laughed and stepped behind her to wrap her

in his arms. “It’s our baby. Yours, mine, and even dumbass’s there, who has apparently lost his ability to speak.”

Chris paled, and then his mouth fell open. He snapped it closed, but it only fell open again. He then paled further.

Sarah collapsed against Barrett’s embrace, her strength spent. She looked up at Chris as he swayed and put his hand on the table to steady himself.

“You’re...I’m...We’re...You’re...We’re going to have a baby. A little Gideon. Oh, Christ. Oh, Sarah!” He laughed like a madman. When tears brightened his already brilliant eyes, Sarah sucked in a breath. She’d never seen a grown man cry.

Until now.

Chapter 23

Sarah wished she felt as brave as Amber sounded. She didn't know how. She didn't know when. Yet somehow Amber and Norris had managed to not only track Lucky down, but had a meeting with him—all in the same day.

Amber sat at the table with Lucky, her back straight, looking as royal as a queen as Norris and Sarah stood behind her, hands crossed in front, staring straight ahead. While Amber dressed in head-to-toe cream silk and fur, Sarah and Norris dressed in expensive black suits and had sunglasses on, just as any movie star's bodyguard would wear.

"Just mirror me," Norris had told her before the meeting. "Do what I do and nothing else. If there is trouble, you get behind me and stay there."

No problem there.

Both Barrett and Chris made Norris promise that nothing would happen to her. Great. Now she had three overprotective men watching her every move.

"Tell me again why you need my help?" Lucky grinned, and Sarah noticed how much he really did resemble a weasel. Beady little black eyes were dwarfed sitting too close together on top of that enormous eagle beak of a nose. He wore his brown hair slicked back in a ponytail.

Her hatred for the man made it hard for her to remain calm. She loathed him. With the dark sunglasses, she could watch him without him knowing. Her glare rested on him, and she quickly memorized everything about him, just in case he somehow slipped away. She

wouldn't rest until she had every last dime he'd stolen back into the rightful hands.

He'd successfully driven family after family into bankruptcy and was about to do it again with her own family. And the Gideons were her family now.

You don't fuck with family.

"Calm down," Norris whispered. The earpiece she wore picked it up as if he'd whispered it right in her ear. "I can see you shaking."

"I'm pissed," she whispered back without moving her lips. "And I have to pee."

"Again?"

She slowly turned her head and looked at him.

When Lucky spoke, Sarah jerked her attention back to the meeting.

"As you know, Norris and I joined forces with Brett a few years back, and together we three run *The Roadhouse*."

"I've heard a few things about *The Roadhouse*. Nice joint. Too bad it's so small. It has potential."

"My thoughts exactly. We need to expand. The Gideons have done an adequate job of representing themselves in the BDSM and alternative love community, so Norris and I decided to pay them a visit. We've been after the ranch for a while now, but those stubborn brothers wouldn't sell. But now..."

Lucky leaned forward and lifted his wine to his little, thin weasel lips. "Tell me what it is you need me for."

Amber sat with her back to Sarah and Norris, but from Lucky's reaction, she must have done something intriguing. His mouth fell open, and he started to visibly pant.

"It seems the Gideons have gotten themselves into a bit of financial trouble."

The way he eyed Amber, like she was his next meal, made Sarah feel like *she* needed a shower. She could only imagine how Amber felt.

“Are you asking me for money, sweetheart?”

Sweetheart? Sarah loved it when Barrett and Chris called her that. But to hear it fall from this man’s lips gave her the serious creeps.

“Deep breaths,” Norris whispered to her. She followed his instruction.

“I need a sizeable loan to pay them off and then get them off *my* ranch. I’m not about to have those brothers and their pesky cousin stick around. They’ll get in my way and stifle my creativity.”

“I’ll bet. So why tell me all this?”

“When I asked around on who had the means to front me that kind of money, your name came up.”

Lucky took it all in and studied her after she fell silent and waited for his response. “It did, huh?”

He didn’t sound too convinced. Sarah dared a glance at her brother, but he seemed cool and collected, so she tried to relax, but between her nerves and the need to relieve herself, she was approaching peed pants stage.

He kept his gaze intent on her, studying her, scrutinizing her. “Carol warned me about you. She said you flirt with men to keep them distracted. Nicely done, by the way. Listen, I know you’re working for that family from Colorado, but here’s the deal. They were already going under when I got there. I just did them a favor and helped get them there faster. I only go after businesses already on their way out. I simply cut their pain and suffering short. I’m a goddamn hero.”

