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Corralling the Stones

Part 2

The Taming

Ara Mitchell



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Liebling, Texas 3

Corralling the Stones, Part 2: The Taming

Things are hot and heavy in Lily Chisholm's workshop, where more than furniture is getting nailed. Finally, everything is coming together—the furniture, color swatches, and she and the Stone twins, Jackson and Ethan—and running the way she dreamed it would. But just when Lily thinks she can't get enough of her naughty twins, her long-kept secret is revealed, and it threatens to tear the three of them apart for good.

When one twin forgives while the other one just wants to forget Lily ever came into his life, Lily must decide for herself whether to pursue her career or follow her heart. To top of it off, she still has to tread her way through old family feuds, meddling older brothers, and figuring out where she truly belongs.

Little do Lily and her men know, they are in the eye of a gathering storm where family tension and old enemies can strike any moment with more devastating force than they ever anticipated.

NOTE: You are purchasing Part 2: The Taming of *Corralling the Stones*. This purchase does not include Part 1: The Chase.

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CORRALLING THE STONES, PART 2: THE TAMING

Liebling, Texas 3

**Ava Mitchell
Sydney Holiday**

MENAGE EVERLASTING



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CORRALLING THE STONES, PART 2: THE TAMING

Liebling, Texas 3

AVA MITCHELL AND SYDNEY HOLIDAY
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Chapter One

Light danced over Ethan Stone's eyelids, and he popped them open. The first thing he was aware of was that the sheets around him were cool. Then he smelled her. That soft perfume that lingered only on Lily Chisholm's skin and in her hair.

Mmm. Any day was a good day when he got to wake up next to her.

He stretched until his arms and legs fell back onto the bed and then adjusted his pillows behind him. He was about to get up and look for her when he heard her soft footfalls drawing near. Then he really started waking up. He sat up just a tad higher on the pillows and watched as she sauntered over to him in Jackson's white undershirt, her nipples poking at the almost see-through material. Ethan's cock went from relaxed to ready-to-fuck in the span of a second, and his eyes were glued to the sight of the shirt's hem dancing around the tops of her toned thighs.

Ethan gulped. *Holy shit.* He had never been this floored by a woman before, but looking at Lily with her wild, I-had-awesome-sex-last-night hair as it tumbled around her face, wisps of it getting caught in her eyelashes, Ethan could not help but fall even more under her

spell. He could finally understand the whole Helen of Troy thing. Going to war for the woman he loved would be the natural choice if someone tried to take his Lily away. She was his, damn it. His and Jackson's. And he would go to great—he looked down—lengths to keep her.

Ethan stared as she came closer and thanked his lucky stars she was there. Her graceful, high-arched feet soundlessly landed on the floor, and by the time she came to a stop at the edge of the bed, he was panting like a wild bull. She stood above him, just close enough for him to touch her, and his gaze took her in from her ankles, her calves, her thighs...her slit.

Goddamn, she was not wearing panties. The woman was out to give him a heart attack.

"Damn, Lily." He almost croaked the words, but he could not hide the hunger in his tone.

The woman just gazed down at him, her lips still pink and puffy from last night. "I could say the same thing."

She stepped toward him so the front of her thighs touched the mattress and ran her fingers down his chest, brushing the fine layer of blond hair there. His whole body tightened in response when he did not think he could get any harder. He was primed, ready. Lily Chisholm, the woman of his dreams, was looking down at him, her eyes soft yet full of invitation, and she was practically naked. He wanted to howl at the moon and beat his chest—all that stupid shit victorious men did when their mates returned their affections. Instead, he curled his hand around the back of her calf and, holding her heated gaze, slid it up and up until his fingers brushed over her pussy lips. They were already damp and slick with her cream.

She groaned and bit her lip, the soft flesh pillowing around her teeth. "Ethan."

"Just getting started. Relax. We've got all morning."

He parted her lips with a fingertip. Her girl-lube slicked his way, and he found her clit, hot and swollen. He circled her little bud with a

light touch, barely making contact with it. It was moments such as this that made him realize how intimate it was for a woman to let a man this close, how much of a gift it was. It was in moments like this that they let someone bigger and stronger in when at their most vulnerable, and Ethan felt pathetically grateful she had chosen him and his brother.

He could smell the sex between them, and tension buzzed like an electric current between their bodies. Already, her lips and cheeks blushed pink, making her glow.

“Spread your legs wider,” he whispered.

Her eyes widened, but she did as he said. The moment she did, he shifted toward her then flicked his tongue between her pussy lips, flicking her swollen, engorged clit.

“Ethan,” she groaned. Her fingers wound through his hair, and she opened her legs more for him.

Fuck, yes. Yes, yes.

She was so juicy and creamy for him, so succulent and wet, like a peach in the middle of a hot summer afternoon. He buried his face between her legs and licked at her pussy until she trembled around his face and her breathing came in hitched, almost hiccupped bursts. He loved the sounds she made.

“Ethan...”

Yeah, she was close. He could taste it. He let his tongue drag from her delectable cunt to her swollen clit, and he swept the entire flat surface over it, giving her a good, solid lick. Then he did it again.

“Shit, Ethan. Oh, my God. I’m close.” Her legs wobbled, and she planted a hand on his torso, her fingers digging into his flesh.

He flicked the tip of his tongue over her clit and pressed his index and middle fingers inside her pussy at the same time, then curled them forward and rubbed her sweet spot. Her fleshy cunt gripped him tight, and his cock jumped in response. But he wanted her to come first.

With his free hand, Ethan spread her pussy lips farther apart, drawing her little clit from its hood. She was all his now, completely

open to every sensation. Just how he liked it. He used the flat of his tongue and moved it in tight circles, not giving her a moment's reprieve from the undiluted pleasure he wanted her to have.

Lily came apart in seconds, her whole body shaking and trembling. Her knees gave out and she pitched forward, but he rose up and gathered her up in his arms, clutching her tight as she trembled and twitched in his grip. Her hair fell over his skin like a caress of silk, and her soft cries of "Ethan, Ethan" went to his head like a shot of whiskey. They fueled his desire, brought out the side of him that did not want to be gentle.

With more force than he intended, Ethan positioned Lily so that she straddled his hips, her knees resting on either side of him. What a beautiful sight it was to see her thighs splayed wide over his hard, aching dick, inviting him to close the space between their bodies.

Gripping her ass for leverage, he lowered her over his cock. The moment the head pressed into her, he bit out a curse. Her warm, slick cunt pulsed around him with the aftershocks of her orgasm, tempting him to come right then and there.

"Oh, damn, Lily," he gritted out, "your pussy—so fucking luscious."

"More," she groaned. "I need..."

He shifted his hips up and fucked into her, forcing the rest of his dick as far as it could go into her warm, fleshy cunt.

Lily collapsed forward, catching herself against him with her palms. Her nails dug into his chest, and she made a little squeaking sound as she shifted her hips back.

"Ohhh, God."

Her cunt muscles clamped down on him, and he swore his eyes crossed. She hugged him so tight he had to grit his teeth to keep from plowing away at her pussy like some horny teenager—but that was what she did to him. She made him lose any semblance of control and civility when all he wanted to do was make her feel so damn good.

Lily rose up on her knees and took him in a slow slide, her body gripping him like it never wanted to let him go. Little bells went off in his head. She felt so good, so fucking good. It was amazing. He could stay in the tight glove that was her pussy forever. Then she slid down a couple inches, tilting her pelvis toward his so that her clit brushed against the base of his cock.

Holy shit.

“Ohh, Ethan.” Her head lolled back on her shoulders, but he wrapped his hand around her neck and made her look him dead in the eye.

“Stay with me, babe. Ride me. Yeah, that’s it. Use me, Lily. Use me. Come again.” His voice was low and rough, even to his ears, but he really did not give a shit.

She sank down on him again and again, going so slowly he thought his balls would burst with his agonizing desire to wait until she came so he could watch, so he could look into her eyes as they went blank and wild with passion.

Her tits swayed and bounced with her movements, her berried peaks tempting him to steal a taste. So he did. He shifted his upper body and wrapped his lips around her nipple. Then he sucked on it. Lily gripped the back of his head and pumped her hips faster, using his cock like a joystick for her carnal pleasure. All he could think was *fuck, fuck, fuck* as she rode him for all he was worth, her pussy massaging his cock from head to base, making him go out of his damn mind.

He let that nipple pop out of his mouth and went for the other one, gripping it lightly between his front teeth as he lashed his tongue against the very tip. Her throaty groans turned into high-pitched cries, and she started moving faster. Then she changed the angle of her hips and sat on him. Hard.

Ethan decided he had waited long enough.

He gripped her hips and took control of the rhythm, pumping her up and down, making sure her clit hit his cock with each stroke. Her

pussy gripped him tighter, and he felt the fluttering an instant before her mouth fell open in a surprised *O*.

“Come, Lily,” he urged between clenched teeth.

He fucked into her harder, faster. Limp, she tried to bury her face in his shoulder, but he cupped the back of her head and kept her in place. *Just few more strokes...* She jerked her hips and clamped down on him, and his eyes locked on hers the moment before she came all around his cock. How intimate it was to feel her every pulse and sigh as he watched everything play out across her face.

Her whole body tightened above his, and her hips jerked as he fucked her, her body eking out every second of pleasure it could. Her pussy rippled around his cock, and he just about spontaneously combusted. Pleasure radiated from where they were joined and diffused through his entire body.

His orgasm kicked him from behind. His lower back tightened, and then sensation washed over him, and he let himself get caught up in it. He did not hide anything from her. He surged up and into her multiple times, her pussy wringing out every spasm of pleasure until there was nothing left.

But it still was not enough.

Before the pulses wound down, he rolled them over so that her warm body lay beneath his, their legs dangling off the side of the bed. Hell yes. Lily under him? What could be better?

* * * *

Lily basked in the sensations jolting through her. Even her fingertips sizzled. Holy crap, a girl could die from that sort of incandescent pleasure. It should be a sin. It really should. No man should ever be that good at giving her pleasure.

She breathed in deep, her body gloriously pinned beneath Ethan’s lean yet muscular body. He smelled so good—so clean and cool—and he pretended he was so aloof and oh-so-over all of it. Yet when he

touched her, he went from laid-back boy next door to fully trained and primed sex king. No, sex god.

The glory of the morning quickie. It was wonderful.

Today was going to be a good day. A great day.

“Y’all up yet?” Jackson walked in, his jeans unzipped and his chest bare, toweling off his hair.

And Lily’s desire kicked in again. Oh, God. If they kept this up, they would not get out of the room at a decent hour.

Ethan’s hand trailed down her hip as he sucked a nipple into his mouth. He quickly released it, but the damage was done. Her clit was thrumming again. She spread her legs for Ethan’s thick fingers, and he did not disappoint. He rubbed them gently over her sensitive clit, spreading her moisture from her release all over, then he sank his fingers into her pussy.

She moaned his name, but her eyes were fastened on Jackson as he dropped his towel and kicked the door closed. The bulge in his pants tripled in size until his cock rose up past the waistband and toward his belly button.

The normal Lily was embarrassed that Jackson walked in on her while his brother worked her up into a frenzy with his hands and mouth, licking away any last traces of their previous round of sex. The greedy nymphomaniac who inhabited her body wanted nothing more than to have one of their cocks shoved deep in her pussy.

Jackson hooked his thumbs in his waistband, pushed his jeans to the floor and stepped out of them, then mounted the bed. “Damn, Lily. You look *delicious*.”

He slid his hands under her ass and drew her toward him, and Ethan removed his fingers from her pussy. She groaned at the loss of that sensation, but then Ethan lifted his fingers up to his mouth and swiped them clean with his tongue. Her insides tightened, and she wet her lips in response, mimicking the movements of his mouth. Damn, she loved how they were not shy about anything when it came to her body. It made her feel free, as if she had nothing to be embarrassed

about. The feeling was priceless. Then Jackson gave her a solid lick from cunt to clit and back again, and she collapsed backward.

“Jackson,” she groaned.

He kissed the inside of her thigh. “Yes, Lily?”

She did not respond. Instead, she sank her fingers into his hair and wiggled her hips.

“I think she wants more,” Ethan said, his voice gravelly.

Jackson’s fingers gently separated her pussy lips, and he used the tip of his tongue on her clit. Little teasing strokes. Lily clenched her teeth and sucked in a breath.

“She tastes so good, and I just can’t get enough.” Jackson gripped her inner thighs and, looking fiercely at her, spread her legs higher and wider, leaving her completely exposed to their dark, feral gazes. She turned her head away, embarrassed at her open vulnerability.

“Don’t hide,” Jackson commanded. He gripped her chin in his fingers and tilted her head back toward him. “Watch.”

Hypnotized by the glowing, jade-like intensity in Jackson’s eyes, Lily watched as he kissed his way back down her body, lingering at her breasts. He used his mouth on both of her nipples before pressing his lips against her belly button, the softly rounded part of her lower belly, the top of her mound.

Ethan settled behind her, and she rested her head on his leg as Jackson shouldered her thighs farther apart. Then his tongue flicked out and jiggled her clit as he sank a thick finger into her cunt, slowly pressing it in and out of her. The dual sensations made her belly flutter.

Pleasure throbbed through her entire body, and she moved her hips to the beat of Jackson’s tongue. She rode his face, pumping her hips for all she was worth. He growled against her pussy, sending sparks of vibration through her. Her nerve endings sizzled and snapped.

And oh, sweet heaven.

Lily cried out as she started coming in heavy waves, shocked by the fierceness of it. It had come out of nowhere. One minute, Jackson had been slashing his tongue against her swollen clit, and the next he did something with his fingers in her pussy, and she started unraveling before she could do anything to stop it, to prolong the divinely carnal sensations pulsing inside her.

Before she came down from her orgasmic high, Jackson pulled his fingers out of her. Then he flipped her onto her stomach none too gently. "Squeeze your thighs together."

Dazed, Lily did as he said. Jackson shifted his weight on the bed and placed his knees on either side of hers then lowered his hips toward hers.

"It makes you tighter," Jackson explained as he fitted the head of his cock against her pussy. "Not that you're not already, but I love feeling you gripping me so tight like you don't want me to leave."

I don't. And she really didn't. For all she cared, he could take permanent residence there and set up shop for good.

Before the words could fly past her lips, Jackson surged forward, his thick cockhead pushing into her cunt. Her breath gushed out of her, and she gripped the comforter. His already large dick felt even bigger in this position. He started pumping immediately, not giving her a chance to fully adjust to his girth. She loved it. Jackson was impatient and demanding when it came to loving her, and she willingly accepted it because the way he made up for it was to fuck her until moving even her fingers was an effort.

His cock massaged that place inside her, and she felt the delicious pressure starting to build. "Oh, Jackson. Oh, God."

"Come, Lily. Come all you want. I need to feel it." Jackson's voice was deep and strained, and he fucked into her, faster and deeper, until the pressure peaked. She hovered over the abyss for a moment and gazed into it before she tumbled over.

She turned her face into the mattress and screamed, the wild, ecstatic sounds of her coming muffled by the sheets. Jackson slapped

the side of her ass and rode her harder, and her pussy convulsed around him.

“Ah, yes. That’s it. Oh, Lily, you grip me so tight. So good.” Jackson pumped and pumped away behind her, his huge cock filling her pussy up past capacity.

Even slick from her orgasms, with her juices coating his dick, she still struggled to stretch around his girth. She loved the snug fit and the way her body had to get used to his sheer size. It was pure gluttonous physical sensation. Yet she still wanted more.

They must have read her thoughts because Jackson pulled out of her with a strangled cry. “Fuck! Holy hell, she tests my control.” He ran his big hands up and down her back and hips, cupping her ass and kneading the flesh as he spoke. His voice was low and rough, and it hypnotized her even as his hot fingers separated her ass cheeks.

Lily groaned. She knew what was coming next and desperately wanted it. She even wiggled her ass at him.

The bed shifted, and she felt Ethan draw closer. Then a dollop of cool lube pooled around her asshole, making her suck in a breath between her teeth.

Jackson growled low in his chest. “I think our girl likes where this is going.”

“Yeah. Just look at her wiggling her ass for us.” Ethan’s fingers spread the lube around, and Lily followed his touch with her hips like a wanton thing, desperate for more. “Damn, that’s beautiful. Look at that little hole. So pretty.”

“Prettiest one I’ve ever seen.”

“Ain’t that the truth.”

How could they form coherent sentences at moments like this? Were their bodies not trembling with arousal? Were they not weak from overwhelming desire? She sure as hell was.

Then Jackson pressed his thumb into the tight ring of her ass, penetrating her in a slow, slick invasion that sent burning, tingling shards of pulsing pleasure through her entire being.

“Ohh, Jackson. Oh. My. God.” She fisted her hands in the sheets and squeezed, but it did nothing to keep her grounded to reality. The tight, burning sensation of her ass stretching around his thumb made her shiver in delight.

“You like that, babe? Hmm?” Jackson’s free hand rubbed her ass cheek in a heavy caress.

“Yes,” she hissed.

“But I bet you want something bigger, don’t you?” He withdrew his thumb, making her lift her hips off her bed to follow him shamelessly.

She moaned. “Mmm.”

Ethan slipped his hand under her chest and pinched her nipple, making her gasp. “Louder, Lily. I didn’t catch that.”

She almost shrieked, but she lifted her face out of the mattress. “Yes. God, I want more.”

“And what do you want?” Ethan asked, his voice like velvet.

“I w-want Jackson.”

“And what do you want from Jackson?”

Jackson sank two fingers straight into her ass, making her writhe.

“Ah! Jackson, you sn-sneaky bast—”

“Aw, no name calling while we’re pleasuring you, babe. It just can’t work like that,” Jackson teased.

“I want his cock!”

“And where do you want my cock, babe?”

Did they really expect her to say it? That she wanted his cock shoved as deep as it could go in her ass so that Ethan could fuck her pussy at the same time? Did they really expect those words to come out of her mouth?

Ethan twisted her nipple between his thumb and forefinger, and the sharp sensation mingled with the warm pulses radiating from Jackson’s fingers outward. Her pussy was leaking, ready to be filled.

“I w-want his cock.”

Ethan's hand slipped between her body and the sheets and found her swollen, desperate clit. He flicked it with his fingertip, and she almost came. "Where do you want it?"

Lily opened her mouth with every intention of telling them exactly where she wanted them. With Ethan's fingers on her hot button, she would have done anything, said anything for them to fuck her and get it over with. But Jackson scissored his fingers inside her ass at the same moment Ethan pinched her clit, and she screamed, unable to contain that much feeling inside herself.

"My ass! Oh, God, please! I can't take it anymore."

"Now that's what I like to hear." Jackson's gloating tone told her just how happy he was. He probably even had a huge shit-eating grin on his face.

That overindulged asshole. It was one thing to be good at what he did and entirely another thing for him to know how good he was. And, damn, was he good. Her whole body pulsed in time with her throbbing clit, and she was on the verge of an orgasm so intense she would probably pass out from the inordinate amount of pleasure. Combine that with the full, burning sensation in her ass, and she would go off like a fireworks show on the Fourth of July.

Their fingers were everywhere—in her cunt, swirling over her clit, kneading her ass cheeks, working her nipples. Pure, unadulterated sensation swept through her, over her, all around her until all she felt, saw, smelled was Jackson and Ethan. Everything disappeared and morphed into background noise, and the only thing left was the three of them in carnal bliss.

Jackson's fingers sank into the flesh of her hips, and he yanked her straight up so she knelt on the bed. Blood rushed all through her body, making her reel, but he was right there behind her, steadying her. "You okay, babe?"

Lily told herself there was a hint of concern in his gloating tone.

Ethan grinned. "She's doing just fine. Aren't you, Lily? Look at how flushed your skin is. So pink. So pretty." Without another word,

Ethan plucked her up as if she weighed nothing and rolled onto his back with her legs splayed on either side of his body. “Ah yes. This is exactly how I like you—open and waiting for me with your cunt dripping for my cock.”

To demonstrate his point, he let his cock slide between her pussy lips, and the ease with which he did it made her cheeks burn.

“Aw, look at that blush, Jackson. Our girl’s feeling shy.”

Jackson’s big hand cupped her right ass cheek. “I’m looking at something, all right, and it should be making her shy. Man. I love this ass.”

Ethan’s hands skimmed up her belly to hold her heavy breasts. “And I love these.” He pinched her nipples in time with his cock gliding between her pussy lips, and her head lolled back on her shoulders. But not before she caught a glimpse of his abs clenching and releasing with his strokes. Good God, Ethan was the embodiment of earthly sensuality. With his pecs and abs tight and his whole body rippling with muscle as he moved, Lily’s eyes were having an orgasm.

She felt Jackson press a hand between her shoulder blades, and she fell forward at his command, catching herself on her palms. The movement made her breasts dangle in Ethan’s face, and he took her nipples into his mouth, sucking on them like they were some sweet, exotic fruit. Hot, sweet ripples of pleasure coursed through her. Behind her, Jackson separated her ass cheeks and slathered more lube around her asshole, getting her ready for his cock.

She peeked over her shoulder, and through the blanket of hair falling in her face, she saw him palm some onto his dick. The sight of him handling himself made her desire for him shoot even higher. The mushroom head leaked pearly pre-cum, and she licked her lips, wanting to taste him.

Jackson glanced up at that exact moment, a hot look passing over his features. “You want this, babe?”

She bit her lip and nodded. “Mmm hmm.”

He grinned, his nostrils flaring. “Well, never let it be said that I left my woman wanting.”

Her heart leaped at his words. *My woman.*

Then Ethan wrapped his hands around her waist and lifted her over his stiff, ramrod-straight cock and guided her down. Her pussy walls stretched around him, full to bursting.

“Ohh, Ethan.” Her embarrassing wetness barely helped her sit down on him to the root of his cock, but she would not have traded the pleasure-pain for anything in the world. There was nothing like having her men deep inside her, stretching her body to its limit.

She planted her hands on either side of Ethan’s head and leaned forward, tilting her hips up and back. Jackson’s cool, lubed-up fingertips traced her asshole then pressed inside a little. Lily moaned and pressed back against him, her clit brushing against Ethan’s pubic bone as she did. Shards of pleasure shot through her, and she squeezed the comforter.