“Charming fellow,” Sarah whispered.

“Fucking asshole,” Norris retorted.

“Did Barrett hire you? Is that what this is all about? Or maybe that nosey cousin? Is this some pathetic attempt to get their money back?”

“I’m afraid you aren’t listening. We aren’t here to help the Gideons. Quite the contrary. They are cutting into *The Roadhouse’s* clientele and thus our profits.”

“They’ll be declaring bankruptcy by spring. I put word out that

they were selling the names on the guest lists.”

“Were they?” Amber lifted her wine to her lips.

“Hell no. But I needed to find a way to drop the attendance at those couples’ retreats. They were making too much money. I can’t very well drive them under when they have something keeping them afloat. It seems I’ve done you a favor as well.” Lucky stood and grabbed his suit jacket off the back of the chair.

“Please, you haven’t even heard me out.”

“I want to help you, sweetheart. I really do. But the Gideons aren’t going to sell that ranch, so unless you have something else you’re selling, we’re done here.”

He started out of the restaurant, but Norris casually stepped to the side and easily blocked his escape. Lucky stumbled back and swallowed as he craned his neck to look up at Norris.

“Hear the lady out,” Norris growled, barely moving his lips.

Lucky let out a breath and turned back to Amber. “Fine. So you want the ranch. How much do you have?”

“Two million.”

Lucky laughed. “That ranch is worth at least twice that, and that doesn’t include the cattle or the equipment. That’s another couple million right there. Baby, you’re out of your league. They’ll never let it go.”

Amber batted her enormous green eyes, and Sarah watched as Lucky’s ears grew beet red. “You don’t think so?”

“The Gideons may be horny bastards who’d fall for those beautiful green eyes, but they aren’t stupid. Barrett won’t think twice about tossing you out on your sweet little ass if you show up and insult him by offering less than half of what the ranch is worth. And that cousin, Chris, is the smartest of them all but isn’t around enough to really get the picture, thank God. Those idiots don’t know the gold mine they’re sitting on, but Barrett would hold on to it anyway, just to piss you off.”

She gracefully slid from her chair and swayed over to him, her

hips rocking from side to side like a sexy pendulum. “Match my funds. Put up the capital to make this happen and we’ll cut you in.”

His actions slowed as he looked at her, his expression still and hard. “For two million dollars I’d better get more than a cut.”

“What did you have in mind?”

“Full partnership, not only on the GR&L, but on *The Roadhouse*. And I want a guaranteed return. If your little venture doesn’t pan out, I still get my money back plus twenty-five percent.”

Amber looked at Norris. He shook his head. She nodded once.

Norris bumped his hard chest up against Lucky. “You’ll get ten and like it.”

He visibly swallowed. “Twenty.”

Norris audibly growled, and it echoed through the room.

“Oh, Norris. Just give it to him. He’s got us by the balls, and he knows it.” Amber sighed and smacked Lucky on his shoulder. “Damn. No wonder you’re so good.”

Lucky straightened his tie with a triumphant twitch of his weaselly lips. “That I am, sweetheart. That I am.”

She sashayed back to the table and picked up her wine. Eyeing Lucky with the sexiest look Sarah had ever seen on Amber, she then took a slow drink from her glass. Not once did she pull her gaze from Lucky.

“So do we have a deal?”

Lucky smiled. “Deal.”

Chapter 24

Barrett watched them pull up the drive and tensed, every muscle on full alert. As soon as Strickler walked into the lodge, he'd hammer him until his heart stopped beating. If the bastard even had a heart.

Norris pulled the Jeep up, and they all stepped out. Sarah and Norris looked like secret service agents, dressed in dark suits and even darker sunglasses. Neither smiled as they searched their surroundings before nodding and standing guard as Amber and the devil himself stepped out.

Strickler.

Just seeing him made Barrett more furious than he'd ever been in his entire life. Living with three other men just as pig-headed as him had made him pretty damned mad from time to time. It wasn't enough that he had to sit back while the love of his life, the mother of his child, stood in the line of fire to save his ass.

Add to that the fact they were about to allow the son of a bitch who started it all back into their home with open arms just about killed him. His chest constricted as his guts twisted. It would take everything he had not to attack Strickler the minute he stepped foot back inside the lodge.

"Easy," Chris said and placed a hand on Barrett's shoulder. "Remember the plan."

"Fuck the plan. That man has taken everything from us."

"And we are about to get it back, and then some. Trust Sarah. She'd never lead us astray."

Barrett hoped Chris was right.

Before they could knock, Barrett swung the door open and rested

his glare on Strickler.

“Hello, Barrett.”

“Fuck you, Strickler.”

Strickler laughed. The son of a bitch actually laughed right in Barrett’s face, and now he was about to die because of it.

But then Sarah stepped toward him with that mesmerizing glimmer in her pretty brown eyes as she held her sunglasses down on her nose. She caught him in the power of her gaze, and he simmered down enough to not attack Strickler. Barely.

“Let’s do this.” Norris pushed Strickler inside and then stepped in behind him, using his body as a barrier between Barrett and the enemy. His eyes conveyed the same message Chris had been saying all along.

Easy does it. Trust me.

“It will take all four of them,” Strickler stated and made sure he kept Norris between him and Barrett. “They all have to sign the deed over. That’s how the old man set it up.”

Barrett slowed. Even though Amber and Norris went through the plan at least a dozen times, knowing he’d be signing the deed to the ranch over to anyone clamped at his insides. If something went wrong, if Strickler somehow slipped away, they’d lose everything with no chance to recover.

“It’s about time,” Amber sang as she appeared behind Norris. “Let’s get this over with and get these Neanderthals off my ranch.”

Barrett audibly growled. “These *Neanderthals* are right here.”

Amber looked at him and shrugged, a look of disinterest resting on her expression. “Your point?”

“How can you do this?” Barrett didn’t even have to play his part. This ripped at his gut. He felt like he was about to have a stroke.

“Easy. You have something I want.” She then looked at Norris with a come-and-get-me grin. “When I see something I want, I take it.”

Sarah and Barrett exchanged glances.

“Okay, Gideons. Let’s do this. Sign on the dotted line and get the hell off my land.”

Strickler followed Amber into the business office. “You are a heartless woman.”

“No, I’m just impatient.” She sat down at Michael’s desk and slowly ran her hands along the expensive cherry oak, a slow grin curling her lips. “This is nice.”

“Don’t get too used to it,” Chris rasped. “As soon as we come up with the money—”

She stopped him with a wave of her hand. “Oh, yes. As soon as you can find your way out of that hole you’re in and break even, then you’ll suddenly come up with four million dollars.”

Barrett stilled and looked at his brothers. That wasn’t the deal. Was this part of the scam? Or were Norris and Amber—and Sarah—pulling a scam of their own?

Should he break character and say something?

Chris spoke up. “We agreed on six million.”

“Things change,” Amber sang.

“The agreement was six million, damn it.” Barrett crossed his arms.

“Six?” Strickler laughed. “Come on, Barrett. In this market you’d be lucky to get five.”

“That’s still more than four,” Chris pointed out.

Amber let out a bored sigh. “I’ve changed my mind. It’s four million, cash up front, or the deal is off. You can deal with your debt on your own. I’m sure you’ll find plenty of opportunity to make money living out of a minivan. Good luck with all those payroll checks bouncing.”

Goddamn it. Barrett didn’t know if they played this as part of the scam or not. If he signed the deed, he knew his brothers would sign as well. Damn, he wished he could know whether this was all part of the plan or if Norris and Amber did this as a way to really get their hands on the ranch.

Sarah pushed her sunglasses up and moved away from Norris to put herself between Barrett and everyone else, her back to him. She turned to look over her shoulder and muttered, "Keep it together."

Like hell.

"No deal."

Strickler rolled his eyes. "I told you he wouldn't go for it."

Amber rose to her feet and swayed over to Barrett, her gaze never leaving him. The other brothers audibly groaned as she leaned up and crushed her breasts against Barrett's chest and held her lips just out of reach of his.

"I need your deed, *daddy*."

He was definitely going to have a stroke.

Without warning, Amber backed up, the paper from his inside pocket now in her hot little hands. Barrett slapped at his chest and cursed. How did she do that?

With a triumphant grin, she took her seat at Michael's desk once again. "Once the transfer is complete, you will sign this little piece of paper, and the ranch will be mine."

"Ours," Norris cut in. Barrett shot him a lethal glare.

"Exactly." Strickler nodded in agreement.