“Oh, Lily, you’re close already, aren’t you.” Ethan did not say it like a question. She looked down at him, and her hair fell in a curtain around their faces, making it seem as if they were the only two people in the moment. He looked up at her with all the sureness of a man who knew exactly what his woman’s body needed.

Holding her gaze, Ethan brought his thumb to his mouth, licked it, then guided it between their bodies. “No holding back tonight,” he said with a wicked grin on his face. “We want it all.” Still holding her gaze, Ethan found her clit and tweaked it. Her eyes fluttered shut.

“Jackson, hurry. I’m so close.”

“Your wish is my command,” Jackson responded from behind her. He pressed the fat crown of his cock against the entrance to her ass and started pressing inside. “Damn, babe. It gets better every time.”

Lily froze for a moment. The absolute correctness of his statement hit her with the subtlety of a two-by-four in the gut. Christ, there she was getting all cozy with the two of them, and she was planning on

leaving at the end of the summer. What in the damn hell was she doing?

And then Jackson's cockhead breached the ring of muscles in her ass, and all thoughts of the future went *poof!* The pressure from Jackson's cock entering her mingled with the fullness she felt in her cunt, and she started writhing on their dicks, unable to contain the raw sensations assaulting her.

With one final shove, Jackson seated himself inside her, and their joining was complete. Somehow, her body housed both of them, and the experience transported her to a place where only pleasure—terrifying in its absoluteness—existed.

The first pulses of her orgasm started the moment after Jackson pushed the crown of his cock into her ass, and the intense feeling of fullness only enhanced her pleasure. Sensation shot through her, making her body feel as if a live wire were wrapped around it. Their dicks pumped in and out of her, pistoning in a sure, deep rhythm.

In. Out. In. Out.

They never left her empty, and she was so grateful she could cry.

Jackson spanked her ass and fucked inside her. "Oh yeah, babe. Ride us. That's it."

"I feel you clenching around my cock, Lily. It feels so"—Ethan thrust up high inside her—"fucking good."

They kept at it, fucking her until she was screaming like a banshee. Her orgasm sapped her of all energy. Completely limp, she collapsed forward, but Jackson pulled her up and wrapped his arms around her, plastering her back to his front. "No, no, babe. Stay with us. We're not done with you yet."

"I can't take more. It's too much."

He dropped a kiss on her shoulder. His stubble brushed over her sensitized skin. "We'll be the judges of that. And right now, I think you've got another one in you."

Merciless bastard that he was, he upped their tempo, driving her insane. Ethan pumped his hips up against her again and again, rubbing

all her sweet spots along the way. The new position exposed her clit even more to Ethan's precise thrusts, and each time he stroked it, it felt like lightning bolts shooting through her. When he reached up and tweaked her nipples, the sensations collided in the gathering storm inside her.

Jackson was an animal, fucking her ass like he would never have the chance again. The sheer power with which he moved awed her into submission. She eagerly awaited his every stroke, wanting to feel the masculine wildness inside him. It was a reminder of how much stronger he was than she, and that knowledge excited her on a deep, elemental level.

"Come on, babe," Jackson gritted into her ear. "Let go for us."

Just the rough cadence of words brought her closer to the edge. But the drop was steep and dangerous, the pleasure boundless. Ethan looked up at her, his gaze missing nothing. "Ah-ah, Lily. No holding back." He did something magical with the angle of his hips just as Jackson fucked inside her, and the combined pleasure sparked her gathering orgasm. "Yes. That's it. Just feel it."

There was no issue with what she was feeling—only with how much. But they did not give her the opportunity to fight them or the ecstasy they gave. Instead, they kept at it, their bodies guiding her where they wanted her to go, making her feel what they wanted her to feel.

"Jackson! Ethan!" she screamed in that moment of limbo just before she toppled over pleasure's edge. Then she fell over it and came and came, thrashing, crying out, shaking.

Vaguely, she heard their growls of approval before their thrusts lost all semblance of control or refinement. She heard them grunting, and then her name was on their lips, said in such profane reverence she could not help the smile that came to her face. How wonderful it would be to wake up to this every morning. To have two of the most beautiful men she had ever laid eyes on worship her as if she were a goddess incarnate. A girl could get used to it.

When she peeled her eyes open, she realized she had buried her face in Ethan's neck. His hands skimmed up and down her sides. She struggled to sit up straight, and she realized Ethan's cock was still inside her, but she made no move to change that. Jackson lay next to them, his chest heaving and his abs contracting with his breaths. He looked delicious.

He grinned. "Looks like I'm gonna have to take another shower." He wiggled his eyebrows. "Wanna join?"

Chapter Two

Ethan turned on the lights to the former carriage house turned workshop next door to The Sweet Spot. He took another swig of Edie's freshly brewed organic fair-trade coffee and set it and the basket of organic cinnamon and apple muffins, also courtesy of Edie, down beside his drafting table.

"I still don't understand why we have to get here so early," Jackson grumbled as he pulled out a muffin, broke off a hunk, and popped it into his mouth.

Ethan sighed. "I don't like the idea of keeping Lily waiting. We've all waited for each other long enough. I don't want us waiting anymore."

"Aren't we waiting for her right now?"

"Don't be a smartass. Besides, technically, we're not waiting because we have plenty of work to get done here. We also have to have all this furniture ready for the room unveiling next week, and we haven't made very good time lately."

Jackson chuckled. "Lily *can* be distracting." It seemed like they'd been fucking nonstop for days, unable to get enough.

"Exactly, but that doesn't change the fact that we have a deadline to meet. Lena already sent out the invitations. The unveiling party is happening whether we're ready or not, so we have to be ready."

"Yeah, yeah." Jackson grabbed a hammer. "Well, let's get cracking then."

They'd worked diligently, side by side, for nearly an hour when Ethan realized he was the only one actually working. He looked up to

see Jackson staring off into the distance with a goofy, half-dazed grin on his face.

“She’s really amazing, isn’t she?” Jackson shook his head as if in disbelief and got back to work, that dazed look still lingering on his features.

Ethan had never seen his brother act this way, had never seen that warm, almost wistful, look in the depths of his green eyes or the way just the corners of his lips turned up into a tiny, barely perceptible smile. It could mean only one thing.

“You love her, don’t you?”

Jackson’s posture suddenly straightened and he coughed as if he just choked on his own spit. “What?”

“You can’t fool me, Jackson. I think you’ve finally fallen for someone other than yourself.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Lily. That look on your face, the way you’re all moony eyed. You love her.” He, and the entire town of Liebling most likely, never thought this day would come, the day when a woman finally caught the heart of the infamous Jackson Stone, a self-proclaimed bachelor for life, not that that would even be possible. In Liebling, no one stayed single forever.

“I’m not moony eyed. And I don’t lo—” Jackson swallowed as if something, perhaps the word *love* itself, had become lodged in his throat. “Anyway, what difference does it make how *I* feel when you love her enough for the both of us?”

Ethan shook his head. Classic Jackson. What was he going to do with his twin? Well, it didn’t really make a difference. He knew Jackson would come around eventually. He had to. Ethan didn’t think it was possible for him to love someone so much and not have his twin love her, too. He knew in his heart that Jackson loved Lily, whether he wanted to admit it to himself or not.

Ethan stapled the last piece of loose fabric onto the chaise Lily had designed. Inspired by the Le Corbusier chaise lounge, this one

was strong enough to accommodate more than just lounging. He'd never made furniture like this before, all modern and streamlined. While he appreciated Lily's modern aesthetic, Ethan's tastes leaned more toward the traditional. He liked good, solid hardwood carved by strong and knowing hands, not machines. And while there would be a few of these kinds of pieces in the rooms, the majority had to be stainless steel and cutting-edge fabrics like the zero-porosity, heavy-weight rip-stop nylon he had just finished stapling in place.

Try saying that five times fast.

A warm breath against the back of his neck caught his attention.

"I didn't even hear you come in." Ethan turned his head and smiled at the woman beside him, the woman he'd waited practically his entire life for, and now he had her.

"I like the way you're handling that staple gun," Lily whispered into his ear with a breathy chuckle. Ethan dropped the gun and whipped around to pull Lily up against his body. She seemed to melt right into him, her soft curves molding perfectly into the hard planes of his chest. "Is it finished?"

"Sweetheart, I haven't even begun." Ethan pulled her even closer and pressed soft kisses along her jawline. He hooked his thumb into the waistband of her skirt.

"I meant the chaise, but this is much better." Lily exhaled a husky moan.

"The chaise is done. Do you want to test it out?"

"I thought you'd never ask."

With Lily's legs wrapped securely around him, Ethan bent down and brushed off any stray sawdust from the chaise before setting her down. She squealed as it rocked back. The chaise's incline could be adjusted and then locked with two knobs on either side.

Ethan reached to the locking mechanism when Lily's hand stilled him. "No, leave it. I like the rocking." A devilish grin lit up her face as she pulled her legs around his torso and directed him back to his

rightful place between the apex of her thighs. “It didn’t occur to me to use the chaise this way, but I rather like it.”

“And I rather like the way you look on it.”

“That goes double for me.” Jackson nudged Ethan out of the way. “Except, I can think of one way to make this picture perfect.”

Crossing his arms over his chest, Ethan watched as his twin took over, not that he minded. That was Jackson’s way, and Ethan was more than happy to indulge his twin in his desire to be the one in charge, even though when it came down to it, Ethan was the one who was actually in control. Besides, he was a man who had everything he wanted—the perfect woman for him and his brother to share.

Jackson lifted Lily up and took her place on the chaise, positioning their woman to straddle him. “Ooh, this *is* comfortable. Good job, Ethan. Your craftsmanship is impeccable.” Jackson winked at him over Lily’s shoulder.

“I think you’d be even more comfortable without these jeans on.” Lily tugged on Jackson’s belt, loosening the leather band under the buckle. Ethan might have felt jealous, except Lily chose that moment to turn and land her beautiful blue eyes on him, beckoning him toward her with a crooked finger. “And I think I’d be more comfortable if I didn’t have this shirt on. Do you know anyone who could help me with that, Ethan?”

It was great to see Lily this way, so open and playful. Ethan pulled her shirt over her head, watching the way her long braid fell between her shoulder blades and pointed down her back, leading his gaze to the two adorable dimples peeking above the hem of her skirt.

He unclasped her bra and reached to cup her breasts as they tumbled out of the lacy material. Her breath hitched when the rough pads of his thumbs grazed her pebbled nipples.

Lily arched her back with a low moan and adjusted her skirt around Jackson’s abdomen. When she settled back down, Jackson’s eyes rolled to the back of his head.

“Oh, holy hell. You’re not wearing any panties.” Jackson lifted her skirt up above her waist. Ethan peeked around and noticed the slick pool of womanly fluids that had collected on Jackson’s stomach.

“I was wondering when you’d notice.” Lily rocked her pussy against Jackson’s body, spreading her juices all over him. Ethan could not take another moment of just watching.

He dipped his fingers in her cunt and groaned at the hot slickness inside her tight sheath, the evidence of her arousal coating his fingers. He rubbed her juices against her asshole and then around his cock. Lily was so utterly wet for them, they didn’t need any other form of lube, and Ethan could not help but feel a sense of pride at that fact.

Jackson’s hand on her thigh stilled Lily’s movements. “Wait, don’t we have a deadline to make? This furniture isn’t going to build itself...”

Lily turned her head and looked at Ethan with a roll of her eyes.

Ethan smiled, and then an idea came to him. “Quality control?”

“Whatever. I don’t need an excuse to be with my men on furniture I personally designed explicitly for fucking.”

“The woman’s got a point,” Ethan said.

“Works for me.” Jackson unbuttoned his jeans and pushed down the elastic of his boxers, unfurling his erection. Lily maneuvered herself onto it and sat down with what looked like little resistance.

Ethan quickly undressed and steadied himself behind his woman, pressing his cock against the tight rosebud nestled between her ass cheeks. She moaned, angling her ass toward him even as she pumped herself on Jackson’s penis.

She was so primed and ready for them, so eager, Ethan knew that if this furniture could survive their lovemaking, it would make it through anything the tourists staying at The Sweet Spot could dish out.

Quality control, indeed.

* * * *

Lily squeezed her legs around Jackson, loving the way his muscled hips dug into the soft flesh of her thighs, the pressure increasing with every thrust Ethan made as he worked his magic behind her. The dual sensation of twin cocks inside her was pure heaven. Being joined with them felt so natural, it baffled her as to why she had resisted them for so long.

She concentrated on the pleasure coiling inside her belly and the impending orgasm that threatened to tear her apart. Her heartbeats quickened in her chest as she chased her climax. The chaise she had designed rocked along with the rhythm Ethan and Jackson made as they sandwiched her between their hard bodies, now slicked with sweat.

Sex had never felt this good, and she had to wonder how much of it had to do with her skills as a sex furniture designer. As much as she would have liked to pat herself on the back, she knew it was the chemistry that sizzled between her and the twins that made all the difference. When the three of them were together, it was positively electric.

“Lily,” Jackson grunted beneath her. “I must admit, this fancy chair you made is incredible.”

“It’s not a chair, you ass. It’s a chaise lounge,” Ethan said emphatically. Lily had to smile.

“Thanks for appreciating the difference, Ethan. Now, the both of you, shut up while we let the chaise and your hot bodies rock mine into pure ecstasy.”

Jackson let out a chuckle, but that was the only noise—besides grunts, moans, and pants—that came out of either man’s mouth for the duration of their lovemaking.

With even thrusts, each man pumped inside her like a well-oiled machine custom built for her body and hers alone. Their skin slid against each other’s until Lily felt they were melding as one. As this thought lingered in her mind, her pleasure climbed higher and higher

until it finally hit. Her orgasm exploded, her pussy clamping down on Jackson's cock and milking him for his release. She loved it when they all came simultaneously, and her men rarely failed her, though they usually waited until her second one overcame her.

Ethan and Jackson continued fucking her like animals, and they easily coaxed a second orgasm out of her. It hit her full force, making the first one seem more like an appetizer compared to this, the all-you-can-eat buffet of orgasmic pleasure. It felt so good, so satisfying, so fulfilling. It rocked her from the inside out like an explosion of erotic sparks from every part of her anatomy, from her swollen clit to deep inside her womb and from the tips of her fingers to her toes. Every part of her convulsed in paroxysms of pure pleasure. She could have easily stopped now and would have felt completely sated. But then again, she wouldn't have minded another one. If her first orgasm was an appetizer and the second was the buffet of gluttony, there should naturally be a third course—dessert, a sweet finale to a sumptuous feast for the senses. Lily didn't want to be greedy, but...

And then, before she had time to even catch her breath, Ethan flexed his thick cock inside her ass while Jackson's thumped against her G-spot, and Lily realized her sweet tooth would be satisfied after all. She could now die a happy woman. Her third orgasm seemed to wrap her entire body in tingly, sensual bliss that cascaded over her in slow and calming waves before rocketing her to the heights of ecstatic pleasure. Every synapse in her body caught fire and flashed erotic bliss up and down her entire frame. She could not believe the level of feeling and heightened sensuality she achieved with these two men.

Just as Lily was beginning to come down from her third climax, Ethan and Jackson came in perfect synchronicity. When her insides were coated with the warm streams of unadulterated male virility, she welcomed it with her whole heart.

For a moment Lily lost herself, forgetting who she was and where she was, but not whom she was with. No, there was no doubt as to

who had mastered her body and her pleasure—Jackson and Ethan Stone, so much like the hard, solid monoliths their surname implied.

Their thrusts slowed until finally Lily could no longer hold herself up, and she let herself fall onto Jackson's chest. Ethan carefully pulled himself away, and Lily knew he was going to wash himself off and get cleansing wipes for her and his brother. Ethan always liked to clean up first and then cuddle.

Jackson tucked a strand of damp hair from her face to behind her ear and then kissed her cheek. She could feel him smiling as his lips pressed softly against her skin. "Can I talk now, beautiful?"

Lily giggled. "Of course."

"That was fucking incredible." He ran his fingers through her hair, carefully working through the tangles. "You are incredible."

"I second that," Ethan said as he wiped her backside down with a warm, wet cloth. His caress felt nice against her skin, but it was the sentiment behind his action that really touched her in a place his hands could not reach. Her heart.

Ethan bent down and pressed his lips against her own. He stared into her eyes, not saying a word yet communicating volumes. He loved her. She knew it.

Lily could see herself spending the rest of her life with Ethan and Jackson. And then, an unexpected pain clenched at her chest. Maybe it was the strain from all this physical activity. Or maybe it was guilt. She still hadn't looked at the letter she'd received from New York. She knew the information within that envelope buried somewhere deep in her purse could shape her future and take her away from the twins.

"Lily, are you okay?" Ethan sat beside her and rubbed her back. His eyes searched hers, and she forced a smile.

"I'm fine. Why?"

"I don't know. You just had a funny, faraway look all of a sudden, that's all."

“Oh, Ethan, leave the poor girl alone. Clearly she’s in shock at the way we rocked her body.” Jackson tilted her chin so she had to look at him and the arrogant yet adorable smile he had plastered on his chiseled face.

Shutting her eyes and turning away, Lily hoped it just seemed like she needed to rest and Ethan would let it go, that he wouldn’t realize she just could not look at him at that moment.

“I think I need some air,” Lily said as she pulled away and started to get dressed. She forced a smile. “Maybe Jackson’s right, and I am in shock. I’ll be back in a minute.”

Lily walked out the door, hoping neither of them would follow her out and headed for The Sweet Spot. She hoped Edie would be there to talk her ear off about organic farming or whatever green cause she was supporting at the moment. That way she could avoid thinking about her own future for at least a little longer.

* * * *

“Where do you think she’s gone off to? You think something’s wrong?” Jackson pulled his pants up around his hips and tucked his cock, now happy and spent, safely in the confines of his jeans. He couldn’t understand why Lily would leave so suddenly, but at least it would give him a chance to get some work done without the distraction of her hot ass and wandering hands.

“What do you mean?” Ethan had already gone back to his workstation and was beginning to assemble an ottoman, which unfolded into two angled wedges. One wedge was bigger than the other, so that the person lying on the larger wedge could be easily penetrated by someone kneeling comfortably on the smaller wedge. The larger wedge also had the added benefit of angling the user’s body so that they were at just the right angle to hit the G-spot, if it was a woman, or the prostate, if it was a man. Not that Jackson knew

anything about the latter. He was, however, more than willing to experiment with the former.

"I can't really pinpoint anything specific..." Jackson lowered his voice, and he walked over to his twin. "It's just that sometimes she gets this funny look in her eyes or something, like she's preoccupied or maybe even hiding something."

"What? Don't be ridiculous. What would Lily possibly hide from us?"

"I don't know, but even you said she seemed a little off just now."

Ethan shrugged. "It was probably nothing. Or maybe you were right. The girl's in shock from your sexual prowess, right?" Jackson didn't miss the sarcasm in his voice, but he knew whatever he sensed, Ethan did, too. He just didn't want to admit it. "If anything, Lily's always been a straight shooter, and we've never been closer. I think what's really going on is classic Jackson finding an excuse to ruin a good thing."

"I don't try to ruin shit. So what if I don't stick with one woman for too long? Maybe I haven't found the right one yet."

Ethan frowned. "And what about Lily? You don't think she's the right one?"

"Maybe a *right* one doesn't exist. And let's not make this about me."

Now it was Jackson's turn to frown. He hated when simple conversations with his brother turned into complicated, soul-searching quests to find the deeper meanings in life and personal relationships. What was wrong with just having fun?

Jackson shrugged. "I don't think it even matters what I think because you're clearly sure enough for the both of us. I think Lily's great, maybe damn near as perfect as any one woman can be, but that's not my point. I just can't shake this gut feeling that something's not quite right. Something is on her mind." He gazed back at the entrance of the workshop, half expecting her to pop in and start pulling her bossy routine. He would never say it out loud, but he liked

it when she got a little demanding. The woman knew what she wanted, and Jackson had to admit he found that pretty sexy.

“Yeah, something *is* on her mind. The unveiling next week. This means a lot to her, more than I think you or I can even know. So how about we stop this asinine conversation and finish what we have to do to stay on track? Every minute we stand around jawing is another minute behind schedule.”

“Geez, you’re starting to sound just like her, brother.” Jackson chuckled and shook his head. “She’ll have you completely whipped in no time.”

“Doing the right thing by our woman isn’t being whipped, asshole. Now shut up and do something other than stand there.”

“Maybe she would be here right now if this all means so much to her.”

“I bet she went to talk to Edie and Lena for a bit, and I’ll bet you dinner tonight it’s about next week. Cut her some slack.” Ethan rolled his eyes, clearly irritated and growing more impatient by the second. But that was Jackson’s game. Pushing cool-as-a-cucumber Ethan right to the very edge of losing his cool. Ethan was about to say something when Jackson held up his hand.

“No, I get it, Ethan. I know what you’re getting at. She’s been under a lot of stress and needs a little break.”

Ethan’s posture relaxed, and that’s when Jackson went in for the kill.

“Because when you fuck the life out of a woman, you got to give her time to recuperate. That’s the gentlemanly thing to do. And if anything, you, sir, are a gentleman.” Jackson did a curt bow and feigned doffing an imaginary top hat before he turned around, effectively silencing any retort Ethan might have come up with.

Maybe Ethan’s blind love for Lily made him incapable of seeing her in any light that wasn’t glaringly aglow with her haloed innocence, but not Jackson. No, he’d keep one eye open at all times from here on out.

Chapter Three

Lily buzzed with excitement. And dread. Today was the day—the unveiling. All of the work she, Jackson, and Ethan had done over the last few weeks would be on display for everyone to see, and it would set a standard for the work they would do for the other rooms at The Sweet Spot. Edie and Lena had invited a few of their regulars from out of town to the viewing, and Lily knew expectations were high.

She fiddled with the end of her braid as she paced in Lena’s office and organized her thoughts. What if no one liked what she’d done? Or worse, what if no one understood her vision? Sure, she had technically redone everyday furniture and vamped it up into sex furniture, but there was—in her opinion—inherent meaning in that and in the thought she put behind each and every piece. Not to mention that she looked at her projects as a tangible symbol of how far she and Jackson and Ethan had come in the past weeks. They would not have gotten any of it done without each other and, in doing so, had forged a bond that she was having a little trouble keeping under control.

Each day that passed brought with it newer, deeper feelings as she discovered new things about each of them, which terrified her. What was she going to do when she opened that damn letter?

“Ugh.” She passed a hand over her face, and a few strands of hair came loose. “That damn letter.”

It was still in her bag. It had been since the day by the lake. Her future was wrapped up nice and snug and hidden under her lip gloss, wallet, and cell phone. She blew the hair out of her face. Some go-getter she was, hiding from the exact change she had enacted for

herself months before she had caught sight of how Ethan looked with a carpenter's pencil behind his ear or how Jackson looked holding a hammer.

Sexual chemistry aside, though, there was a connection they shared that redefined what she knew or thought she'd known about romantic relationships. Namely, that people did, indeed, change and that she, Lily Chisholm, could fall—

Nope. Not going there.

She was in like. Most definitely in care. But in love? She was not even going to think about the implications of that.

Her gaze darted to her over-the-shoulder slouchy bag, and she chewed her lip. Jackson and Ethan were in the room doing some last-minute “sprucing” as Jackson had called it, so she had a few minutes to herself before all the guests arrived and she had to play reluctant hostess. She needed to stop putting off reading the letter. Either way, she would be crushed. If she got in, she would leave the two men who had, although she hated to admit it, haunted her for years. If she was rejected, then her dreams of getting her foot in the proverbial door to the design world would practically be shattered.

Her bag just sat there, staring at her. Taunting her.

“Oh, just do it already,” she chided herself.

Gathering her resolve, she stomped to her purse, wrangled the beaten-up envelope out from under her junk, and gathered it in her clammy hands.

“I was wondering when you'd get to that.”

Lily squealed like a little girl and whipped around. Edie stood in the doorway with a knowing expression on her face. Apparently, Jackson and Ethan had been doing a few side projects around the bed-and-breakfast when she had not been looking, because Lena's office door always squeaked. It was either that or Edie had been taking super-soldier lessons from Jason and had learned to move as soundlessly as he. Leaving the door open, Edie sauntered toward Lily

in that full-hipped sway of hers, wearing a deep blue wraparound dress that hugged her curves.

“Get to what?”

Edie sidled up next to Lily and eyed her for a moment, looking a little worried. “You know, I completely understand if you don’t want to talk about it—especially right now—but if nothing else, you need to figure out what’s going on with you before you involve other people. Jackson and Ethan look like they’re on cloud nine, and I think you have a lot to do with that.”

Curse Edie and her spot-on intuition! Lily had a feeling nothing got past her. She noticed practically everything about everyone, which was just what she needed in order to deal with Lily’s brothers. She honestly did not know how the woman handled the two of them together, but she gave her props. Jason and Seth were not the easiest men to get along with. They were overbearing and overprotective, but they meant well. They really did. But Lily was old enough to make her own decisions, and she really wished her brothers realized that fact sooner rather than later.

Lily plastered a smile on her face. “It’s fine. I promise.”

“Okay. I’ll believe you for now. But something’s telling me otherwise. You know I’m here if you need anything, right?”

“Yeah, I do.” This time, the smile was real.

“Good.” Edie looked up at the sound of voices in the hallway. “Oh! People are coming in. I’m going to show them all into the room. Are you ready?”

Lily breathed past the butterflies erupting in her stomach. “I think so.”

Edie gave Lily’s hands a squeeze. “You’re going to be wonderful.”

She watched Edie hurry off to greet their guests, and she took a few moments to steady herself. She looked down at the letter and chewed her bottom lip. *Crap*. It felt thicker than a usual letter, which hopefully meant good news. Or bad news depending on how she

looked at it. Oh, God. How was she going to do this? Was she really going to leave Liebling—her mother and her brothers? Jackson and Ethan?—depending on the contents of that letter?

There was only one way to find out.

Quickly, without giving herself a chance to stop herself, she tore the envelope open and fumbled with the multiple pages inside. Her fingers shook as she read the letter over.

Dear Ms. Lily Chisholm,

We are happy to inform you of your acceptance into our program....

Her heart stopped beating, and the words on the pages blurred.

Sweet heaven. I got in!

This was it. This was the opportunity she had been waiting for all this time—moving to New York, riding the subway to class, staying up late working on her portfolio, touring the best art galleries in the nation. All of it.

“Lily?”

She stiffened, like a kid caught with her hand in the cookie jar, and turned. Edie’s head poked through the doorway, her eyes bright. “Come on, missy! Everyone’s waiting on you.”

“Oh, uh...” She turned so the letter was hidden behind her leg. “I’ll be there in a second. I just need to, um, reapply my lip gloss.”

Edie rolled her eyes. “You already look gorgeous.”

“One second,” Lily said, backing toward her purse. “I swear.”

“Fine, fine. But hurry up. They’re all anxious to meet you.” With that, Edie disappeared back down the hallway, leaving Lily alone in the office, excited chatter from the room showcasing her furniture the only noise other than the crazy beat of her heart.

Lily stuffed the acceptance letter in her purse and rearranged it so her wallet and camera hid it and tossed the bag in a corner of the room. Then she applied some lip gloss absently, her fingers shaking

the entire time. God, she hoped she did not get any on her chin. The short distance from where she stood to the door seemed interminable, and her heels clicked almost ominously on the wood floor.

What am I going to do? What am I going to do?

The words ran circles in her mind, but she could not find an answer to them. With one last look at her purse, Lily smoothed her sweaty palms down her dress, straightened her shoulders, walked down the hall, and stepped across the threshold into the room.

* * * *

Hours later, Lily gave her best smile to her guests even though her cheeks had started hurting a while ago. Was it possible to have sore cheeks? There were other parts of her that were blissfully sore, sure, but her face? That would definitely be something new.

Behind her, Ethan stood tall and erect, his solid presence a balm to her nerves. She continuously scanned people's faces for their reactions to her work, on guard against an upturned lip or skeptically raised eyebrow, but as of yet, she had not seen any of that. What she kept seeing were the blurred words on that letter.

God, the letter. It was really happening, wasn't it? The whole dream-coming-true thing. She fought down the panic rising from her belly and tried not to think too hard about it. If it's meant to be, then it'll happen, she kept telling herself, but it did not make her feel any better. All of this would have to come to an end soon, and she hated it. Why did it have to happen just as everything was starting to be so perfect?

She resisted the urge to wring her hands. It all came down to what she decided, which was the hardest thing for her to accept. Being the youngest child in her family, she was used to having decisions made for her. When Lily was growing up, her mother picked out her outfits for her. When she was a teenager, her brothers did not allow her out of the house after the sun went down. Now, she was grateful because

she knew she would have found some way to get into trouble as many of her friends did. At the time, though, she'd resented every moment of it. It was her time to make mistakes, she had argued, and learn from them.

That was what this situation boiled down to, also. She was so used to making choices to make people happy—working at Cedar Ridge, not going out of state for college, living at home because she did not want to leave her mother all alone in that house—that when it came to making decisions that would make her happy, she froze. But it was not just about her anymore.

She felt Jackson's eyes on her from across the room, and she looked up to meet his serious stare. He had been looking at her like that a lot lately, as if he was trying to pick her apart, and it was so out of character for him to look or be so serious that she wondered if he could hear her thoughts from where he stood. Then, like quicksilver, his mischievous smile replaced his serious expression. Lily could not help but smile back. She knew what that smile meant—he wanted her alone in the room with Ethan and no one else. Clothes off. Lights on.

Her cheeks burning, Lily turned away, but not before his grin widened. That cocky bastard. Of course he knew the effect he had on her. She sent him her best scowl over her shoulder even as guilt set in.

No, it was not just about her anymore, and the weight of her decision pressing down on her felt like she was under twenty feet of water. Her head was ready to explode, her lungs burned, and her body felt as if it was being squeezed everywhere.

Ethan pressed a hand to her lower back, drawing her close. "You okay?"

She brushed a few loose tendrils of hair out of her face and glanced up at him. "Yeah. Fine. I'm just thinking about what we're going to do with the other rooms when it comes to that."

"They'll be just as beautiful as this one. Trust me." He bent down and kissed her cheek, and her heart clenched.

"Sorry to interrupt," a man said from behind her.

Lily started in Ethan's loose embrace and turned around to see who had spoken. A reporter she had been introduced to earlier from an independent Austin newspaper approached her with a charming smile on his face.

"I got all the information I needed from you earlier, but I was wondering if it would be all right if I got a picture of you and your assistants."

Lily glanced over her shoulder at Ethan. "Assistants. I like that. I think I'm going to start using it."

"Yeah, yeah. Don't get used to it."

Lily scanned the room and found Jackson talking to an older man in a Texas tux. They stood next to her favorite piece in the room—the chair she had designed as an homage to her favorite designer—and Jackson looked genuinely pleased as he ran his fingers over the back of the chair.

He must have felt her looking at him because he turned and met her gaze. She inclined her head and beckoned him over.

"So how long have the three of you known each other, again?" the reporter asked.

"Oh, it's been a while, since we were kids," Lily replied, her gaze never leaving Jackson and the confident way he crossed the room. He received more than a few appreciative glances on his way toward her, but he did not seem to notice. In fact, ever since he and Ethan had started working with her, they acted as if they were completely off the market and uninterested in putting themselves back on it. Who was she to complain?

When Jackson reached them, he stood opposite Ethan so they flanked her. With their arms around her, Lily felt so utterly feminine, so safe, protected, and desired. Their touch, even though casual, made her feel as if she were melting.

The camera flashed, and the reporter popped up from behind it. "Thanks a lot. The article should come out within the next week. I'll let you know when."

“Wait! I want a picture of us for myself, if you don’t mind,” she said to the reporter. She wanted to remember this moment, how happy she knew the three of them looked together. “Jackson, can you go get my camera from my purse in Lena’s office?”

“What am I? Your slave?” He tried to sound indignant, but the way his lips curled in the corners gave him away.

She rose up on her tiptoes and kissed him, not caring who saw. “Pretty please? With a cherry on top?”

He grinned. “I’ll take you on top.”

“Well, that, too.”

“Then I really am your slave.”

“You mean you weren’t already?”

Jackson scoffed. “That’s the other guy who looks like me.”

“And here I was thinking I had you under my spell.”

His jade green eyes flashed a deeper green, and her heart started racing. His eyes only turned that color when he wanted her. “Oh, I am, babe. But that doesn’t mean I’m your love slave. There ain’t a woman out there who can tame Jackson Stone. Not even you. No matter how cute you are.”

Well, if that didn’t take the wind out of her sails. “Maybe I don’t want a picture with you anymore. I think I’ll just take one with the nice twin.” She stepped away from him, a little stung, but he gripped her elbow.

“Aw, come on. I’ll get you your camera.”

She took one look at his contrite expression and melted. “Fine. But hurry back. I want to get going soon.”

He gave her a naughty, conspiratorial smile. “Yes, ma’am.”

* * * *

Jackson wove through the people milling about the room with champagne flutes and bottles of beer as they chatted and flirted, but he really only had his mission in mind. The sooner he got Lily her

camera, smiled for the pictures, and made a fashionably early exit, the sooner he and Ethan could get their hands on her. There was something about the way her face lit up when she realized her work was good, that people liked it, that he just could not get over. Maybe it was the way her lips curved into a content smile, but he had never seen her look that way before, and the image would forever be imprinted in his mind.

That and her dress.

Lily had worn this goddess dress—at least that was what it looked like to him—that hugged her body like he wanted to. Oh, man. He stuck his hands in his pockets and readjusted his pants. The material was black lace, and at first he thought it was see through. He, of course, was not happy with his woman showing off his—yes, his—goods to everyone in town, and he expressly told her so, but she had just rolled her eyes.

“Jackson, it has another layer of flesh-colored material underneath,” she had said, “so you can’t see through it.”

He mentally scoffed. Flesh-colored fabric, his ass. It sure as hell didn’t look like it.

He glanced over his shoulder, looking at her as she smiled and mingled, a few strands of her hair coming loose from its style, and he was suddenly struck by the fact that his heart was throbbing. Which was odd. It was an entirely new sensation, one that made him beyond uncomfortable. Maybe he needed to go see the doctor or something because his ticker might be going south. Either that or Lily had done something very strange to him with her girly powers. Women had that effect on men. Especially beautiful ones with deep, deep blue eyes and long legs that wrapped around his waist so perfectly.

Jackson shook his head and continued with his camera-finding mission to distract himself from any more musings about women and hearts. Which, of course, proved to be impossible. She was radiant.

And so was Ethan, if Jackson was honest with himself. His brother had not left her side all evening, perfectly content to be near

her and touch her and laugh with her. Which was great for Ethan. Jackson had never seen him so happy and alive. Perhaps that was the reason Jackson was even at this party in the first place. For Ethan and Lily. Sure, he cared about Lily more than he was willing to admit, but he just was not quite at the level of devotion and sadomasochism his brother was. Jackson had to admit, though, that he had not felt this satisfied in...

Strange, he could not recall this sense of peace blanketing him. He was always looking for something to do, some sort of new excitement. He was all about the novelty of things. Once the shiny newness of anything wore off, he disappeared right along with it, looking for the next thing to satisfy his curiosity. It had gotten him in trouble more than a few times, but, hey, now he had Lily Chisholm in his bed, and he really could not complain about that. In fact, he really wanted to shout from the rooftops that he had had the prettiest girl in town—hell, in Texas—sleeping curled up next to him at night and that all the other guys could just stare and get jealous for all he cared.

His gaze landed on her bag which Lily probably thought was discreetly tucked away, but who could miss a bag that big? Now where was that damn camera?

He tried digging through the abyss that was her purse and finally gave up, pouring everything onto Lena's desk. A letter slipped out of an envelope, and he couldn't help but read its contents.

He did a double-take. Then a triple-take. Then he reread the entire letter to make sure he was not losing his mind. Surely he was hallucinating or something. His Lily would never do anything so asinine as go out of state to New York City, of all places, by herself. And she would not plot behind his and Ethan's backs while she was sleeping with them every night.

Right?

His intestines knotted, and he felt sick. Ah, hell. Who was he kidding? Of course she would leave. What the hell did he have to

offer her? Ethan was “the nice twin.” What was he? The asshole twin? He winced. The description fit.

His hands shook, which pissed him off. Damn her and her ability to make him panic like this. No. No, this was not happening. He was not going to let Lily go off all by herself into the city. Those bastards would take one look at her and know she was sweet and naïve and take advantage. He balled his hands into fists, trying to control his rage at just the very idea. The letter crumbled in his grip. Surely the fact that his heart was racing and the empty, hollow pit forming in his gut simply meant that he was worried about her, not panicking at the idea of losing her.

He kicked himself. Why did her leaving matter, anyway? It wasn’t like he was head-over-heels in love with her like Ethan was. Sure, he cared about her a lot, but that was as far as it went on his end. But how did she feel about him? The idea of her leaving gave him a painfully hollow feeling in his chest, but of course that was for Ethan. After all, Jackson Stone did not have a heart to break, but he did feel for his brother. Ah, Jesus. He would have to nurse Ethan back to health after Lily dropped this bomb on him.

Unless he got to her first.

Yes. That was it. He would get her to confess to Ethan before his brother fell even more in love with her.

* * * *

Lily knew something was horribly wrong the moment Jackson practically stomped back into the room like a pissed-off bull. Without any modicum of social decorum, he walked up to her, grabbed her arm, and said, “I need to talk to you.”

She glanced up at Ethan, who regarded them with a puzzled expression.

“Now,” Jackson pressed.

“Uh—” She fought against his grip. “—we’re in the middle of a conversation.”

“It’s fine,” Ethan supplied, looking at the reporter. “I’ll meet the two of you in a few minutes.”

“Great. See, Lily? Let’s go.” With that, Jackson dragged her none-too-gently into the hallway. His face was mottled with an angry red, and his breathing was erratic.

His fingers dug into her arm, and she tried to pull away. “Ow! Jackson, you’re hurting me!”

“Not as much as you’re going to hurt Ethan. He’s already picking out china patterns, for Christ’s sake.”

“Ethan? What the hell are you talking about?”

“Don’t treat me like I’m stupid. You know what I’m talking about. The letter? Or did you not think I’d find out? Or maybe that was your plan all along. Get Jackson to get your camera and—Oh! What’s this letter?”

Dread settled like curdled milk in her stomach. “W—what do you mean?”

“I’ve got to hand it to you, Lily. That was brilliantly played. All that shit about you hating us? It just made us want you more. Damn, you’re good. You made us eat out of the palm of your hand.”

“Excuse me?”

“Oh, yeah. Just dangle yourself in front of us like some sort of forbidden fruit. So unattainable.”

Rage reared its ugly head, blasting through her panic. “You jackass! You’re way off base, but if you stop talking, I’ll forgive you for being so thick skulled.”

Jackson scoffed. “Look at you, being all self-righteous.”

“Of course I am! You’re accusing me of things that aren’t true.”

“Not true? Not true!” He lowered his face so close to hers she could see the blond tips of his eyelashes. “You expect me to buy the trembling lip routine when I have this—” He whipped the letter out and brandished it in her face. “—to back me up?”

“Oh, God. Jackson—”

“Save it, babe. I’ve got your number. I have to congratulate you on finagling Ethan and me into this. Wow. You had us working our asses off in the middle of the Texas summer for you, and we thought we had it good getting to look at you in those shorts and that cute little tool belt. And don’t even get me started on the sex.”

He put a hand on his chest. “Damn. I gotta say that it was some of the best I’ve ever had. I don’t think Ethan will ever stop thinking about it. Poor guy. I’m going to have to put him back together after you’re gone. I might even have to find a Lily-lookalike.”

He might as well have sucker punched her in the stomach for how painfully breathless she felt. She never thought him capable of being so deliberately cruel, but something in his eyes told her he had not even started yet.

Lily swallowed her tears and fought to be reasonable. “My God, can we talk about this somewhere else? Guests are just down the hall.”

“It’s okay, Lily. I won’t tell anyone else that you’re cold hearted and that you lead softies like my brother around for the fun of it. Your secret is safe with me.”

“Stop it, Jackson. Just stop. Now you’re just being mean—”

“What I really don’t get is why you didn’t tell us. I mean, if you had just wanted some action to get you past your dry spell, we would have been happy to oblige.”

Before she realized it, she had levered her hand back and swung, wanting to slap him so hard he would see stars. And maybe bloody his mouth up a bit. But his hand shot out and wrapped around her wrist, making a mockery of her.

“Fuck you, Jackson Stone. Fuck you and your goddamn pride.”

He yanked her closer to him, and for a moment, she feared he would hurt her. The fear only fed her anger, though, and she shoved against his chest until he let her go. “You son of a bitch. Don’t you

fucking handle me like that ever again, or I swear to God I'll make you regret it."

"Don't you talk to me like that, you self-righteous hypocrite. You're the one who swung first, remember? And don't you look at me like I'd hit you. I would never do that, and you damn well know it."

"Do I? Huh, Jackson? When you're the one trying to intimidate me?"

"Oh, please." He snarled. "You're just pissed because you got caught, and your plan to get me and Ethan pussy-whipped was ruined."

She was so frustrated she thought she might cry. She felt the tears burning at the back of her throat, making her tongue feel thick and fat in her mouth. "My God! That was never my *plan*! If you would just *listen* to me, you'd—"

"Then get to talking, Lily, because it seems you have a lot to do," Ethan commanded from behind her.

Lily squeezed her eyes shut, willing that moment to end. *No, no, no*. She did not recognize the tone in his voice, but it sent chills up her spine. She must have been quiet for a moment too long because Ethan took a step closer. She took a deep breath and turned from Jackson to face his twin and peeled her eyes back open, terrified of what she would see.

Ethan stared at her, an exasperated look on his face. "What the hell is going on?" His apparent calmness threw her. Surely he heard more than he was letting on?

"Why don't you ask Lily?" Jackson responded from behind her and shoved her forward none too politely.

"I..." She twiddled with the ends of her hair like a dimwit and searched for the right words to say, but they would not come. There was something about Ethan's demeanor that just did not sit right.

"Well?" Ethan supplied.

"It's just that—"

Jackson sidestepped her and pushed the letter at Ethan. “This is what’s going on. Our little lady has been playing us for fools.”

Ethan looked down at the now crumpled papers in his hands then up at her. Lily wanted to throw up. She tasted the hors d’oeuvres in the back of her throat already.

Jackson continued talking at Ethan, gesticulating wildly and pointing his finger at her, but she just stared in abject horror as Ethan methodically smoothed out the pages and started reading them. He seemed to curl in on himself more the farther down he got, and her sick feeling made her sway on her feet.

“Ethan, I can explain.”

“Sure you can explain. Use us to do all the heavy work and get some sex on the side. Kudos, babe. It’s pure genius. I couldn’t have done it any better myself.”

“Damn it, Jackson, just shut up and let me explain!”

“Nah. I don’t think you’ve earned it.”

“Earned? Oh, fuck you, you arrogant son of a bitch! I haven’t done anything wrong or malicious at all.”

Jackson snatched the letter from Ethan, advanced on her, and waved it in her face. “I think this is proof of malicious intent, don’t you, Ethan?” Jackson looked like a raving lunatic compared to Ethan, who was eerily sedate. He banded an arm across his brother’s chest and forced him back two steps.

“Let her explain, Jackson. I think we both need to hear this.” His words were calm and quiet, but the hard set of his jaw let her know they were uttered through clenched teeth.

Her belly quivered, and her palms broke out in a sweat. The past few weeks flashed in front of her—Ethan emerging from the shadows after she had been attacked, Jackson sending her that coy smile of his when she caught him staring—and she watched it all fall away.

“I sent in all the applications before I even knew I’d be working with you,” she said, her words jumbling together in her haste to get them out. She took a deep breath. “I swear. And then it all got started

and we happened, and it just got pushed to the back of my mind. Then all of a sudden it was tonight.”

Jackson looked like he wanted to hit something. With a disgusted sound, he turned away and started pacing.

“When did you get the letter?” Ethan asked, devoid of any emotion.

“I...”