Amber smiled sweetly and opened her laptop. "You're on, Lucky. Give me your numbers."

Strickler crossed his arms in front of him. "Not until I see yours in there first."

"Show me yours and I'll show you mine?"

"Something like that."

Strickler eased his sleazy lips into a grin, and Barrett's entire body tensed, his need to kill this bastard overwhelming all other senses. Fuck the plan. Strickler wouldn't be able to steal money from another family if Barrett ended his pathetic life.

"Aren't you just the cutest thing." Amber winked and tapped at the keys. "There. Done. See? Isn't this fun?"

Everyone crowded around the laptop after Strickler typed in his

account number. No one moved. No one spoke. No one breathed. The cursor turned to an hourglass as a message blinked across the screen.

Transfer in Progress.

The amount on the screen changed from two million to four million. Amber then typed in a new transaction, and the computer blinked again as another transfer took place, changing the amount remaining to zero.

"It's done." She batted her large green eyes up at Barrett. "Do you need a pen?"

Strickler laughed and shook his head. "So cold. I think I love you. A woman without a heart is a rare commodity."

Barrett flicked his gaze to Sarah, who had shifted so that she kept him in her sights. He just made out her pretty eyes from the side where the sunglasses didn't hide them.

She winked, and he let out a relieved sigh. He turned to Chris and gave him a single nod, which brought a slight curl to Chris's lips.

"Okay, Barrett. Your turn. Let's see if your signature looks as good as the owner."

He snapped his glare back to Amber. "For four million dollars?"

"That's my offer," she said and sat back, folding her hands in front of her. "Take it or leave it."

"I'm leaving it."

Amber jerked forward, her eyes wide. "What?"

"You heard me. Until I am physically removed from this property, I say what goes. And this does not."

Matt stepped up and took the pen from Barrett's hand. "I'll sign."

"Matt, no. This is wrong." He didn't know whether he should be putting up this much of a fight, but, goddamn it, this was his life. Who wouldn't fight for his life?

He whipped around. "No. You know what's wrong? Always leaving the decisions up to you. It's bullshit. I say we sign. Four million dollars, Barrett. No more debt. We can start over fresh."

Matt signed the paper and handed the pen to Wyatt, who did the

same before turning and looking at Barrett with sorrow in his eyes. "I'm sorry, Barrett. I have to go with Matt on this."

Michael then approached and took the pen from Wyatt. He shook his head and muttered a curse as he signed his name. "There. I hope you're happy."

"Not until all of you sign." Amber looked at Barrett.

He glanced at each of his brothers, saw that vulnerable kid in them he'd fought so hard to protect. They looked to him for guidance, for security. And what did he do with that trust? He let a con artist move in right under his nose and take away everything.

He didn't deserve to be the head of the family.

"Fuck," Barrett bit out and jerked the pen from Michael. "I'll find a way to get the ranch back. I swear to you, this is not permanent."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Strickler rubbed his fingers against his thumbs as he fixed his gaze on the paper Amber folded up and held close to her breast. "Not in this lifetime, Barrett. Now get the hell off my property before I call the cops."

"No need," a sultry voice sounded from the doorframe.

There, in the doorframe, stood Carol, but that wasn't the biggest shock. In her hand she held an FBI badge.

She wore a nice brown turtleneck with a beige blazer and matching slacks. She looked nothing like the Carol who'd been at the ranch a few weeks back. That Carol had bleach blonde hair and too much makeup, and dressed like a cheap hairdresser.

This Carol wore her blonde hair back in a sleek ponytail, very little makeup, and looked every bit the part of a federal agent. Behind her stood two more agents in dark suits, not looking much different than Norris and Sarah, sunglasses and all.

Strickler's mouth dropped open. "Carol?"

The Gideons fell into a stunned silence. Barrett didn't see that coming. From the looks on his kin's faces, they didn't, either.

Everyone except Matt. He walked over and kissed Carol's cheek. "Thanks for taking my call."

She replaced her badge on her belt and pulled cuffs out from behind her back as she walked into the room, her gaze intent on Strickler. "Hello, Lucky."

"Carol?" he repeated.

"Agent Dewitt," she corrected. "We've been after you for a long time. When I got Matt's call, I knew we had you."

Barrett squeezed his hands into fists so tight he swore the mending bones in his left hand snapped under the pressure. And he didn't care. He wanted to know what the fuck was going on, and he wanted to know now.