“How long have you had the letter? It’s a simple question, really.” He smiled at her, but it looked more like he was baring his teeth. His upper lip curled.

She fiddled with the lace on her dress. “Since the afternoon at the lake.”

Jackson spun around mid step. “That was weeks ago! My God, Lily, you’ve been carrying on like nothing was even wrong, but this was in your purse the entire time?”

“I didn’t open it,” she countered. But it sounded pitiful even to her ears.

“Don’t feed us that bullshit. You knew exactly what was in it, but you pretended like everything was just goddamn peachy.”

“And what would you have done? Don’t even think of saying you would have told me everything, Jackson, because I know for a fact you wouldn’t have. You would have gone along with things just to get as much pussy as you could because that’s all you care about!”

Jackson recoiled from her for a split second, and then he sneered at her. “Well, lookie here. Sweet little Lily has a dirty mouth.”

Ethan stared at her with a scarily resolute look on his face. “It was all done before this whole thing—us—started.”

Lily shifted her gaze from a red-faced Jackson to Ethan. “Yes.”

“When did you open the letter? And don’t lie,” he added when she opened her mouth before he finished talking.

“Tonight,” she answered. “Right before everyone started getting here.”

Ethan narrowed his eyes at her, appraising her with a shrewd look she had never seen on his face before. “Why didn’t you open it sooner?”

“I... Well—it’s...” She wanted so desperately to look away from him, but he would not let her. “I didn’t want to know.” His silence prompted her to continue. “I didn’t want to know what was in there—” She took a shaky breath. “—because I didn’t want it all to change.”

There. She’d done it. She’d laid it all out on the table.

“That is the biggest load of crap I have ever heard. But, hey, what else can you expect from a Chisholm?” And there went Jackson ruining it.

Anger, hot and uncontrolled, burst through her, making her shake. She charged through the small distance separating them, so enraged she wanted to wrap her fingers around his neck and shake him.

“You arrogant prick!” she snarled.

“Whoa, Lily.” Ethan wrapped an arm around her and, as gently as if he were leading her on the dance floor, stepped into her so that she walked backward. “Calm down. Shhh. Just breathe.” She fought against him, but he just held her against his body and crooned into her hair. “I know the feeling. Trust me. He pisses me off almost every day. Let it go.”

She clenched her teeth and shot a murderous glance at Jackson over Ethan’s shoulder, too angry to calm down.

“It’s fine. Everything is going to be fine. Jesus, you’re shaking. Breathe.”

Lily concentrated on the way Ethan’s hands felt skimming up and down her back, and when she did, she realized she was, indeed, shaking. Hard. Her breath came out in shallow bursts. Her heart thudded against her ribs. She was completely out of control, and she did not know how to get it back. She had put off all of her carefully laid plans of going off and pursuing her dreams because she did not want to leave Jackson and Ethan when what they had together was so addictingly good. Look what it had brought her—something that

looked terrifyingly like a broken heart and the realization that she had almost given everything up for two men whose affection, loyalty, and trust disappeared at the first sign of trouble.

She backed out of Ethan's embrace and willed herself calm. "I'm finished explaining myself to you. No, Jackson, you're going to listen now," she said when he opened his mouth. "Yes, I applied to grad school. It was before I even knew Edie and Lena had a project for me. Then, before I even realized what was happening, something changed between us. And, yes, the idea that I might have to leave was there when I chose to get involved with you, but would you have taken no for an answer? Don't try to come off like you're the victims here because if you're honest with yourselves, you'd know you wouldn't have."

Jackson regarded her with a closed-off look and started pacing again, staring at the floor instead of her. The heavy sound of his steps echoed in the hallway and mixed with the voices floating out of the room.

Jesus, the room. The party. The guests.

She shut her eyes and ran her hands over her face. "Look, this isn't going to change anything. I still have to make a decision, and we still have to finish the rest of the project, even if I do leave at the end of the summer. There's still a roomful of people in there probably wondering where we went, and I really don't want to embarrass our future sisters-in-law by causing a scene, so I'm going back in there, whether you like it or not."

She moved to walk past Ethan, but he gently grasped her wrist. "Wait."

Taking a step back, she looked up into his face. "You're right. We wouldn't have taken no for an answer. It would have happened anyway. So let's just keep it that way."

Jackson's mouth flopped open. "Are you hearing yourself?"

“Yes. I am. And I’m also hearing myself say that it doesn’t matter. If we only have a few weeks left, then we better make the best of it.” He looked down at her. “Right?”

Stark fear made Lily stay in place even as Ethan dropped a kiss on her forehead. What in the living hell was going on? Why was he so damn calm as if they were talking about color samples? “Don’t worry about it, Lily. No harm done. But I think I better get back home before it gets too late. Parties wear me out.”

Oh, God. What had she done? “Ethan?” she called after him. Her voice came out strangled.

He stopped in his tracks and turned around. A haunted smile came to his lips. “I’ll see you Monday.”

Her eyes bugged out of her head. “Monday?”

Ethan’s smile did not quite meet his eyes. “Monday. Bright and early. Just like always.” Then he walked down the stairs toward the front door, without looking back.

Panic clawed at her insides. She felt the unfamiliar burn of tears in her throat, and her tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. She met Jackson’s wild, angry gaze just as the tears started to fall. “Jackson...”

“Save it. If it were up to me, we wouldn’t see you again.”

Lily squeezed her eyes shut, willing this all to be a horrible dream. But when she opened her eyes, all she could see was that she was alone and crying in her prettiest dress.

Chapter Four

Lily nervously gnawed on her pencil as she stared down at the blank page in front of her. She was supposed to be designing the furniture for the dungeon suite, but she could not concentrate. Instead, she looked down at her watch for the umpteenth time. Her gaze scanned the studio, focusing not on the objects filling the room but the emptiness in between.

They were late, something that used to irritate her to no end, but not now, not today. Today was different from all others because she was waiting not for two Neanderthals whom she had spent the better part of her life avoiding, but for two men whom she dared to care about and desperately hoped they still felt the same about her. As she waited for them, only two emotions swirled inside her—fear and sadness.

What if Ethan changed his mind, and they don't show up? What if they both hate me? What have I done?

She let out a deep breath and ran her fingers against her scalp, trying to massage away the tension manifesting there and fast becoming a raging headache.

The door creaked open, and Lily felt her heart leap to her throat. She vacillated between wanting to run to the door and hiding under her drafting table. It all depended on the look she'd see on Jackson's or Ethan's face. Hopefully, that would tell her all she needed to know to understand where they all stood. But, the moment the twins walked through the door, she realized it wouldn't be so simple.

Jackson's face was a mask of disdain. He wouldn't even look at her. It made Lily feel sick to her stomach, a feeling she knew she

deserved for what she'd done to them or, rather, what she hadn't done, which was tell the truth from the beginning.

But just as she was about to bow her head in shame, Ethan caught her eye.

"Hey, Lily." Ethan walked up to her and hesitated for a moment before leaning down and placing a careful peck on her cheek. "I hope we didn't keep you waiting too long." His smile held a hint of sadness, but she was relieved to see it all the same. It was a start and more than she was expecting.

"No, not at all." She was happy just to see them there. "To be honest, I wasn't sure you two would even come in today. You know, after..."

"Forget about it." Ethan held the tips of her fingers, pulling them into his chest. The combination of his words and the heat radiating from his skin and the hard planes of his body had her struggling to find her bearings. She could not reconcile the look of heartbreak that had been written all over Ethan's face a few nights before with the Ethan before her. He gazed at her with love and warmth in his eyes, and more than anything, Lily felt grateful.

"But—"

"Shh." Ethan lifted his finger to her lips, silencing her. "I'm not mad, Lily, at least not anymore." He pulled up a stool beside her and sat down, folding her hands into his own and resting them on his firm, denim-clad thighs. "Believe me, I was angry at first, but it didn't take long for me to realize what's actually important here. I love you, Lily, and I've only ever wanted what's best for you. I'd like to think it's being with me and Jackson here in Liebling, but if that's not what your heart tells you, I can't change that. If your dream is to go to school in New York, and if you really think that's best for you, then I can deal with that. I've waited about ten years to be with you, something I never thought would happen in the first place, and maybe I can wait ten more years if that's what it takes. But I decided that whatever happens to us in the future, we still have today, and if that's

all I can get from you, I can accept that. Whether it's for another four weeks or for forty years, I want to be with you. We'll just take it one day at a time." He blew out a deep breath as if to punctuate the end of his speech. It sounded like something he'd rehearsed all weekend and it made her feel absolutely shitty. Why was he so damn nice, so fair, so insanely diplomatic?

Ethan's big hand held the back of her head and pulled her firmly toward him to his full, delicious lips. His kiss electrified and melted her all at once. His lips parted, and she welcomed his sweet tongue as it massaged her own and explored the depths of her mouth as if searching for something she could not name.

His hands trailed down her back, his fingertips caressing her through her blouse, sending tingles of pleasure throughout her body. When his hands reached her ass, Lily let him pull her to straddle his lap. The feeling and intention of his cock swelling against her was unmistakable, but when she reached for his fly, Ethan pulled away.

"What's wrong?" Lily felt her stomach sink and fear again crept back to cradle her heart.

His smile, this time offered without hesitation, instantly eased her mind. "Nothing." Ethan's hand ventured down her blouse, unbuttoning her as it went.

But even as effervescent pleasure blanketed her body, one loose thread tugged at her happiness. She flicked her gaze to where Jackson sat on the other side of the room. The moment their eyes connected, Jackson grimaced and looked away. She knew that without Jackson in the picture, Ethan would never be truly happy. Hell, Lily wouldn't be truly happy either. As much as he pushed her buttons, Jackson had a special place in her heart. He was a man she loved to hate, but more than anything else, a man she loved to love. Jackson could definitely be an ass at times, but when he turned on the charm, he was absolutely irrepressible.

“Don’t worry about him,” Ethan whispered into her ear between nibbles. “He’ll come around, and if he doesn’t, well, that just means more Lily for me.”

Lily nodded and pushed Jackson out of her thoughts. If this is how Ethan wanted it, she was more than happy to comply. At least for now.

* * * *

Jackson breathed a sigh of relief when Ethan finally took a break from fawning over Lily to pick up lunch. He had been trying to ignore them all morning as they worked side by side—as close as two bodies could get without being on top of each other—discussing Lily’s new designs and ways to improve on existing ones. On the surface, they seemed professional, but the devil’s in the details and Jackson picked up on every subtle gesture and caress. The air was thick with their attraction, and it probably would’ve made him as hard as a rock if it weren’t so annoying at the same time. Those two were acting like lovebirds, and Jackson suddenly felt like renewing his hunting license. He was amazed they had managed to keep from tearing each other’s clothes off. Maybe that’s because *he* wasn’t in the equation. Surely if he had been there, Lily would’ve stripped down to her birthday suit to blow out his candle in a heartbeat. She would’ve sucked his cock like her life depended on it, her warm lips and wet mouth bathing him, her tits swaying beneath her, peaked with the most adorable little nipples he’d ever...

Jackson shook the fantasy from his mind. Maybe his body still wanted her, but his brain sure as hell didn’t. Lily was trouble, for him and his brother. Jackson didn’t know how much more of this he could take. Watching his brother get played by a Chisholm drove him crazy, but he knew nothing he could say would change Ethan’s mind. The damn fool loved the girl and had nursed a love for her that could not be squashed by reason or logic alone. No, he had to convince Lily to

come to her senses and stop toying with his twin. The woman was leaving, and no matter what Ethan claimed, he could not possibly be fine with that.

She *was* beautiful, though, and smart—dangerously smart. The woman was damn near irresistible, but Jackson was too strong for her wiles. He could resist her, and he knew he had to be strong enough for both him and his brother.

Damn it.

Jackson realized he might have been staring at Lily, which she apparently took as a sign that he gave a shit about her and decided to walk on over. But that was okay. A perfect opportunity to show just how little power that she-devil had over him.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Jackson shook off Lily’s wandering hand.

Frowning, Lily crossed her arms over her chest. Jackson didn’t miss the way the action pushed up her tits in the process, creating a line of cleavage he could not help but imagine his tongue sliding over. “You were staring at me with your tongue hanging out, so I figured...”

“Well, you figured wrong. If my tongue had been hanging out, it was from the shock of watching evil incarnate picking out fabric samples.”

Lily’s jaw dropped, and she took a step back. “What is your problem?” Her eyes seemed to search his face for any clues or maybe any sign that he was joking around. “Ethan’s happy, we’re happy, and I don’t know why you can’t be happy for us or, even better, be a part of this...this relationship.”

“*Pfft*. In your dreams, Lily *Chisholm*.” He spat out her last name as if the word itself left a bad taste in his mouth. “You Chisholms are all alike—selfish, stubborn as mules, and able to tell a lie like you were singing the gospel.”

Her posture stiffened as if she had actually been slapped in the face. Whatever emotion she was feeling before, only anger seemed to

be behind her eyes now. “What the hell are you talking about?” She flipped her hair over her shoulder and planted her hands firmly on her hips. She looked ready and raring for a fight. Well, if that’s what she wanted, Jackson would be more than happy to comply. He pushed his sleeves up over his elbows and towered over her. He was about to give her a piece of his mind when he saw the awful way her brows knit together. Did she look *afraid*?

Oh, lord. Don’t tell me she thinks I’m planning to hit her or something.

Jackson would never raise a hand to a woman, and the fact that Lily didn’t seem to know that hurt him to his core. This woman who drove him crazy didn’t seem to know him at all. So why was he even bothering with talking to her?

Ethan. He could not let his brother get hurt.

Jackson took a deep breath and took a half step back. “Listen, Lily, all I want to do is talk.” He cleared his throat. “What you’re doing is wrong. How you’re treating Ethan is wrong. While you two are carrying on like lovebirds, I’m over here working *and* trying to figure out how I can get Ethan to realize what a damn fool he’s being.”

“I think the only fool here is you. What goes on between me and Ethan is none of your business.”

“Like hell it isn’t. If you really cared about Ethan, you wouldn’t treat him this way. You can’t just lead people on and make them think you love them! Do you know what that does? It tears a man apart. When you leave, I’ll have to pick up the pieces.”

Her jaw ticked, and she tugged at the end of her braid as it curled over her shoulder. She chewed on her bottom lip, and Jackson thought maybe he’d actually gotten through to her. He could not believe how easy that had been. He had been ready to argue till he turned blue in the face. It looked like he wouldn’t have to. Jackson was about to pat himself on the shoulder when Lily turned around and started pacing. Suddenly, Jackson didn’t feel so confident that this was over.

When she whipped around and poked her finger in his chest, Jackson knew they had only just begun.

“How dare you! Pick up the pieces? Well, if you did that, that’d be a first for you, Jackson—doing anything for someone other than yourself. And besides, you’re wrong, because I do love Ethan, and you heard what he said. Ethan is a grown man, and he can make his own decisions, and if he says he’s happy with this arrangement then I’m going to take him at his word.”

“Do you really think it’s as simple as that? It’s Ethan we’re talking about. The man overcomplicates everything.”

“But—”

“Please, the man is in denial, sweetheart. And if you don’t know that, then you’re dumber than I thought. And love him? You know, Lily, I never took you as a love ’em and leave ’em kind of gal, but I guess I was wrong.” Jackson almost felt bad for insulting her like that. It was a cheap shot, and if his mother had been around, she would’ve washed his mouth out with soap for speaking to a lady that way. But all’s fair in love and war, and this seemed to be both. Jackson decided to press on. “Do you honestly think Ethan is okay with you leaving, with his bullshit ‘I’m happy with what I can get’ line? He’s not happy. He’s miserable inside, and when you leave, who do you think will be stuck with his moping, brokenhearted self, huh? Me, that’s who. And nothing dampens a man’s game more than a twin brother pining over some other woman.” He unclenched his fists as he realized his nails were starting to dig into his flesh. “Listen, Lily, what you’re doing is selfish and wrong. Plain and simple.”

Lily bowed her head and turned away. Then he heard a sound that nearly broke his heart. A small snuffle and then another. A quick hand swiping her cheek told Jackson everything, and as much as he knew he was in the right, he still felt like the biggest asshole this side of the Mississippi.

“Ah, Christ, Lily. Are you crying? You can’t do that. That’s not fair.” He walked toward her, placing his hand on her shoulder. He didn’t know if he was comforting himself or her.

She shrugged his hand off and whirled around to face him. The force of her movement made Jackson take a step back, and he instinctively put his hands up in a defensive position. Despite the tears that still trailed down her cheeks, the fiery look in her eyes burned as strong as ever. He hadn’t comforted her at all. She was pissed.

“You know, Jackson, you have some nerve accusing me of being in the wrong when your actions haven’t been so angelic either.”

“Don’t you turn this around on me. This is about you.”

“It’s as much about you as it is about me.”

“How do you figure? I’m not the one taking advantage of Ethan’s heart.”

“Ha! Well, aren’t you the pot calling the kettle black? You practically have a monopoly on taking advantage of your brother.”

That one cut deep, but he wouldn’t let on. “That’s ridiculous...” But even then, Jackson could not deny the grain of truth her words held. No, not a grain of truth. It *was* the truth. “Okay, whatever. Let’s say it were true, and I’m not saying it is, that’s our business. We’re brothers, and when it comes down to it, we look out for each other, and I know you’re trouble for him.”

“And what am I to you?”

“A pain in the ass.”

Lily scoffed and crossed her arms back over her chest. “Are you sure you aren’t talking about yourself?” Lily’s bottom lip went out in a pout, and she suddenly became that little girl he teased when he was a kid. They were both acting like children, bickering back and forth and not getting anywhere. When they were kids or even teenagers, he would have found this endless teasing amusing, but not now. As he looked at her, her face pinched in anger and frustration, the evidence of her crying now drying salty trails on her face, he felt sad. Sad for her, for himself, and for Ethan. Sad for the future they might’ve had

together, except she was leaving them. That Ethan's heart would be broken went without saying, but what about himself? Did he want to be Jackson the bachelor for life? Maybe a small part of him didn't want to see her go either.

"The bottom line is you're leaving. It's your choice and your life, but you're not the only one who'll be affected by your decision." His voice caught in his throat, and he struggled to push down the emotions welling up inside of him, emotions he had tried his entire life to avoid feeling.

"This isn't just about Ethan, is it?" Lily uncrossed her arms and put a tentative hand on his, just the warmth from the tips of her fingers breaking down the walls he kept trying to build even as she tore them down.

Damn this woman!

Jackson clenched his fists into tight balls and turned to walk away, the emotions raging inside himself with nowhere to go and nowhere to turn. Usually a man turned to his woman when he needed comfort, but what did he do when *she* was the source of his agony?

"Damn it, Lily!" He slammed his fist down and roared. He felt like a cornered animal, letting fear manifest into aggression. "Why'd you have to go and do a thing like that?"

"L-like what?" Lily stammered as she watched him, her eyes wide with an unknown emotion. Was it fear, was he scaring her again? Her tiny pink tongue darted out and licked her sweet lips, and he knew. She wasn't afraid. Lily Chisholm usually wasn't a girl who was afraid of anything, not even a brawny man looking ready to throw a temper tantrum. Her cheeks flushed and her lips parted, as if in invitation.

Jackson went to her. He had to touch her, to be so close to her he could feel her heart beat, to smell the soft, delicate scent that emanated from her like a halo of femininity. He needed this woman.

Wrapping his big hands along her face, he held her still, held her close to him. He rested his forehead against her own, could feel her

pulse beating against his palms, quickening with each second that ticked by, each moment that passed between them.

“Why’d you have to go and make me fall in love with you, Lily Chisholm?”

Her mouth formed a perfect *O*, and he dived right in. He wanted to devour her, to love her, to assure her with his actions what he could not with words. His hands traveled down her smooth neck, the gentle slope of her shoulders, and then down the length of her back, past her luscious ass, until he reached the warmth of her thighs. He quickly thanked his lucky stars she chose to wear a skirt that day and tore away her panties, the thin material soaked with the evidence of her arousal. Jackson knew she hated when he did that, but he hoped that she, too, was beyond caring at that moment. The way her hands worked furiously on his buckle and then the button of his jeans told him he was right.

Finally, blessedly, his jeans fell to the ground, setting his cock free to be one with the woman he loved. He wrapped his hands around her waist and lifted her. She was all for it, as evidenced by her low groan of approval, and wrapped her long legs around his waist. The luscious contact his hard, aching cock had with her pussy made his whole body clench in wild anticipation. There was not any time for foreplay. He needed her. Now. Without any preamble, he plunged the thick length of his cock inside her, letting her moist warmth envelop and soak every inch of him.

The world fell away and nothing else mattered. It was just a man loving his woman and cherishing her for what she was for what little time they had together. He finally understood what Ethan had meant. A second of bliss with Lily Chisholm was worth a lifetime of pain at her loss, but Jackson pushed those thoughts away precisely because of the truth they held.

Lily’s back arched, pushing her dripping cunt harder against his pelvis, rocking into him, riding him like the stallion he felt like whenever he was with her. Jackson leaned her against a table and took

his shirt off. Her hands clung tightly to his shoulders, her nails digging pleurably into his flesh with each hard thrust of his hips against her soft body. He was aware of the fact that his shoulders would be peppered with crescent moons from her grip on him, but he rather liked the idea. He pumped into her, letting any anger, fear, or other emotions besides love and pleasure melt away with each slap their bodies made as they collided together. Her pillowy breasts, tipped with her pebbled nipples, met the hard planes of his chest, electrifying his skin, suddenly more alive with feeling than he'd ever thought possible.

He parted her ass cheeks and brushed his fingers against her asshole, knowing the rough calluses of his hands would rasp against the sensitive skin there, the rosette of nerves that ached to be filled with his twin as much as her pussy was with him.

And like magic, Ethan appeared at the door. Jackson gave him a nod, and Ethan immediately tossed their lunch aside. Who wanted chicken salad when all you had an appetite for was pussy?

Lily gasped when Ethan came around behind her. She reached her hand back and pulled his twin in for a kiss as he worked furiously to undress himself. A smile curled the corners of her lips up ever so slightly.

Jackson could feel the moment Ethan entered her and savored the way their woman shuddered with each of their thrusts, one pushing in while the other pulled out in perfect synchronicity. The three of them were meant to be together, just like this, always and forever. And if forever meant just until summer's end, then so be it.

He could accept that. Finally, he understood. He had no other choice than to take what he could and simply be at the mercy of this amazing, sometimes infuriating, always beautiful woman in his arms.

* * * *

Lily's breath had hitched in her throat when she realized Ethan was joining them, a reaction of both surprise and relief. This was how it was supposed to be, the three of them together. Every nerve ending in her body was set afire when she felt Ethan penetrating her from behind, his long, lubricated cock stretching and massaging her from the inside out.

She cried out when Ethan gripped her hips hard, digging his thick fingers into her flesh as he fucked her. Jackson had wrapped his hands around the back of her neck while he steadied himself with his other hand on the edge of a table. She felt like she was being pulled in two directions both literally and metaphorically. The literal version felt amazing, but the metaphorical, not so much. She did not know how she would reconcile that deep-seated feeling of being exactly where she wanted to be with the reality that she needed to leave Liebling.

Then, as she gave herself over to the motion of their bodies rocking together in unison, a feeling of absolute peace and completion overwhelmed her. Both men thrust into her in perfect rhythmic harmony, and all notions of a life without them flew out the window. She, again, pushed those thoughts out of her mind and kicked the can a little farther—which was not difficult to do.

Ethan nuzzled her ear with a feral-sounding growl that sent shivers down the length of her spine. Something about the way he touched her, the way he worked her body, seemed different, freer somehow, like he was no longer holding anything back. Lily realized she was finally experiencing the full force of the twins' love for her, unmitigated by any external factors, fears, or worries. It was just them and pure, raw, untethered emotions.

It made her pussy ache even more for them, and rivulets of her cum slid between her inner thighs. She ran her fingers through Jackson's hair, forcing him to look at her, and kissed him. Light danced in his green eyes. Their tongues instantly met each other, tangling and soothing from one mouth to the other. When Jackson's mouth explored down her jawline to her throat and her breasts, Lily

reached behind her and grabbed Ethan's head, pulling him in for an equally devouring kiss. Surprisingly, Ethan's kiss was more forceful than his twin's, a kiss that had been uncharacteristically sweet for Jackson Stone's normal sexual style. Ethan was normally the sweeter, more tentative one, but not today. Today, it was as if he was claiming her or exerting his ownership over her body and the sinfully decadent feelings he and his twin were able to wring from her.

Their lovemaking was more than she could take, and she shut her mind off to all thoughts and just felt. She reveled in the moist heat that formed between them as their bodies writhed against each other, the delicate tickle of the fine hairs on Jackson's and Ethan's chest as they brushed against her sensitive skin. The obvious strength of these men as they fucked her made her seem like a soft rag doll in comparison. And she loved it. Their muscled thighs flexed with each thrust, pistoning their cocks inside her as if to build her release with those fine God-given tools.

Her clit raked against Jackson's pelvis with every thrust, and it wasn't long before the inevitable hit her like a tidal wave. Her orgasm exploded through her, making her body stiffen and tremble at the same time. Spots of light flashed behind her tightly shut eyelids, and the sound of her screams was all she could hear. The walls of her pussy undulated around Jackson's massive cock, and her asshole clamped down on Ethan's equally impressive dick. She dug her nails across their flesh. She was no longer sure who was whom because she was so lost in this moment, but she felt like she was holding on to them for dear life, as if she would fly away were she to let go.

But she wouldn't because *they* would hold on to her, and she knew they had the strength to never, never let go. She sighed deeply as the intensity of her orgasm began to subside, the breath escaping her, cooling her lips. She took a few more deep breaths to clear her head, fogged by too much stimulation, and she found herself smiling.

"What's with the smile?" Jackson asked.

“What, can’t a girl smile after she’s been loved on by two amazing men?”

“Not just loved *on*, Lily. Loved. And don’t ever forget that,” Ethan whispered into her ear. He pulled away and gave her ass one last squeeze before soaping up a wet towel in hot water and wiping himself down. He came over and did the same to Lily, cleansing her entire body before repeating the process with another wet towel.

Jackson pushed an errant strand of hair out of her eyes, tucking it behind her ear, before kissing her eyelids and resting his forehead on hers.

“I love you, Lily. I never want to let you go.”

The words made her heart swell at the same time they broke it. The truth was she never wanted to let them go either.

* * * *

Lily had headed out to help her brothers tend bar at Cedar Ridge, leaving Jackson and Ethan in the workshop. Jackson rode on the unfamiliar high of being in love and on the same page as his twin. For the first time, they were both head over heels for the same girl, and she was equally head over heels for them. And so what if she was leaving? Ethan was right. What they had together was special, and if Lily had to leave to pursue her dreams, then so be it. They would just have to live in the moment and enjoy what time they did have together. Maybe, in the end, they’d all be back together again as if they had never spent time apart. Who knew what the future held? Only today mattered, because when it came right down to it, what did anyone really have except for this moment?

“We have to make her stay.” Ethan’s voice broke Jackson from his thoughts.

“What?” Now he was confused and right when he thought he had everything figured out.

“We have to make her stay,” Ethan repeated, more emphatically this time and with an almost crazy-looking glint in his eyes. Jackson chuckled inside. He hadn’t thought his twin, always so calm and collected, had it in him.

“But I thought you said—” Jackson began before Ethan gestured for him to shut his mouth as if he were swatting a fly into silence.

“Yeah, well, I didn’t mean it, especially after this morning.” Ethan paced the room. “It just finally felt so...”

“Right,” Jackson supplied.

“Exactly, and I can’t imagine going to bed at night without that woman lying between us. She can’t leave. What if she never comes back?”

Jackson nodded. So Ethan wasn’t the Zen master Jackson and Lily had both thought he was, so stoic and in control of his emotions. It was all just a show that Jackson knew was just as much for Ethan as it was for him and Lily. A fake-it-till-you-make-it sort of thing. Well, apparently Ethan had decided the time for faking it was over.

“So it’s time to make our own destiny. But how do you think you’ll change her mind, someone as stubborn and determined as Lily Chisholm?”

“I rented out some space downtown for a showroom for Lily’s designs.”

“Are you kidding? That will totally freak her out. What happened to taking it slow with her, to not scaring her? You know she’s going to think you’re just trying to control her. And Lily hates that.”

Ethan shrugged. “You’re right, but I don’t know what else to do. She has to know she doesn’t need to leave *Liebling* to make her dreams come true. Her furniture’s a big hit, and with the publicity she’s going to get when that article comes out, she’ll have people coming to *her*. She doesn’t need New York.”

“Maybe you’re right, but you’ll need more than an empty room to put her stuff in to make her change her mind. We’ll have to woo her.”

“Woo her? Since when did you know anything about wooing, Mr. Wham-Bam-Thank-You-Ma’am?”

Jackson could not help but grin. “Just because I’ve never had to woo a girl to come to me doesn’t mean I don’t know how to do it.”

“So what do you have in mind?”

Jackson chewed his bottom lip in thought. “I don’t know.”

Ethan threw his hands into the air, clearly annoyed. “Great.”

Jackson clapped his hands together. “I’ve got it! Her birthday’s coming up, exactly ten years after her sixteenth birthday, a birthday which we royally fucked up for her.”

“We? You, Jackson. You fucked up.”

“Whatever, no need to assign blame. The point is we make this birthday special and we right that wrong.”

“Okay.” Ethan nodded. “I’m listening. Go on.”

Even Jackson could not believe how brilliant his idea was, and he never had trouble congratulating himself for anything. He sat his twin down and went over every detail of his plan. It would blow Lily away, and hopefully, right into their loving arms for good.

Chapter Five

All Ethan could think was how stupid he and Jackson had been for not doing this sooner. He was done being stubborn and unforgiving. Jason and Seth were Lily's family, and even if he had to grin and bear it through cutting glances and barely concealed hostility, he would do it. For Lily.

Jackson let the truck roll to a stop, and he put it into park and pulled the key out of the ignition. "We're sure we want to do this?"

Ethan sighed. "Of course we want to do this. It's been a long time coming. Plus, it fits into the overall scheme of things we've got going."

That night—the fateful night by the lake—their teenage selves had driven over to this very house to apologize to Jason and Seth for what they had done, but they had been turned away without the chance to say what they had gone there to say. Without seeing Lily. He would not let that happen again.

"I guess you're right."

"I'm always right. You're just too thick-headed to know it."

"Yeah, and I'm Superman," Jackson shot back. "Let's go before you distract yourself with visions of grandeur. And by visions I mean delusions."

They both levered themselves out of the truck and swung the doors shut behind them. All was quiet on the Chisholms' front. The wind was still, and the air was heavy. Even the cicadas had stopped singing in the trees. It was almost as if they knew there was a confrontation coming and had quieted down to hear.

Jackson rounded the hood of the truck, and together they marched toward Jason and Seth's front door, two brothers ready to do battle for their lady.

Ethan tugged on the collar of his shirt before raising his fist to knock on the door. Then he stepped back and rocked on his heels. It was now or never.

Jackson let out a low whistle. "I'll bet you dinner tonight they don't answer the door," he said out of the corner of his mouth.

The heavy metallic sound of the deadbolt sliding back greeted them before the solid-looking door swung open.

Jason and Seth looked like they had been expecting them for quite a while. They piled out of the house and shut the front door behind them, walls of human flesh.

Jason nodded in greeting, but true to form, he did not say anything, which, naturally, made Ethan want to break the silence. He was a Southern boy, after all. But miraculously, Jason ended up beating him to the punch.

"Jackson. Ethan. What brings you here?"

"We're—" Ethan started.

"We thought we'd invite you two out on a joyride around town so we can enjoy the weather together, man to man. Well, men." Jackson gave the Chisholm brothers his best sparkly grin, and Ethan gritted his teeth and rolled his eyes.

They're not women, Jackson.

Ethan cleared his throat. "What he means is that we came by to talk about a few things. Lily in particular."

Seth looked at Ethan speculatively. "What about Lily? That you're with her against our not-so-secret wishes? Or that you're taking up all of her precious time left here?"

"Look, man,"—Jackson shouldered Ethan out of the way a little—"we just wanted to bury the hatchet of family animosity."

"The hatchet," Jason echoed. "Okay, fine. Consider the hatchet buried."

Ethan regarded Jason very carefully. “Just like that? After all this time of you not wanting us around your sister, you’re just shrugging it all off?”

“I didn’t say I was shrugging. But I do realize that we’re all probably putting Lily in an awkward position.”

“So we’re fine, then?” Ethan asked. “The Chisholm-Stone tension is gone now?”

“Consider it done.”

“And the other thing?” Ethan pressed.

Jason lowered his brows over his glacier-like eyes. “What other thing?”

“Us. With your sister. The relationship.”

“That thing. Right. We’re still burying that issue.”

“Burying,” Jackson repeated. “As in still in the process of thinking about it?”

Seth grinned, but it was a flashing of canines. “Right.”

“That doesn’t make any sense, and you know it,” Jackson said.

Seth crossed his arms over his chest, mimicking his brother. “You really don’t want to tell me what I do and do not know.”

“I thought the hatchet was buried,” Jackson threw back.

“That was the other one,” Seth retorted. “The one that’s officially buried is the family hostility issue. The issue of our sister is still a pretty hot topic.”

“Yeah, it is,” Jackson said menacingly.

“Watch it, pal,” Seth snarled. Jason glared at him then turned to Ethan.

“We appreciate the two of you coming out and wanting to set things right, but it’s not that easy. The issue here, other than the fact that we’re still making up our minds about you, is that we have precious little time left with our sister. The little sister we raised, sent to college, and protected all her life.”

Ethan scrubbed his face with his palms. “That’s what the real issue is here. It’s not us, and it’s not Lily. It’s you. I know I would do

the same exact thing if we had a younger sister, so I'm not judging, but you can't keep doing this to her."

Jason uncrossed his arms almost as if the tension in them could no longer be contained. "You're saying what, exactly?"

"Lily is so desperate to please you yet have her own life that she's stuck in the middle. It's like a tug-of-war. We're on one side and you're on the other. And it's making her decision to leave a lot easier."

Seth looked at Ethan as if he were a three-headed dog. "The hell you just say?"

"What?" Jackson jumped in. "Neither of you thought that you were the ones pushing her to make her asinine decision?"

Seth's face flushed bright red. "Don't you even try to tell us we didn't do right by our sister when you've never been responsible for more than a car."

"And don't you try to tell us that we're coming out of nowhere with this! Lily isn't a reckless, act-now-and-think-about-it-later kind of girl. She thinks things through. There is always a method behind her madness, and you need to stop and think for just a minute that it might be you!"

Seth clenched his jaw so hard his lips turned yellow around the edges. "Listen, you self-righteous punk, you have no idea what it was like for us when our fathers died. You don't know what it was like trying to raise her and protect her from guys like you who pounce on the freshest meat possible. And don't even think to deny it because I know how the game goes."

"So you're admitting that you've played the game," Jackson sneered.

"Of course I have. All of us have. But that doesn't make up for the fact that you're dealing with our baby sister here. If you had a sister you'd know exactly where we're coming from."

“That’s what you’re not getting! Jesus H. Christ! You’re talking about her like she’s some sort of child. She’s not! She grew up a long time ago, and it’s time you started realizing it.”

Jason’s eyes looked like ice chips in his skull. “We know she’s grown up. Believe me.”

“I think I’m going to disagree with that.”

“Oh, really.”

“Hell yes. It’s not right for a twentysomething woman—yes, woman—to have to sneak around town to see the guys she’s dating. It’s preposterous.” Jackson’s hand gestures grew wilder by the second. So much for calm and in control.

Jason seemed to mull that over. “Okay. Let’s put it this way. You have a baby sister, right? A sweet, precious baby sister who is the very definition of what is good in the world. And you watch her grow up and trade following you, her big brother and biggest hero, around to play dress-up and try on her mother’s lipstick.”

Ethan could just see Lily doing that. Prancing around with her spun-copper braids and her makeup smudged all over her face. The idea made his heart seize.

“Then guys start noticing her. It’s all innocent until they start looking at her for real—when they start thinking of her as more than the girl next door. You have no idea what it’s like. You can’t even imagine what it’s like to know that people like you are interested in my baby sister.”

Jackson scoffed. “People like us? What, stand-up guys?”

“No. I’m talking about all the shit you pulled back in your heyday.”

“That was over ten years ago!” Ethan felt like he was about to lose his temper.

“Was it? Are you really done being those people? You can’t change for her. You can behave for a while, but in the end, the only people who can set you straight are yourselves.”

“Okay,” Jackson said, “philosophy session is over. We’re not idiots. We had our share of fun and messing things up, but she is too important to us to get caught up in what we used to be and holding grudges. You’re not the only ones who’ll lose her if or when she leaves.”

“That’s supposed to make us feel sorry for you?” Jason seemed to curl into himself. Instead of making it seem as if he was backing off, it made him seem bigger, more intense and focused. “She’s our flesh and blood.”

“And she’s the one for us!” Ethan shot back.

“We care about her,” Jackson said. “We always have. I’m sick and damn tired of this Chisholm-Stone bullshit.”

Jason sighed long and hard. “This isn’t about the feud. It’s about you proving you’re good enough for our sister.”

Ethan ground his teeth so hard his gums hurt. “You won’t let us.”

“Yeah, because you screwed up big time.”

Ethan nodded. “We want to make it right again. We had no idea back then about what that car meant to her. To all of you. We never would have touched it had we known. Now that we know, we want to fix it.”

“Give us that chance,” Jackson said.

Jason crossed his bazooka arms over his chest and glared at them. *Okay, fine.* He was a badass, and Ethan and Jackson had every right to fear he would kick their asses in less than two seconds apiece. “What exactly did you have in mind to convince her to stay?”

Ethan met Jason’s gaze with his own. “We were going to redo a classic Mustang for her to make up for the one we ruined ten years ago.”

“That’s the special plan? A car.” Seth scoffed.

“Hey. It all goes back to the car,” Jackson shot back.

They all shared a moment of male agreement on the subject. Then Jason opened his mouth again. “What makes you think it’s going to make her stay? It’s just a car, after all.”

“It’s more than that, and you know it. If we hadn’t been so damn reckless when we were younger, maybe all of us would have gotten along. Hell, we might not even be having this, um—”

“Girl talk,” Jackson supplied.

“—discussion,” Ethan finished, glaring at his brother. “We might be sitting at Cedar Ridge throwing back a few beers for all we know. We messed up, though, and here we are, back at square one.”

Jason appraised them with his blank stare, and Ethan felt a little itchy. He hated being scrutinized like that, but he would embrace the experience if it brought him one step closer to claiming Lily forever.

Ethan returned Jason’s unblinking stare for a few moments longer, and then Jason turned to Seth. “Devin Callahan is still doing his thing at the garage, right?”

Seth grunted. “Yeah. Last I checked.”

Jason and Seth looked at the two of them, and Ethan felt as if he could breathe a little easier.

“We won’t get in your way, then. Last I heard, Devin had a few old beauties just waiting to be dolled up.”

Jackson rubbed his palms together. “Just what I was waiting to hear.”

Chapter Six

After almost three weeks of sneaking around and made-up excuses of a very vague nature, the day had finally come. Today, Jackson and Ethan would unveil Lily's surprise—a fully-restored Mustang much like the one they had destroyed almost a decade ago.

Jackson honestly did not know how they had gotten it all done. When they had driven up to Devin's shop, he looked at them as if they were asking for his firstborn. He had scratched his unshaven jaw and stared at the '65 Mustang Jackson and Ethan had selected. "I'll have to call in a few favors, but I can do it. She'll be beautiful."

Jackson had agreed with the statement, but for more reasons than one. While Devin Callahan had his fair share of the ladies, especially the ones he shared with his brother, Cole, the sheriff, the one complaint their women always uttered was that Devin had more love for his cars than he did for them.

As he had looked at the other man, Jackson had to admit that was the truth. Devin was a good enough mechanic to be on one of those TV shows dedicated to restoring old cars to at least mint condition or better. It took a lot of research, a lot of know-how, and ultimately, a lot of passion. After Devin had given them a tour of the garage he owned, Jackson had to admit that what Devin did to those cars was an art form. And that wasn't just his male side talking.

Now, looking at the work Devin and his crew, along with Jackson and Ethan pitching in, had done, Jackson let out a low whistle. "Man, Ethan. I might be having second thoughts. I want to keep her for myself."

Ethan ran his hand over the hood. "She is pretty."

“So we can keep her?”

Ethan shook his head in dismay. “I knew it. I *knew* it. I had this sneaking suspicion you would want to commandeer the car.”

“Commandeer? *Moi*? I would never do such a thing.”

“Right.” Ethan scoffed. “You’re just saying that because you’re not quite sure what it means.”

“Insults to my intelligence don’t count anymore. You used them all up when we were kids.”

“Either way, you can’t have the car. It’s Lily’s.”

“If we were giving it to anyone but her, I think I’d have to pout.” Jackson stepped back and admired the Mustang even more. “Lily’s going to love her.”

Ethan grinned. “Yeah. She will.” He went quiet for a moment as he walked around the perimeter of the car. Contemplative quiet.

“What?”

“Nothing, Jackson.” Ethan stopped when he neared him. “It’s just that I was thinking how much Lily fits the car.”

Jackson thought about her long, toned legs and the way her shorts hugged her ass. *Mmm, her ass*. One of his favorite places in the world to be. But lately he started realizing that his favorite place to be was having Lily tucked into his side after sex when she was damp with her sweat and the scent of their lovemaking stuck to her skin. He loved pressing his nose against the back of her neck and inhaling her deep and slow. It was almost as if he were taking her inside himself. In those moments, everything was right. There was world peace, the birds chirped outside the windows, and gum drops grew on the front lawn. It was like a Prius commercial in his mind.

And then she would snuggle into his arms as if she did not want to leave, and his heart would clench to the point of pain. He exerted enough control not to rub the spot, but the sensation grew more intense with the passing days. He really needed to see a doctor about it. He was approaching the heart-attack age, right? That meant he needed to give up drinking, whoring, and fast food. Now that he and

Ethan had Lily, the first two were a no-brainer. He still needed a little wiggle room on the last one.

“Uh, Jackson?” His twin waved a hand in front of Jackson’s face. “You there?”

“Yes. Stop waving that thing around like it’s a weapon. I was just thinking about Lily. You’re right about the car thing. She’s classic. And she’s tough. And there’s something eternal in her lines and curves—something that makes me look twice every time.”

“Are we talking about Lily or the car?” Ethan asked, but his eyes held a deep understanding that unnerved Jackson a little.

When he and Ethan were younger, Jackson had called it “the Ethan look.” He honestly did not know how his twin knew practically everything about everyone, but he did. Ethan had powers of observation Jackson lacked, and there were times, when he was straightforward with himself, that Jackson felt cheated. Ethan and Lily had this connection, this invisible, sparkly rope that tied them together. Ethan was intelligent, solid, and strong—exactly what Lily needed to ground herself. She was creative, and creative people needed some solidity in their lives.

What did he, Jackson the asshole twin, have to offer? A smart-ass attitude and some mad bedroom skills? Sure, that kept women enamored for a while, but Lily was not like the other women. She was much, much more, and he wondered if he was enough.

“I’m talking about Lily,” Jackson responded.

Ethan regarded him long and hard, and Jackson swallowed. “She’s going to love it. How could she not?”

“I dunno. Should we get her some flowers? She is a woman, after all. They like that sort of thing.”

“Nah. She’s going to love it. I know it.”

Jackson shrugged. “If you say so.” He tried to play off the serious tone in his voice. “Let’s go show it to her. I get dibs on driving it.”

“You know, sometimes, I have no idea what goes on in your mind.”

"I'm pretty sure you do. You always do."

"Not lately. Something's been bothering you for a while now, and it has nothing to do with the letter or New York."

Ethan was so on target it pissed Jackson off. "If I need a shrink, I'll pay for one."

"Save it. I know something is bothering you, and I want to know what it is before we go over to see Lily. I'm not going to have you ruin our surprise with one of your moods."

"I do not have moods. Men do not have moods."

Ethan eyed him and lifted his brows. "Now you're avoiding the subject. Classic Jackson maneuver."