"Matt, you have five seconds to explain."

His brother widened his eyes before hiding behind the beautiful FBI agent. "Don't look at me like that."

"You're right," Carol said to Matt. "He does look ready to kill. Listen, Barrett. Don't be too angry at him. I needed to stay close to Lucky without losing contact with someone from the ranch in case Lucky decided to go out on his own. Since I didn't even know about this meeting, I guess it was a good thing I kept in contact with Matt. When he called me and told me what you all were up to, I figured I'd pay the ranch a visit. Imagine my surprise to find Lucky here."

"I haven't done anything wrong. You have no proof."

She gave Strickler a shrug and nodded for the men behind her to take him. They did without hesitation. "I have two million dollars in proof."

"That's my money. And this is my ranch. Check the deed."

Amber handed the paper to Carol, who opened it and then grinned as she turned it around to show Strickler. "It's blank, aside from the signatures."

"No. *No*, goddamn it! That was supposed to be the deed. I put up two million dollars for a piece of this ranch."

Carol's voice was smooth, cool. "Looks like you put up two million dollars for a piece of paper."

Strickler shook his head desperately. "No. That's not possible."

“Oh, but it is.”

“You’re FBI. You can’t pull a scam.”

“But I can,” Norris said softly. “I’m not bound by the same rules as the feds. I’ve been tracing your money since you started draining the accounts. You bounced it plenty of times, I’ll give you that, but you didn’t bounce it enough.”

Strickler paled. “This can’t be happening.”

“It sure is.” Carol walked over to Norris. She shook his hand as he nodded at her. “Thanks for the assistance, Emerson. If you ever want to get back into the bureau, give me a call.”

“I was SBI, not FBI. Besides, I like what I do now much better.”

She smiled. “You make sure you get that money back to the rightful owners.”

“Scout’s honor.” He raised his right hand.

“Let’s go.” She turned around and started out of the room when Sarah’s soft voice stopped her.

“Carol?”

With a sigh, she lowered her shoulders and nodded for Sarah to join her off in the corner. They exchanged a few words, and then Sarah nodded, hugging her.

“I’ll see you around. And Matt? I’ll definitely take you up on that offer.” Then Carol left, Strickler in custody.

Barrett still hadn’t a clue what had just happened and turned to his brother. “What the hell was that?”

Matt grinned. “That, my dear brother, was the ultimate sting. Carol told me about Lucky that first night.”

“What first night?”

“Remember when she showed up in the play room?” Chris asked. “She had come to the room to talk to us both, but you stormed off to find Sarah. Matt had already tucked his couple into bed for the night, so I asked him to keep Carol company while I joined you and Sarah in the kitchen.”

“She told me everything, the real reason why she’d come to the

ranch,” Matt explained.

Barrett swung around to Norris. “What about you? You knew about her, too?”

“Not until she called me right before the meet to tell me who she really was. Apparently your playboy brother knows how to keep a secret.”

“Three weeks!” Matt cried and let out a guttural sigh before laughing like an insane man. “I had to keep that for three damn weeks. Dear God, that had to be the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life. It feels so good to finally have that off my chest. And then Norris and Amber came in. And then Sarah dropped the bomb about the baby. And then Strickler. And now this scam. I can’t wait for our lives to get back to normal.”

Barrett didn’t know whether to hug his brother or kick his ass for keeping this all a secret. He couldn’t decide, so instead he took Sarah’s hand and pulled her to him.

The worst was over. With Sarah in his arms, the ranch still in his name, and his world back on its axis, he could finally start his life.

With his *family*.

Chris snuggled up against Sarah’s backside, sandwiching her between the two men. “I love you, my sweet Sarah.”

“And I love you,” Barrett murmured in her ear.

She reached up and touched them both, a hand on each of their faces. Emotionally she’d touched him the minute he’d spotted her in the bar, and he knew Chris felt the same.

Her eyes sparked with fresh tears. “We’ve denied ourselves almost a full month of time together. We have some serious making up to do, boys.”

She then leaned into her men, and Barrett knew they’d all have forever to make up for the past.

THE END

WWW.ALLIEKADAMS.COM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allie K. Adams writes as Eve Adams when a sizzling, M/F love story isn't enough. She currently resides with her family in southwest Montana, where the west is still wild and that's just the way she likes it. Please visit her website for more information or to contact her. She loves to hear from readers, so please don't be shy!

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