"So I have maneuvers? When did this happen?"

"You've always been like that—being a smart-ass to cover up when you're upset about something."

"I'm not upset. I was just thinking about something that wasn't palatable."

"You must really be upset," Ethan said. "You just used the word palatable."

Jackson scratched the back of his head. "I was thinking about Lily and the car and what it all means." At Ethan's silent urging, he continued, "What happens after this? When she is so wowed by this gesture that she—hopefully—decides to stay? How does this work?"

"Just like it does for Mom and Dads."

"Mom has a special relationship with all of them..." Jackson kicked at the ground and thought for a moment. "Lily, I get. Her and you, I get. Me? What do I have to give her?"

Jackson felt Ethan's shock as if it were his own.

"Where did you get that idea?"

"The two of you have this connection. You knew for years that she was it, and you never lost sight of her after all that time. You never gave up, no matter what happened—her brothers, the letter, all of it. All I got is a temper and a really low recovery time after sex," he grumbled.

Ethan looked at him then burst out laughing. “Jackson, you really need to get your head on straight.” His blue eyes danced with so much humor that Jackson found himself cracking a smile. “If you haven’t noticed, she asks for you just as much as she does me. She’s just less vocal about it because you’re such a stubborn ass.”

That stung. “Yeah, thanks for the support.” He started to turn on his heel when Ethan spoke up.

“I didn’t mean it that way, man. Come on.”

Jackson faced his brother. “And you’re calling me the ass.”

“Stubborn ass,” Ethan corrected, “and you didn’t let me finish. She hates to admit it, but she follows our lead when it comes to opening up. She thinks she’s in control of it all, but she’s still holding back a little. I don’t know why, but she is. Then she sees you hesitating over showing her how you feel, and she hesitates, too. Watching the two of you can be exhausting.”

“So first I’m an ass then I’m a sideshow at the circus.”

“Pretty much.” Ethan snatched the keys to the Mustang out of Jackson’s hand. “Just let yourself feel what you feel for her without shying away from it,” Ethan said over his shoulder as he rounded the hood of the car and opened the driver’s side door. “Then she will, too.” Jackson started after his brother, but all he really saw was Lily. “She’s waiting, Jackson.”

He walked to the passenger’s side door and swung it open. “Then let’s not keep her waiting.”

* * * *

Lily stood in her workroom comparing color swatches. She held them out in front of her and tilted her head from side to side as if holding her head at a certain angle would gift her with the knowledge she sought. It was useless. Those two had promised to pick her up and take her to LiebFest, which was one of her favorite things, but they were running late.

In fact, they had been acting strangely for the past few days. They would try to keep her distracted, but she was not stupid. She knew their tricks. The one they employed the most was the one-on-one strategy, which included one of them trying to butter her up—or *distract* her—while the other one snuck off to answer a phone call. They would also pull stunts like they did today and show up late.

What in the hell is going on?

Of course, her first thought was that they were having an affair with one of their ex-bimbos. Then she thought better of it. Jackson and Ethan would have disappeared permanently if her brothers found out about any behavior of that sort, and Jason had an uncanny way of sniffing out information. So that hypothesis went out the window. Which left her the only answer—they were trying to distance themselves from her before she left.

She picked up a silk teal color sample and held it in front of her face as if it held all the answers to her predicament. She understood why they would want to slow things down between them, but it still hurt, especially when she thought they had been living in an absolute state of bliss. Her brothers had better not have been right when they said Jackson and Ethan were not the permanent-relationship types of men.

“Stuck on colors again?” Ethan asked, shocking her out of her thoughts.

She spun around. “Jesus, you scared me. I didn’t even hear you come in.”

Her heart did that hummingbird wings thing in her chest when they walked into the room. Spaces seemed so occupied when Jackson and Ethan were near. They took up any extra room with how aware she was of them, with how vital they were to her. She could pick out almost every nuance of their behavior now. How Jackson tended to stand with an overly comfortable posture to make it seem as if he did not care about what was going on. How Ethan made it a habit to make sure his stance never closed Jackson out of the room or conversation.

Looking at them now, she had to force herself to concentrate on forming words. She loved the shirt Jackson wore today—a red-white-and-blue plaid shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. It showed off his muscular forearms and the sprinkling of blond hair there. She flicked her gaze over to Ethan and loved the way he filled out his dove-gray T-shirt. It was just the right shade to bring out the flecks of gold in his tan skin.

It was such a treat to look at them, especially like this, toward the end of the day, when their blond facial hair grew back just the perfect amount so that she envisioned the way it would feel against the insides of her thighs.

Jackson straightened. “Is that a blush I see?”

“What? No.” Lily blinked, trying to think of something more intelligible to say.

“Yep. It’s definitely a blush. Look at that, Ethan,” Jackson said as he moved toward her. “Such a pretty pink.”

“It’s almost as pretty as the pink she flushes when we’re finished with her.” Ethan walked alongside Jackson, and together they formed a six-foot wall of solid male flesh and broad shoulders. “What were you thinking about that was so interesting?” he asked before he pressed a kiss to the side of her neck.

“Mmm,” she responded. She set the swatches aside then turned in Ethan’s loose grip and rose up on her toes. “Hey, a girl’s got the right to her privacy.” She pressed her lips against his and savored the way his lips fit so perfectly to hers. When she pulled away, his smile was lazy and all-knowing, and his eyes danced. He looked happy, almost excited.

“Just when I thought my day couldn’t get any better.”

“You sweet talker,” Jackson said.

Lily snickered and turned to face him. “Says you.”

“Since I wrote the book on it, I figured I can call him out when it gets too sappy.” Jackson gave her a cocky half-smile, and her stomach tightened right behind her belly button.

“Don’t you start getting cockier on me now, Jackson Stone. You might not want to see the ways I’ve already thought up to punish you.” She reached down and undid her little tool belt and laid it on the work table.

Jackson’s jade gaze followed her every movement then snapped back to her face. “Oh, babe, you already are. I love the way that tool belt looks riding your ass.” As if to prove his point, he cupped her within his big-palmed grip. “All I can think about when you strut around with it on is how you would look with it strapped to your waist while you’re naked. Mmm-mmm-mmm, I’ve had a few fantasies about that.”

She shook her head. “And all this time I thought you got to work early because you wanted to help out.”

Jackson leaned down and kissed her, quick and hot. “So naïve.”

Even after all the kisses they had shared, he still made her blood run hot. “Keep telling yourself that.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Jackson looked from her to Ethan, and something passed between the two of them she still had yet to learn to interpret. When his gaze settled on her once more, Jackson looked uncharacteristically unsure of himself. “You ready to go?” Jackson cleared his throat. “To LiebFest, I mean.”

She backed away from Jackson enough so that she could not feel his body heat and surveyed them. Peculiar. Very peculiar, indeed. If she did not know any better, she would suspect that they were a little...nervous. A little sweaty around the hairlines and shifty in the feet.

“What did you two do now?”

They looked at each other, at her, then each other again, wearing twin expressions of amusement and confusion.

“What do you mean?” Ethan asked.

She gestured at them. “The two of you are acting strangely.”

“Define *strangely*,” Jackson said.

“Oh, you know what I mean. Sneaking around, trying to distract me...Don’t think I haven’t noticed.”

They shared an incriminating glance.

“I knew it!” she exclaimed. “You did something stupid, and now you don’t want to tell me. Well, I have news for you. If you think you can just act like jerks because—”

“Whoa, whoa. Calm down, sweetcheeks,” Jackson said. “It was supposed to be a surprise, but we got you something.”

“That’s what all you men say. ‘I was just going to get you this, babe,’ or ‘Look, let me distract you with something shiny so I can go screw my mistress.’”

“Lily, babe, I don’t know what’s gotten into that head of yours, but that’s not the intention. We just wanted to get you a gift. Right, Ethan?”

“Right,” Ethan responded, sounding perfectly smug.

“And besides, only wimpy men in tuxedos have mistresses.”

“Jackson Stone, I swear I’m going to slap you one of these days,” Lily spat.

He shoved his hands in his pockets, looking for all the world as if he had recovered from his momentary lack of finesse. “You better calm down or you won’t get your gift.”

Lily glared at them. “A gift? What kind of gift?”

“What, two guys can’t get the woman of their dreams a token of their affection?” Jackson laid his palm over his heart. He was aiming for stricken, but his acting skills were subpar.

“I know all about you and your wiles. You like to let ’em down easy.”

“I would never do such a thing.”

“Not with me you won’t.”

“Hey, hey, hey. We just wanted to spoil you a little. Who said anything about letting you down easy?”

She fiddled with the end of her braid. “The two of you have been sneaking off for hours at a time lately. Avoiding me, going out alone...It’s like you have this big secret or something.”

“Babe, if you only knew,” Jackson said, sounding exhausted. “But it has nothing to do with us leaving you or any other crap your overactive imagination cooked up.”

“Oh, so my mind produces crap?”

“Would you stop playing devil’s advocate and listen to what I’m trying to tell you? Ethan and I got you a gift, and we would like to give it to you.”

Her glance darted over to Ethan, and she shifted her weight before saying, “Okay, fine. I’ll believe you. But just so you know, you two *have* been acting strange lately.”

Ethan just smiled. “You’ll know why in a sec. Now cover your eyes.”

“Oh, please. We’ve played this game before.”

“It’s not that kind of present. Get your mind out of the gutter.”

“As if I could. And anyway, y’all are the ones who put it there in the first place.”

Ethan just gave her a pointed stare even though he was fighting a smile. “Hands.”

“Fine, fine.” Lily closed her eyes and covered them with her palms.

“Oh, so you’ll believe *him*,” Jackson complained.

“Of course I will. Ethan is the nice one,” she shot back in the general direction of Jackson’s voice.

“What does that make me?” Jackson asked.

Lily snickered. “The bad one.”

“Bad,” he said as if rolling that round in his mind. “I can work with that. Chicks dig the bad boys. Especially good little girls like you. Come on. You’re gonna love it.”

* * * *

As he and Ethan each took Lily by her elbows and lead her out toward her “brand-new” Mustang, Jackson fought down the need to pin her against the wall and show her just how much he and Ethan did not have the urge to do the things she had accused them of doing.

Get hard for another woman? Sneak around and make a fool of her? Hell no. What really stuck in his fucking craw, though, was the fact that if she thought they were messing around on her, then maybe she thought they were not as exclusive as he and Ethan thought they were.

Jackson glanced over her head at his twin, who looked like he was floating on a cloud of joy. He sighed mentally. If he was honest with himself, then he would have to admit that it bothered him on a very deep, caveman level that she was still suspicious of his and Ethan’s intentions. True, she had no idea the extent and grandiose level of the surprise they had cooked up for her, but the idea that she felt they would not shower her with gifts just because—or in this case because they had some making up to do—did not sit well with him.

She was theirs, damn it, and that came with certain special treatment benefits. Those included orgasms, sex, after-sex cuddling—which was very hard to come by with him—and conversation, and visible tokens of their undying love. Hell, all women liked gifts. The smaller and shinier, the better. But, no. He and Ethan had to go pick out the one woman in all of Liebling, hell, all of Texas, who did not fit that mold.

Hell. He and Ethan had their work cut out for them.

“But why is my gift outside?” she asked as they led her through the pathway to the street. “Oh, wait. Did you get me a pony?”

“Your enthusiasm is contagious,” Ethan retorted, his voice devoid of any expression.

Lily’s laughter bubbled out from her mouth, and Jackson found himself chuckling along with the sound.

“You’re such a comedian, Ethan,” Jackson joked. “We need to line you up a stand-up routine.”

Lily snorted. “Oops! Sorry.”

“How ladylike.” Ethan shook his head, looking dismayed. “Now cover your eyes. No peeking.”

Lily rested her hands against her face. “They *are* covered, and I would never peek,” she said through the small space between her wrists.

“Yeah, and I would never... Well, that list is pretty short,” Jackson said.

“Yes, I know,” Lily huffed.

Jackson caressed the soft skin of her inner elbow with the tips of his fingers. “Is that a hint of jealousy I detect?” He really should not have prodded her, especially at a momentous occasion such as this, but he could not help himself. There was just something about the way she got all feisty on him. He did not think he would ever get tired of it.

He and Ethan drew to a stop. “Okay, Lily. Open your eyes.”

Jackson’s gaze fixed on her so he could catch every nuance of her reaction. At first, he panicked. She just stood there, her arms dangling at her sides. Then she blinked. Shook her head. Blinked again.

“Oh. Oh-oh my...” She covered her mouth with her hands and went utterly still. She said something, but her palms muffled her words.

Ethan wrapped his hands around her wrists and pulled gently. “Lily? Everything okay?”

She sniffled and nodded.

“Uh, was that a yes or a no? It was a bit of a mixed response,” Jackson said as he sidled up behind her.

When she wiped at her cheeks and looked at them, Jackson’s heart seized in his chest. For a horrible, interminable moment, he thought she was upset. The idea made him sick. “Lily...”

He and Ethan closed in around her, and when a sob broke free from her lips, they looked at each other in abject horror. Neither of them was good around a crying female, least of all him. Especially when the female in question was Lily. He could deal with her angry, pissed, and beyond pissed. But tears? Oh, good Lord, have mercy. Anything but that.

Without thinking, he rubbed her arms slowly, letting her know he was there for her even if he did not have the right words to say so. Ethan whispered something against her hair, and she sniffled before looking up at the car.

"It's beautiful." She said the words in a hushed whisper, but he heard the conviction behind her words. The vise around his chest loosened. "It's absolutely beautiful. Oh my God, look at her! So shiny and new and..." She broke free of their arms and rushed over to the Mustang and circled it, listing off its attributes. Loose strands of her hair fluttered and floated around her face, making her look like an angelic mad scientist. And when she started flouncing around like a five-year-old on her birthday, Jackson felt himself relax.

He and Ethan shared a job-well-done glance and then got a good eyeful or two of watching the pure, unadulterated joy on Lily's face. She was so breathtakingly lovely when she smiled. True, Jackson had a soft spot for the fire her eyes spit at him when she was angry, but there was something so disarming and genuine about her smile. Her blue-black eyes sparkled with joy, her smile was so wide her cheeks dimpled, and her entire face was so radiant, Jackson found himself staring at her like an awestruck teenager.

While she cooed and clucked over the car, the two of them made their way over to her.

"I think we did a good job," Jackson told his brother.

"I told you she'd love it."

"Yeah, but this goes beyond my expectations."

Ethan stopped and looked at him. "Doesn't she always?" he said then continued on.

Jackson halted in this tracks and thought about the implications of that statement. He had to admit that Lily did, in fact, surpass every single one of his expectations and more.

“This looks almost exactly like the one my brothers, dads, and I worked on,” she said over the hood of the car. An expression of clarity spread over her face. “How could you two remember...”

Ethan rested his palms on the passenger-side door. “We asked your brothers.”

“Th—they helped you with this?”

“They weren’t exactly thrilled to find us on their porch, but when we told them what we wanted to do, they started coming around.”

“Slowly,” Jackson put in.

“So, all of the phone calls...” Lily’s stare grew in intensity.

“Were either from your brothers or Devin Callahan,” Ethan answered.

She looked at the Mustang again. “No wonder she’s so pretty. Devin does the best restorations I’ve ever seen, and my dads used to drag me to a lot of car shows when I was younger and—” Her words came up short, and her lips started trembling. “I can’t tell you two h—how much th—this means. I can’t even think of the right words to say.” She swatted at the tears that spilled over her bottom lashes. “God, and now I’m all red, I bet.”

Jackson rounded the hood of the car. “Nah. You’re beautiful.” He pressed a kiss to her nose, and she giggled then buried her face in his chest.

“Thank you.” Her words were muffled, but he heard them loud and clear.

He bent his head and rested his cheek against her neck and breathed her in. “I know it can’t make up for the one you lost, but we hope it shows you how sorry we are and how much we want to make things right.”

Lily lifted her head, and a few wisps of hair tangled in her lashes. “I think the fact that you two went to my brothers to do this is the best gift of all.”

Ethan, who had been watching them with unbridled satisfaction, came up behind her. “It was time.”

She nodded. “It really was.”

“So, are you ready to take her for a spin?” Ethan asked.

“I’ve got the keys right here.” Jackson grinned and patted the small bulge in his front pocket, right next to the big one pushing against his zipper.

Lily fished the keys out of Jackson’s pocket, which made him turn from sentimental to ready-to-go in half a second. “Do you even have to ask?”

She opened the driver’s side door and stuck her head in. “It even smells new! Uh, why is there a rope in the backseat?”

Ethan grinned. “For later. After LiebFest.”

“Later. What’s going on later?”

“You’ll see. We’ve got something planned.”

“I’m assuming this is a surprise of the more physical kind?”

Ethan just regarded her, gave her another grin, and ushered her into her seat. “You’ll see.” He pressed his lips against hers, and a warm wave of heat rolled through Jackson at the flushed look on Lily’s face. The look Ethan gave her promised a few treats she had yet to experience.

“I’m going to hold you to that, Ethan.”

“I hope you hold more than that.”

Chapter Seven

As Lily pulled up to the fairgrounds in her sweet Mustang, Ethan in the passenger seat and Jackson riding in the back, she could not help but feel like a happy-go-lucky teenager, like this was destiny finally coming to fruition. Ten years ago, she was meant to come to LiebFest in this exact car to get the attention of two smoking-hot twins. Instead, a stupid teenage prank ensured that that would never pan out.

So her fantasies as a teenager didn't turn out as she had hoped, but if they had, she probably wouldn't have appreciated it anyway. As they say, youth is wasted on the young. Now, Lily realized waiting ten years for this day to happen was exactly how it should have been, and, best of all, it was Ethan and Jackson who had made it possible. Replacing the car they had totaled and getting her brothers to help them restore it was beyond thoughtful. It was her best birthday ever.

Lily had never felt happier, and her future had never seemed more open and hopeful. It was like being a teenager all over again, except without the angst and acne. The two boys she had loved as a girl were now grown men and she was a woman, and they could carry on just like lovesick teenagers but without having to sneak around and hide in the woods—at least not out of necessity. Her cheeks warmed as the image of her fucking her two men surrounded by a grove of oak trees and nothing but moonlight and stars to illuminate the night sky flashed in her mind. Have mercy. Lily knew exactly what they would do as soon as the carnival ended.

The smell of the fairgrounds was intoxicating with its mixture of all manner of fried delights, damp hay, and buttery popcorn. LiebFest

coincided with the Liebling Rodeo. There were rides, games, and more handsome cowboys than any girl could shake a stick at. Not that she really cared about the cowboys. She already had her hands full with two studs of her own.

In the past she might have relished the testosterone-heavy scent of anonymous rugged men passing through with the rodeo, but not tonight. No, if she had anything to do with it, she'd have the sweet odor of her masculine men wafting into her nostrils twenty-four-seven for the rest of her life. Ethan and Jackson were everything to her.

She had decided she wanted to stay in Liebling over the past few days, but for whatever reason, she wanted to surprise them with the news. Perhaps it was because she wanted to be completely sure she would be staying for something worthwhile. After seeing the lengths to which they had gone in order to prove to her that they—*Gulp!*—loved her without saying it, she realized the deal had been sealed. Now, she just had to figure out the perfect moment to give them her special surprise.

"It looks like they've done it again," Ethan said, awe softening the richness of his voice. LiebFest was Liebling's official and festive way of signaling the end of summer, a way to get everyone together, young and old alike, before the start of another school year. Even for those without summer break, the season still held a lazy magic as if no one could completely let go of that feeling of freedom and limitless possibilities that always marked the beginning of summer vacation.

"Ah, do you smell that? That is the unmistakable scent of foot-long corndogs and deep-fried Twinkies—both served on a stick, I might add," Jackson said from the backseat. Lily could practically hear him salivating. "It's a beautiful thing."

"Not as beautiful as this." Ethan held Lily's hand just after she put the car in park and kissed her open palm.

"You're even cornier than the corn dogs, brother," Jackson teased as he climbed out of the car.

Ethan laced his fingers with her own as he escorted her from the driver's side, closing the door behind her. She didn't miss the way his other hand grazed her ass in the process nor the way his eyes twinkled upon contact. She was beginning to think her time might be better spent riding her men than carnival rides. And then she saw it. The Ferris wheel in all its twinkling glory, slowly spinning round and round.

"Come on, slowpokes, let's head to the Ferris wheel before the line gets even longer." Lily grabbed each twin's hand and raced toward the ride as fast as her legs could carry her.

Several people were ahead of them in line. Lily clapped her hands as butterflies of excitement fluttered in her belly.

She could not wait to get to the top and give them her big news. Way up there, they'd have no choice but to hear her out.

"I'll go get the tickets," Jackson said. "I'll find you two in line."

Ethan shook his head as his twin disappeared into the crowd. "He just wants to get some corndogs. That sneaky bastard. I hope he brings us back something."

"I'm keeping my fingers crossed for some funnel cake." Lily's stomach gave an approving rumble.

"I think I've got all the sweetness I need right here." Pulling her close to him, Ethan looked at her adoringly. He was always the sappier of the two, but Lily wouldn't have it any other way. She eagerly accepted the kiss he placed on her lips like a warm drop of molasses. She wrapped her arm around his waist and stuck it in his back pocket, tucking her head into his broad chest as they waited. Even though she was excited to reach the head of the line, she realized she could wait like this wrapped in Ethan's arms forever.

"All right, you two." Jackson elbowed between them, a corndog in one hand and funnel cake in the other. "I've got three tickets in my pocket, and I'm not saying which one but you're more than welcome to figure out, sugar." Jackson grinned at her devilishly.

“Well, at least you got me my funnel cake.” Lily went to grab it when Jackson lifted it out of her reach.

“Hold on there, sticky fingers. Who said I got this for you?” Again with that grin of his. She wanted to smack it off his face and then kiss him to bring it back again.

“Don’t be an ass, Jackson.” Ethan swiped the paper plate from over Jackson’s head and gallantly held it out for her.

She put a piece of the decadently greasy confection into her mouth. She didn’t care what it did to her hips. It was a once-a-year opportunity to eat like a kid again, a time before she worried how she looked in a bikini. “Oh, it’s so good.” They shared it and easily finished it by the time they got to the front of the line.

“Going up?” the Ferris wheel operator asked perfunctorily as he took Jackson’s tickets.

They were secured in the four-seat car, and Lily reached across to squeeze a tree-trunk thigh in each hand as they arced up into the night sky.

“Oh, my God. We’re up so high!” Lily looked down at the people milling about below them then looked up at Jackson and Ethan who sat opposite her. “What?”

Jackson regarded her with a haughty eyebrow. “Some of us have ridden the Ferris wheel more than once.”

“Hey! Neither of you is scared of heights.”

Ethan quirked his eyebrows at her and crossed his arms over his chest. “Wait, if you’re so scared of heights, what on earth are you doing getting on a damn Ferris wheel?”

Lily smiled. “Some people like to live on the edge. It’s not as fun if it isn’t at least a *little* scary.”

Jackson leaned back in his seat and splayed his legs. “Well, ain’t that funny. By the look of pure joy on your face when you’re riding me, I’d think you were terrified of my co—”

“I’d just like to remind you that we’re at a family-friendly event,” Lily cut in. “Summer LiebFest is crawling with innocent ears, and I

don't want to be responsible for any of them coming home knowing a few choice words for your happy bits."

"Happy bits? Babe, you really know how to sweet-talk a man, don't you?"

Lily braced her hands on his knees and hauled herself across the space separating them to plant a quick kiss on his lips. "I learned from the best."

Ethan chuckled as Jackson pulled her closer. "Well, then you should know by now that that doesn't qualify as a real kiss."

She licked her lips, her arousal growing at the reckless look in his eyes. "Then I might need another lesson."

Jackson grinned right before wrapping his hand around the base of her neck, his fingers tangling in her hair. He guided her face toward his without any preamble, his lips forcing hers into submission in the most delicious way. He kissed her with a combination of firmness and ease, teasing her, making her want more. So much more.

Her blood flowed like warm honey through her veins, making her limbs weak. Her knees and elbows buckled, and she would have fallen to the floor had Ethan not moved in behind her.

"Shh," he crooned, "I've got you."

He moved behind her and arranged her so that she sat in his lap, her legs bent and resting outside his knees. His quickly hardening cock rested between her ass cheeks, and her shorts were thin enough that she could feel the precise outline of his cockhead.

Desire, hot and sharp, shot through her, making her nipples bead in her bra. The way they brushed against the material drove her crazy, and she wished something else were touching them—their mouths, preferably.

Ethan's hands drifted up and down her sides in a caressing motion that did nothing to calm her. Instead, his touch incited her lust for him—for them—and made her imagine his fingers on other parts of her body.

Jackson leaned forward, seducing her with just the power of his lips moving over hers and the way their breaths mingled in the humid afternoon air. There were times when Jackson surprised her, and this was one of them. The ease with which he kissed her—as if he had all day to kiss her—made her head spin, but his subtle command of her made her cunt start throbbing. She loved it when he got bossy.

Ethan's fingers slipped underneath the hem of her shorts and found her thin cotton panties. They were already soaked through with her cream.

"Oh, Lily. You're so wet." Ethan groaned, his voice husky.

He fiddled with her underwear, the material blocking her from the full force of his fingertips dancing over her slit. She held her hand over his to still him. "Wait, what are you doing? Someone might see."

"Don't worry, sweetheart," Jackson said mischievously as he nibbled her ear lobe. "I bribed the carny. The wheel stops when we reach to top. No one will see a thing."

"Aren't you a clever one?" Lily smiled as her arousal amped up even more.

"I have my moments."

And then, just as Jackson had said, the wheel stopped when they reached the top. "How much time do we have up here?" Part of Lily hated she was acting like a nervous Nelly, but she wasn't an exhibitionist or a slut. Her mother had raised her right, and the only people who needed to be privy to her most intimate moments were right there with her in the car.

"Twenty bucks bought me five minutes. But don't worry, we'll make it count."

"Well, in that case, I want your fingers inside me." She whimpered. "Now."

Ethan kissed his way from her shoulder to the sensitive spot under her ear. "So impatient."

He took her earlobe between his teeth. She sucked in a breath. "Ethan..."

“I love the way you say my name like that.”

The sound of a zipper made her look up at Jackson. “You know what I love? Your lips on my cock.”

She licked her lips. She liked that, too. She watched, transfixed, as he lifted his hips to slide his jeans down his thighs. His dick, thick and long and heavy, leaked with pre-cum, and she greedily lapped it up.

“Shit. Yes. Like that. Lick me, Lily. Damn, that’s good.” Jackson’s head fell back, making the cords in his neck stick out. He was so beautiful like this—a male in the throes of carnal ecstasy.

She pressed kisses along the underside of his cock as she cupped his balls, and he groaned above her, his fingers tangling into her hair. While he did not press her head down onto him, he thrust his hips up in little pulses, mimicking the motions he made when he fucked her good and deep.

Lily watched the play of his muscles under his skin as he moved, in awe of his male potency. His balls were a heavy weight in her hand, his cock filled her mouth to bursting, and his body was made to pleasure her.

Holding the base of his cock with her free hand, Lily slid her lips down the length of his dick until she could go no farther then started pumping her head up and down. She moved her hand in tandem with her mouth, and soon Jackson started moving along with her, fucking her mouth like he meant it.

“Damn, Lily, that’s good. Suck my cock—ah, yes. Shit.”

Behind her, Ethan lifted her shirt and ripped the cups of her bra away from her breasts, which tumbled into his awaiting hands. Without hesitating, Ethan pinched her hardened nipples with his fingers as he kneaded her tits with his palms, sending twinges of pure pleasure to her engorged clit and aching empty pussy.

“I love the way you fill my hands.”

“And I love—” She felt the first drops of rain moments before the sky opened. Lily squeaked and covered her head with her hands—as if that would protect her from the deluge—and cowered under them.

Raindrops ran down her arms and thighs and soaked into her clothing, making it stick to her in soggy patches. Giggling, despite her current position, she looked up at Jackson. His lashes stuck together, and water dripped down his cheeks. His shirt clung to his well-defined chest and abs, and though his cock was still hot and thick in her grip, his lips quirked on what looked like the beginnings of a laugh. The Ferris wheel lurched back on and began its descent.

Ethan straightened her clothing, snickering behind her. "I guess that's what we get."

Jackson looked at him from over Lily's shoulder. "For what?" He glowered, albeit falsely.

"For getting frisky on a kids' ride."

"Hey! I paid for five minutes up here. We're practically hidden from plain sight. There are bars around the top of this thing, and we're at the very top."

"I'm not disagreeing with you," Ethan said, "but you gotta admit it's pretty funny."

"I'm not agreeing to anything that cuts my blowjob short."

"Aww, poor Jackson," Lily teased as she tucked him back in his pants. "Maybe later if you quit your pouting."

"Oh, I'll show you later." He reaching out, pulled her out of Ethan's lap, and tickled her.

She burst into hysterical laughter, kicking and squirming. "Stop it! Stop, stop, stop! Fine! You win. Later! I swear!" When her giggles subsided, she took a deep breath. "I have some news."

They looked at her expectantly, and her heart started slamming in her chest.

"I, um." She flicked her braid over her shoulder.

Lily blushed from the heat of his stare and was about to tell them she was staying when the door to their passenger car opened and the attendant rushed them out. Lily struggled to look presentable as Jackson pinned the man with a glare.

“Sorry, buddy,” the attendant shrugged, “lightning and rain trumps your five minutes in heaven.”

Lily’s face heated as she realized the man knew exactly what the rain had disrupted. She might have been mortified if she weren’t so damn happy. The three of them scrambled out, slipping and sliding and as giddy as if they were drunk. She was flying high on happiness even though her hair stuck to her face in fat clumps.

“You look beautiful.” Ethan tucked a wet strand behind her ear.

“My hair is wet, and my clothes are sticking to me,” Lily complained.

His smile widened. “Exactly. You look beautiful.”

“He’s right, you know,” Jackson said. “You look downright edible.”

The air smelled like water, asphalt, and freshly-cut grass, and steam rose up off the ground, coating her ankles. She breathed in deep. There was nothing like the scent of a sudden rainstorm in the middle of the sweltering Texas summer. Now that she had decided to stay, it would be one less thing she would have to miss.

The rain started coming down harder, and she ran toward the nearest building—the house of mirrors. Jackson and Ethan followed close on her heels, and once they were partially sheltered from the rain, Ethan started rooting through her purse.

“Where are your keys? I need to put the top up and bring the car around.”

“Oh, God. I had completely forgotten about the top,” she responded.

“Yeah, but that’s what I’m for.” Ethan grinned down at her then pressed a hard, hot kiss to her lips before he sprinted off in the rain, leaving her with alone with Jackson.

He wiggled his brows at her. “The house of mirrors, huh? I like the way your mind works.”

She rolled her eyes. “Oh, please. Like we didn’t do what we just did on that Ferris wheel.”

“But that was on the Ferris wheel. This is a whole other thing entirely.”

“You better calm that thing in your pants down before I have to discipline it.”

He crossed his arms over his chest, and the action made his muscles bulge. “Just how do you plan on doing that?”

“I’m the girl. I get to decide when and with whom I—”

“Are you threatening to hold out on me? That’s just wrong, babe. I knew you were pretty feisty, but this? That’s just plain cruel.”

“Then don’t get greedy.”

He stepped up to her, unfolded his arms, and wrapped them around her, drawing her close. His hands skimmed down her back and cupped her ass. “This is mine.”

“I don’t think so, mister.”

“Like hell it isn’t.”

“We’ll see,” she said, extricating herself from his embrace. “You need to be a good boy.”

She sidestepped him, and he followed close on her heels. “But I’m always a good boy, and good boys get treats.”

“Very true, but I think you’re still pouting.”

They walked up the steps leading to the house of mirrors, and Jackson looked around for the ticket taker, who was nowhere to be found. Maybe the attendant was on a break. Jackson shrugged and pulled the door open for her. “I thought we agreed to later.”

She stepped past him and shivered at the change in temperature. “You cheated.”

“But I still won.” He looked down at her, all male pride, but when he saw her rubbing her arms to get warm, he shooed her hands away and did it himself. “You okay? Damn, I wish I had a jacket to give you.”

She snuggled against him. “You seem a little cold, too.”

“Nah. I’m good. I’m a guy. We’re programmed to give our jackets to shivering women even if we’re freezing to death.”

She pressed a kiss to where his pulse beat in his neck. "Not all guys are like that, but I love that you are."

"What can I say? You make me noble."

"Right. Noble." She pulled away and looked up at him. "Jackson Stone, you are plenty of things, but a knight in shining armor you are not."

He looked wounded. "I offer to give you my jacket, and this is how you repay me?"

"It was an imaginary jacket, first off. And secondly, you might not be a knight in shining armor, but I don't think I want that. I think I like you as the dark horse knight."

"Dark horse, huh?" He mulled that over for a moment. "I'll take it." She disentangled herself from his embrace, and he looked around. "You want to play hide-and-seek?"

She grinned, and he started counting.

"One...two...three..."

Lily scurried off, passing blown-up, shrunk-down, and wavy reflections of herself.

"...seven...eight..."

Lily walked past a mirror that made her legs look great, and she did a double-take. *Wow. I need this one in my house.* She turned around when Jackson stopped counting, expecting to hear him rushing toward her.

"Jackson?"

Instead, all she heard was the rain on the roof of the trailer. Goose bumps broke out over her skin, and her ears tuned in to every minute sound. Something was wrong. Horribly wrong.

"Jackson?" she whispered into the stillness, her heart thudding against her ribs. "Where are you?"

Her breaths shivered out of her, and her knees wobbled. Someone approached, but she could not focus on where they'd come from, and the only movements she caught were her own reflections.

Oh, God. Echoes of another humid night slammed into her, making her panic. She knew those steps. Knew the scent of smoke, the wind, and body odor. She had already pushed the memory of that night back into the farthest reaches of her mind, and in an instant, every detail came back to her in full force. Sticky night air, the sting of gravel digging into her flesh.

“Hey, babe. Did you miss me?” It was the biker who had attacked her at Cedar Ridge earlier that summer. She might have gotten seriously injured, or worse, if Ethan and Jackson hadn’t come to her aid.

Lily gagged and clutched her belly. “Where is he? What did you do with him?”

He finally stepped in front of her where she could see him. He was taller than she cared to remember. “He’s fine. Just a little bump on the head. Didn’t even see me coming.”

She took a step back with his step forward. “You’re not going to get away with this. We’re in public. At a huge family event, if you haven’t noticed.”

“And if you haven’t noticed, it’s raining, babe. So everyone’s going home. But you know what I didn’t notice? That you have two men. The one in here with you wasn’t the one I had it out with that one time. You’re a naughty little girl, aren’t you?”

She took a step back. Then another. Her back hit a cold surface—the mirror behind her.

“I like it when girls know how to play a little dirty.”

His meaty hand shot out and knocked her off balance. She toppled to the floor and bounced, hard. Her breath left her in a wheeze, but she scrambled forward. She saw him everywhere—behind her, in front of her—then the real thing grabbed her by the hair and yanked.

“I’m done playing nice. You’re coming with me now. You’re going to be my woman, and there’s no way around that.”

“Fuck you!” She struggled against the terrifying grip. Her scalp felt like it would rip off her skull any moment.

“Yeah. We’ll do that, too. Don’t you worry.” He dragged her behind him with an ease that made her sick. Agony shot down her neck and shoulders, and her legs fought for purchase on the floor, but the harder she fought, the harder he tugged at her hair.

She screamed for all she was worth, putting her terror and rage into it. Please, God, let someone hear her. Oh, please, God.

Then something slammed into the side of her head. Sparks flew in front of her eyes, then everything went black.

* * * *

Jackson cracked his eyes open then wished he had not opened them in the first place. Hot brands stabbed the back of his eyes, and a sledgehammer pounded away in his head. Jesus H. Christ, that hurt. *Holy shit.* How the hell had he ended up on the floor? Then his ears started ringing, a high-pitched sound that made him cringe. God, that was horrible.

A few years ago, he and Ethan had gone javelina hunting out on their family’s property a few hours’ drive from Liebling. He had shot one nice and clean. Right on target. Or so he thought until he heard it squeal. The sound made shivers crawl up his spine, and to this day, he had never heard anything so horrible. Until now.

As suddenly as the sound started, it ended, abruptly cut off with a heavy *thunk* a few yards away.

Then he remembered.

Lily.

He shot to his feet, pitching forward when his vision went blank from the pain. It overtook him, disorienting him. All he saw was himself stumbling, falling, dragging himself on the cold floor. Desperation like he had never known swamped him, driving him forward when he would not have been able to do so otherwise. There was nothing that would keep him from reaching her.

Chapter Eight

“Can’t you drive any faster? I knew I should’ve driven. You’re going to lose them.” Jackson searched frantically around the interior of Lily’s Mustang for anything that could help them as they chased down that biker bastard who dared lay a finger on their woman. The sound of rain pounding against the Mustang’s exterior barely registered.

“Shut up, Jackson. We won’t do Lily any good if we’re T-boned around a damn tree, and it’s slippery as hell out here. Besides, she said to never let you drive her car.”

Jackson would’ve rolled his eyes if he weren’t so busy trying to save his woman’s life.

“Jackson, I think I see them.” Ethan tapped Jackson on the shoulder, and he looked up just in time to see the small headlights flash and then disappear around a curve. “We’ll catch up to them. Up ahead the road straightens for a while and I’m going to gun it, but getting to them is only half the battle. What the hell are we going to do once we meet up with them? We can’t just run them off the road. He’s got Lily.”

Just then, Jackson noticed the coil of rope in the backseat. He caught his twin’s eye and smiled, holding the rope up. “We’re going to rope her.” He had intended on doing just that later in the evening, but for an entirely different end.

“Are you out of your damn mind?”

“I won a blue ribbon for calf roping the last time I competed.”

“Yeah, like fifteen years ago at the *junior* rodeo.”

“Roping’s like riding a bike.”

Ethan shook his head. “No, it’s not. This has to be the dumbest idea you’ve ever come up with. What if you miss? Or worse, what if you get that rope around her and end up yanking her off the back just to be dragged on the fucking road?”

Jackson gritted his teeth. “We’ll just have to time it just right. As soon as she’s roped, you’ll speed up exactly next to them, and I’ll pull her into the car. There won’t be any slack in the rope, I’ll make sure of that, so if we all do our jobs right, we should be able to pull it off. We have no other choice.”

“I don’t know, man. This is Lily we’re talking about. I couldn’t stand the idea of her getting hurt.”

“Neither can I. Like I said, we have no other choice that I can come up with. You have any other ideas?” Jackson waited as he watched his brother’s knuckles go white around the steering wheel, anger ticking at his cheek. “That’s what I thought.”

“After this curve the road goes straight for a while. It’ll be our only chance to get up beside them. You’ll only have one shot at this. I hope you know what you’re doing.”

Jackson gauged his surroundings and realized how cramped the quarters were, not an ideal setup for swinging a lasso over one’s head. He was going to have to take the top down. Jackson reached up and pulled the latch behind the rearview mirror to open the car’s convertible soft top. As it popped open, a deluge of rain poured into the car, the hard droplets stinging his eyes.

There goes our perfect birthday gift. Lily’s going to love balling me out for this...again.

Jackson had never looked more forward to getting yelled at by a woman. Once he got his arms around Lily again, he’d let her nag him for the rest of his days.

They rounded the curve, and just as Ethan had said, the road became as straight as an arrow. Ethan floored the pedal, and they shot forward over the slick road. Jackson could make out the motorcycle in the distance.

When they got closer, what he saw made his blood run ice cold. Lily sat sidesaddle in the backseat, wedged between the biker's ass and the bike's backrest. She steadied herself with her bound hands behind her back. Her mouth was gagged with a bandana, and even with the rain pouring down around them, Jackson swore he could see tears running down her face.

"Oh, Christ. There she is, barely hanging on." Ethan slammed his fist on the dash before Jackson lurched back from the force of the car's acceleration. "I hope your plan works, 'cause now's the time to test it out."

With one hand, Jackson held the frame of the windshield and swung the lasso over his head with the other.

Just one shot. Jackson squinted through the rain and aimed at Lily's form as they got closer. He ran a mental checklist of all the things he'd do to that biker once they caught up with him.

When they were only a couple feet behind them, Ethan pulled slightly to the left, which gave Jackson the perfect angle. As he released the lasso, he watched in slow motion as the rope soared through the air toward his damsel in distress. He held his breath. He felt like he was in some kind of action flick, and he waited for his perfect superhero moment to occur, the moment when the lasso circled Lily and he pulled her to safety.

But reality wasn't like the movies. Instead, the biker swerved and nearly lost control. He turned, squeezing Lily's thigh, and sneered at Jackson and Ethan. The biker had a crazed look in his eyes, a glint that said he didn't care whether he lived or died. He revved the engine and sped off at a breakneck pace.

"Oh shit." Ethan's voice was a hoarse whisper.

Jackson squinted into the distance and saw what made his twin sound so hopeless. The road, bordered by a steep embankment, was about to curve. At that speed, it would be a miracle for them to make the turn without laying the bike down.

Jackson watched in horror as the bike wavered and swerved. He feared his worst nightmare was about to come true. The taste of bile rose in his throat. But what he saw next gave him a flicker of hope.

Just as the bike was about to crash, Lily managed to jump off, flying onto the grassy shoulder. The biker, however, didn't look as lucky. Sparks flew as the bike skidded on its side on the road before spinning off the embankment, taking the biker with it.

Ethan slammed on the brakes, and Jackson jumped out before the Mustang came to a complete stop. He stumbled on the wet asphalt, catching himself with his hands, as he rushed to Lily. She was lying on the ground in a crumpled heap, covered in mud and blades of grass.

He fell to his knees next to her. "Oh, my God, Lily. Are you okay?" Jackson caressed the side of her face, rubbing off some of the dirt that now obscured her perfect complexion.

He surveyed her from head to toe. Her shoulders were rising and falling, so she was breathing, but her arms were at an awkward angle. It was then he saw her wrists, still tied behind her back. There was something about the sight that made him want to kill something. That fucking bastard was going to pay for making Lily feel helpless like this. Without a second thought, he ripped off her bindings, his fingers steady and purposeful. After he freed her, though, he had to use all his strength to restrain his need to swoop her up into his arms and hold her. Instead, he squeezed her small hand in his own.

Rain still fell in cold sheets, and the sound of it hitting the soggy earth masked the sound of his twin's hurried footsteps until he was right behind Jackson. Ethan knelt down and flicked on the flashlight he carried, shining it on her, checking her over. Lily was covered in scrapes and bruises, but a cursory glance showed no major external injuries. Jackson felt her hand being taken away and glared at his twin before he realized Ethan was checking her pulse.

"I'm no doctor, but she's definitely got a steady pulse. I don't have a clue about internal injuries, though." Ethan leaned closer to

Lily, his hand cupping her face. “Lily, sweetheart, can you hear me? Are you okay?” Ethan shined the light into her eyes, checking for what Jackson had no idea. He suddenly wished he had paid more attention when their doctor brother, Brock, had given them basic lessons in first aid. At least Ethan had.

Jackson swallowed the lump forming in his throat. He had to be strong, but he was beginning to feel frantic. If anything happened to Lily, he didn’t know what he’d do. All those fights they’d had, all the time they wasted apart because of petty disagreements or squabbles, seemed so utterly ridiculous now. “Say something, Lily. Anything, please.”

Lily mumbled something and pushed Ethan’s hand away.

“What is it, baby? What do you want to tell us?” Ethan moved the light back on to her face, only to have Lily swat it away again.

“I said get that damn light out of my face.” Lily struggled to move.

“No, don’t move. What if something’s broken or you have a spinal injury or something?” Ethan rested his hand on her shoulder, making a futile effort at stilling a bullheaded woman who clearly had a different idea.

“I’m fine, really.” Lily sat up, rubbing her shoulder and moving her head back and forth. “You don’t grow up with two absurdly overprotective brothers—one of whom is a former SEAL—and not learn proper tuck and roll techniques. I probably would’ve still been fine even if I didn’t have this muddy grass to break my fall.”

“They taught you how to jump off a moving vehicle?”

“You’d be surprised at all the survival skills I’ve accrued over the years. I can identify every edible plant in the state, start a fire with two sticks, and fashion an animal trap out of a piece of twine and a bobby pin.”

“Well, that may all be true, but it’s better to be safe than sorry, so don’t move another muscle.”

“Fine, but only if you hold me, and we’re all forced to not move. Then you’ll see how annoying you’re being.”

“If that’s the way she wants it.” Jackson grinned at Ethan and put his arm around Lily and lay beside her, resting her head on his shoulder. He was so happy to see her in one piece, he’d indulge her every whim from now until eternity. He wouldn’t waste another precious moment bickering with this woman.

“Fine, as long as Lily doesn’t move. I’m going to call for help, while you two stay here in the mud and the pouring rain.” Ethan stood and fished his phone out of his pocket.

“Can’t I at least lie still in the car then? Surely being soaked to the bone isn’t good for a wilting flower such as myself,” Lily said snarkily as she turned her head toward her Mustang. “What the...is the top down?”

Oh, shit.

“Yeah, about that...” Jackson ran his fingers through his mop of wet hair. “You see—”

“My car is getting drenched, my new upholstery, the leather...” Lily crossed her arms over her chest and shook her head. “I don’t think I even have to guess whose fault this is.” She glared at Jackson, a hint of mirth crinkling the corners of her eyes as she playfully poked him in the chest.

Jackson had to laugh. No one but Lily could muster the energy to crack a joke at a moment like this. “It was me, okay? I ruined your car...again. Maybe it just wasn’t meant to be.”

“No,” Lily said, pressing a kiss on his lips and then Ethan’s. “This was definitely meant to be. Definitely.”

“Somehow I don’t think we’re talking about the car anymore.” Ethan cast a glance at Jackson then returned his gaze squarely on her. “You were going to tell us something on the Ferris wheel. What was it?”

Lily grinned. She couldn’t believe he’d remembered. A man who could fuck *and* listen?

“Okay, stop your grinning and spit it out,” Jackson pressed, a confused look on his face.

Lily took a deep breath. “I’ve decided to stay. I’m not moving to New York. I’m staying right here with you two in Liebling.”

“Are you serious?” Ethan asked.

Lily nodded and was surprised to see Jackson immediately leap in the air and let out a whoop of joy before picking her up and spinning her around. He squeezed all the new bruises forming on her body, but she didn’t care. It was hard to feel anything besides pure, unadulterated love at that moment.

When Jackson set her down, Ethan held both her hands and gazed deeply into her eyes. “Well, then, there’s only one thing left to do.”

Before she could ask him what, bright lights and sirens invaded their intimate moment. The cavalry had arrived, reminding her of the horrific event that had brought them there in the first place.

Chapter Nine

Lily blinked hard at the blue and red lights flashing around them, trying to get her eyes to focus. Officers in uniform milled about, but she planted her feet where she was and refused to move. Her head throbbed so much even the tip of her nose hurt. She huddled into the emergency blanket and willed the night to pass so she could go home, see her mother and brothers, and then fall asleep with Jackson and Ethan wrapped around her.

Jackson and Ethan. Her heroes. Her protectors.

She shivered. She'd almost lost everything tonight, if that biker had been able to carry out whatever atrocities he'd had planned.

"Lily?"

She turned toward the sound of Jason's voice. Horrible idea. Her skull felt like it would explode. Putting a hand to her temple, she tried to massage the thumping away, but Jason grabbed her shoulders and held her away from him.

"Jesus H. Christ," he cursed, his eyes taking in her face. "My God, Lily. Are you okay? What can I do? I'm going to kill that son of a bitch. I swear to God I will."

Jason's eyes burned black in his skull, and his whole body shook with rage. For a moment, Lily worried he would go for the knife he always carried on his ankle and get the job done right then and there. She looked off to her right and saw Sheriff Callahan directing a deputy to ride with the biker in the ambulance, though in her opinion, they should have left the bastard in that ditch to rot.

Jason followed her line of sight, and his grip on her shoulder tightened. "He didn't...hurt you, did he?"

She looked up into her big brother's eyes and saw the helpless look mixed in with boiling-hot rage. Her heart softened. No matter how overbearing Jason was, his intentions were good. She had never seen him look so helpless in her life, and she burst into tears.

"Jason, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry about how we've been arguing and—"

He wrapped his arms around her and rocked her side-to-side like he used to when she was younger. "None it is your fault. It's all with me and Seth. If we hadn't been so obsessed with making you see things our way, this wouldn't have happened."

Lily pulled away and wiped her nose. "I think it would have, Jason. It seemed like there was nothing that would have stopped him. He made it seem like it, at least."

"You're right about that." He used the blanket to wipe away the tears dribbling down her chin. "The biker gang he's a part of have a lawyer on their payroll. That's how he got out of jail so quickly."

She sniffled. "I guess everyone has a price, huh?"

"Only worthless pieces of shit," Ethan said as he and Jackson walked up to them.

The sight of them brought more tears and sniffing on her part, but out of relief. Deep worry marks bracketed their mouths and eyes, and they looked even more beaten up than she did.

Jason released her, and she threw herself at Ethan and Jackson, wanting nothing more than for them to take her home. Jackson wrapped his arms around her first, clutching her to him. Ethan embraced her from behind, completing the circle.

"I can't thank you enough," Jason said, his voice oddly quiet. "I know now that you don't need or want me to thank you for what you did, but thank you anyway for saving my baby sister."

Behind her, Ethan took a breath and was about to say something when Seth emerged from the sea of cops and firefighters. "Lily!" he called just before his gaze landed on her. He mumbled something to himself that looked like "thank Christ," but she could not be

completely sure from where she stood. He rushed over to them and yanked her from Jackson and Ethan.

"I swear to God, Lily, you need to stop getting yourself into situations like this. That's twice in the past few weeks that I've almost died of a heart attack. I'm this close to locking you away forever and throwing away the key. You'll get your meals through a hole in the door. Not kidding."

Lily rolled her eyes and hugged him instead of snapping her own comment back at him. "I love you, Seth. Even though you're an ogre."

He went dead silent for a moment before he started chuckling. "You're not a fairy princess yourself, baby sis. But I'll love you, too."

Her brothers and her men were markedly silent for a few moments, checking each other out and waiting for someone to make the first move.

Then Jason spoke. "So you ruined the car again, I see."

Jackson scratched the back of his head. "The first time was all my fault. This round is on Ethan. He was the one driving this time."

Ethan glared at his brother before looking Jason in the eye. "I'd like to have a word with you if that's all right."

Jason nodded. "Sure. Lead the way."

Lily watched in stunned silence, and Ethan and Jason walked a few yards away toward a copse of trees. The lights from the police cars did not quite reach them, so she could not read their lips to get a hint of what they were talking about.

"What is your brother up to, Stone?"

Jackson gave Seth a sideways glance. "Beats me. This is a new development."

Seth just grunted, crossed his arms over his chest, and watched Jason and Ethan talk. Lily had to admit they looked downright serious, especially Ethan, who seemed to do all the talking while Jason listened and nodded periodically.

“What do you think they’re talking about?” she asked no one in particular.

“My money is on what to do about that bastard,” Seth responded.

“I have to agree with that,” Jackson seconded. “I vote we kidnap him and take him deep in the woods past the lake. We can show him how things are done when you mess with a woman around here.”

“No need for Jason to use his contacts who *don’t exist*,” Seth turned to Jackson and looked at him as if he had never seen him before. “If you hurt my sister, I’ll kill you myself. But I think I’m starting to like you. If you just keep taking care of her, we’ll be good.”

Jackson eyed Seth up and down and held out his hand. “I can handle that.”

“Good.” Seth took his hand, and they shook on it.

Lily rolled her eyes. She had a distinct impression that Seth just handed off his babysitting duties to Jackson. *Men*.

* * * *

“Yes, Edie. We’re alive. All three of us.”

Lily clutched the phone to her ear and listened as her future sister-in-law spoke at breakneck speed over the connection. She had assured Edie that she, Jackson, and Ethan were all alive four times already, but apparently there was no appeasing that woman until she saw the three of them herself. It gave her a warm feeling in her middle, like warm milk settling in her stomach, hearing Edie worry over her.

Looking back, Lily realized she’d had a lack of womanly warmth growing up. Although her mother was a strong woman, once her husbands had died, a spark had gone out in her, never to light up again. Lily could never blame her mother for that, though, no matter how much she wanted to. If she ever lost Jackson and Ethan like that, she did not know what she would do. Having Edie fret over her felt nice. It felt...familiar. Familial, even. She had finally found the big

sister she had wished for as a child. Actually, she had two now. Lena was going to become her sister-in-law of sorts, and she and the other woman were quickly forming as strong a bond as Lily and Edie shared.

"Lily, I'm giving the three of you the honeymoon suite for as long as you need it," Edie said with a commanding tone.

"Ye—no, I can't. I can't do that! I know for a fact you have a new couple booked for that suite tomorrow."

"But you're family, and we take care of our family," Edie pressed. "I know for a fact that if you stay with the Stones or with your brothers, none of you will have a moment of peace, and I think that's exactly what you need. The peace, I mean."

Lily turned in her seat so she could fully face Ethan, who drove her Mustang, and so Jackson, who sat behind her, could lean forward and press his lips against her forehead.

"We could use some privacy." Lily glanced at her men.

Ethan took a moment from looking at the road and met her gaze. The skin around his eyes was pulled tight, and his mouth was set in a thin line. *Poor guy*. He still looked a bit shaken up, but there was something else below that look, something very, very serious. It was almost as if he was contemplating something.

She glanced back at Jackson, who looked at her as if he had a bit of extra energy to burn and she was his method of choice.

Lily rolled her eyes mentally at how differently they handled things. They had shared a womb yet they were so very different. Ethan ruminated on everything, Jackson glossed things over, and she liked to pretend that nothing happened, when inside she was still a little shaky. Perhaps they did need a bit of alone time together.

"Sure, Edie. We'll take the room if you're absolutely sure you can spare it."

"Don't even start with that. The three of you are more than welcome to that room for as long as you need it. You need time to sort things out, and I think that's a neutral place for you."

“Okay,” Lily said, “we’ll take you up on that. Thank you.”

“Of course. Go ahead and let yourself in. We’ll see you in the morning. I have a special breakfast planned.”

Lily ended the call. “Edie told us we can have the honeymoon suite at The Sweet Spot tonight if we want. She says it’s neutral territory or something like that.”

Ethan smiled. “To The Sweet Spot it is.”

“At least we’ll get some private time,” Jackson said from behind her. “I can’t imagine how much our families are going to hover for the next few days.”

“You’re telling me. Jason and Seth put up a bit of a fuss when I told them I wanted to stay with the two of you tonight.”

“Sweetcheeks, we and your brothers have come to an agreement.” Jackson tugged the end of her braid. “We figured it all out.”

“Oh, really?” She just had to hear this. “And how exactly did the four of you make peace?”

“Just a few death threats and promises of unbearable torture should we hurt you,” Jackson responded. “Pretty standard stuff.”

“You call death and torture standard? Either you and my brothers are insane, or the entire male gender has a twisted view on things.”

“Or maybe it’s you women thinking things have to be peachy all the time. Maybe that’s what messes everything up. Us guys either get along or we don’t. No harm either way.”

“Jackson, that is the biggest pile of crap I have ever heard from you,” Lily said.

Ethan snickered. “It sounds like a bunch of crap, but it’s the truth.”

“Come on,” she argued. “What would you two have done if Jason and Seth decided not to let you do this whole project?”

He shrugged. “We would have done it anyway. It would have made things more difficult, but we were going to do this either way because that’s how much you mean to us.”

“Exactly,” Jackson agreed from the backseat.

Ethan slowed the car down, took a corner, and within a few blocks pulled up to The Sweet Spot. “We’re all about making this work, no matter what.”

Lily felt her overjoyed smile taking over her face. “Sounds like a plan.”

Together, they walked up the hill leading to the front door and through the little red gate. The bed-and-breakfast was still when Jackson opened the door. The only sound was the whirring of the air conditioning and their steps on the hardwood floor.

Lily felt like they were sneaking in after curfew, and her heart jolted at how happy she felt. She might have never seen the two of them again, but now they had however long they wanted to make sure that would never happen.

She led the way up the stairs, creeping up on her tiptoes. Jackson and Ethan’s steps plunked on the stairs, though, and when she turned around to shush them, Jackson just shook his head, threw her over his shoulders, and carried her the rest of the way.

“Hey!” she whispered. “Hey! You put me down!”

He just smacked her ass. “When we get there. You’ve had a hard night and don’t need to be on your feet.”

“Oh, so you’ll just carry me like a sack of potatoes.”

“I was going more for sexy caveman,” he said as he opened the door to one of the larger rooms. “Not working for you?”

“Not particularly,” she complained against his back. She did have to admit, though, that she did find the way his back muscles rippled under his shirt quite appealing. It reminded her of the latent strength just resting under his skin. “Okay, maybe a little.”

Ethan shut the door and flicked on the lights. “And the truth comes out. It always does, Lily, so it’s just a waste of time to fib.”

Jackson set her down, and she straightened her muddied shirt and wiped her hair out of her face. “I was not fibbing. I was trying to prove a point.”

Jackson crossed his arms over his chest, and Ethan regarded her very seriously.

“And what point would that be?” Ethan asked.

She lifted her chin. “That I...”

“That’s what I thought. Enough, Lily. What exactly is going on with you?”

“Nothing,” she said, defensiveness written all over her tone.

Ethan sighed and ran a hand over his face. “After what we all just went through, you’re still trying to pretend like you can handle everything on your own. Why haven’t you realized that we’re here for you, no matter what, and we’re not going anywhere?”

“I know that now. I do, believe me.” Lily backed up until her knees hit the bed, and she sank down. “I just feel a little out of sorts right now.”

Ethan crossed the room and knelt in front of her. “We know exactly what you mean. But pretending like everything is all right is just going to make things worse. Need I remind you about the little letter incident?”

She looked into his eyes and thought about those days of arguing and barely restrained frustration. “Yes. I remember. You’re right. I’m just trying to process all of this.”

Jackson sat down next to her, his shoulder brushing against hers. “That’s fine. Just don’t shut us out.”

“Yeah. I don’t think we can handle too much more this evening,” Ethan said. “We almost lost you. That thought—what would happen to you, what was that bastard planning to do—I can’t go there again. It’s too much. So please don’t shut us out.”

Sitting between them, she realized she had stopped shaking inside. How could it have taken her so long to acknowledge the sense of quiet calm they gave her when they were near? She had always fought it, that knowledge of belonging, of rightness. As she let herself bask in the gift of their closeness, she realized they weren’t going anywhere, and if she tried to leave, they would follow.

“You don’t have to worry about losing me anymore. I told you earlier, and I’ll tell you again. I’m not leaving, so you better not get sick of me.” She twiddled her thumbs as she spoke, still afraid on some level of rejection, of seeing a flicker of emotion on their faces that would clue her into the fact that they did not want to be with her.

Ethan clucked his tongue and cupped the back of her neck, using his thumbs to angle her chin up so she had nowhere else to look but his eyes. “Lily Rose, will you stop that? We just told you we were terrified of losing you, hinting that we don’t know how to live without you anymore, and you still think we’re going to get sick of you? Or that we’re going to up and leave you—”

“Not gonna happen,” Jackson chimed in.

“We’re not going anywhere, you’re not going anywhere. End of story. We’re in love with you, Lily, and we won’t ever stop.”

The need to cry burned the back of her throat. “I think I like you better when you’re sassy.”

A tear popped out of the corner of her eye and rolled down her cheek. Ethan’s bright-eyed gaze tracked its progress. “I think we can handle that,” he said as he swiped the pad of his thumb over her cheek.

The kiss Ethan gave her burned with desire but was tempered with heartbreaking sweetness. There was something about the way he poured his heart out with his lips that melted Lily’s defenses. She opened herself to him, letting him explore the recesses of her mouth as he cupped her face and angled his head just...There.

Lily moaned against him and let him take the lead. There was a wildness about him—about them—tonight, and she was more than happy to follow them to that place. Ethan shifted and then suddenly she broke their kiss as he lifted her shirt out of the way. It landed in a dirty heap near the door.

She sat before them in her shorts and bra, and even though she was dirty and scraped up, she had never felt more beautiful. Their gazes, soft yet full of erotic conviction, focused on her, saw into her,

and she knew she had finally found where she belonged. Reaching behind her, Lily unclasped her bra and let the straps skim down her arms in a kiss of satin. She held the cups to her breasts, though, intent on making them wait for it.

“Aw, babe, not fair,” Jackson complained.

But Ethan just held her gaze, the light in his eyes daring her, taunting her to make his day. When she did not move, just returned his stare, he slid his hands up her arms, hooked his fingers into her bra cups, and pulled. Her breasts spilled forward and filled his awaiting hands, and her nipples rubbed against the calluses on his palms. She sucked in a breath and waited, hypnotized, as Ethan bent and took a breast in his mouth.

His mouth was warm, and the suction gentle. The pleasure immediate. Spirals of heat traveled down her body and unfurled in her limbs, making her soft and pliable for them. She clutched Ethan’s blond head to her chest and rode the sensation of his tongue teasing the very tip of her breast.

The mattress lifted, and she heard a distant ruffling of clothes. When she cracked an eye open to peek, she saw that Jackson had already stripped. Ethan pulled away from her, and she fell back onto the bed. Ethan quickly removed his clothing, his muscles flexing as he tugged on his clothing.

Now this was something a girl could definitely get used to—two Texas men putting on a show for her. Watching them as their muscles moved made her feel so utterly feminine, and it turned her on like nothing else before them. She admired the corded beauty of their muscles, the solid structure of their frames.

Then Ethan was there, yanking her shorts and panties down her legs and exposing her saturated pussy. She was wet and throbbing already, and she wouldn’t have minded if one of them just sank into her and got busy. She would welcome the stretching sensation that bordered on pain and the friction of a hard cock inside her. Once she

was naked, though, Ethan gripped her inner thighs, spread them wide, and put his mouth on her.

“Oh!” Her body jolted off the bed, but he held her down for his pleasuring.

“You taste so sweet,” Ethan said against her pussy. His tongue flicked over her clit, and she screeched. Ethan’s intimate touch was so, so sweet. Already, her cunt was begging to be filled and stretched, packed full of Stone cock. She rolled and bucked with her desperation, fucking Ethan’s face with each pump of her hips.

“You like that, sweetcheeks?” Jackson cupped the back of her head and pulled her up to his fat cock. “You like this, too. Open wide, Lily, and suck it.” His cock flushed a deep red, and his balls were heavy, virile weights below.

She licked her lips, happy to oblige. She gave him the same treatment Ethan had given her—she got straight to the point, sucking Jackson’s thick cock into her mouth without any soft preamble.

“Ah, fuck. Suck it just like that. Yes.” Jackson flexed his hips and seated himself another inch in her mouth. She fluttered her tongue over the under-ridge of his cockhead, and his abs tightened and fluttered.

Lily gripped the thick base of Jackson’s dick and used her mouth on the rest, but there were still inches of poor, unattended flesh. She let Ethan’s sucking, licking, and stroking guide her pace as she sucked his brother off. Jackson shuddered and groaned above her, but even though she could tell he was desperate to thrust fully into her mouth, he held back. Then Ethan slipped two fingers inside her and swirled them around her G-spot at the same moment he sucked on her clit, and she let go of Jackson’s cock.

“Ethan!” She gasped. “Oh, God, I’m close already.”

He grinned at her from between her wide-open thighs. “Not yet, Lily.” He straightened and pulled her up then turned her so she knelt on the bed facing away from him. Jackson laid himself out before her, a golden-skinned god carved with fine artistry. Her gaze gobbled him

up from his solid, muscular legs, his long, thick club of a cock, his abs that rippled and contracted with each breath, to his wall of a chest. When she reached his face, he grinned at her with such a hot glint in his mischievous green eyes that she felt herself blushing.

“Oh, baby, you make me crazy.” He reached down and stroked himself, still damp from her mouth.

She licked her lips at the sight of pure masculine sexuality before her, and her pussy cream started tracking down her thighs.

“When I do this, sweetcheeks, I always think of you and your hot pussy. The way it strokes me when I’m fucking you with your legs folded high and back so I can go deep.” His hand moved up and down, and a pearly drop of pre-cum slipped from the tip.

Helpless to stop it, she skimmed her hand up her hip and cupped her breast, fondling her sensitive nipple.

“That’s it. Pinch it for me. Roll it—yes. Like that. That’s my mouth on you, sucking you in.”

His words swirled—dark and rich—in her blood. Each tug on her nipple caused fluttering jolts in her cunt, and her clit thrummed with the overwhelming desire to be stroked into madness. A groan slipped from her lips, and Ethan tugged her against his solid frame.

“It sounds like you need some help there,” he said against her ear as his cock slipped between her thighs.

“Mmm,” she responded. She thrust her ass against his pelvis, and his fingers tightened their grip on her flanks.

“That’s how I like you.” Ethan slipped his hand between her thighs and pulled her legs open, exposing her. “So flushed and swollen—” His hand crept up her thigh. “—so creamy and wet. Oh, fuck, Lily. You’re so ready, so slick.”

She trembled in his grip. His fingers slid through her pussy juices and spread them all around—over her clit, the space between her pussy and asshole—and his touch sent spears of hot, pulsing joy through her body.

“Make her come, Ethan,” Jackson commanded. “I want to watch.”

At the hungry, almost predatory gleam in Jackson's eyes, Lily's pulse fired up.

"Gladly," Ethan growled. He slapped her exposed clit, making her squeal. "Get those juices flowing, Lily. We're going to fuck you so hard you'll need every bit of lube you can get. And it's my personal goal to lube up that sexy little asshole just from the juices in your cunt."

Ethan's fingers found her clit and circled, circled, circled. They never strayed, just stayed on glorious target, pushing her higher and higher. Her mind swirled, and she lost all traces of any thought other than the primal need for release.

"Ah, shit. She's creaming all over my hand." Ethan sounded wild, uninhibited. She loved it.

"Ethan!" she cried. "Oh God. I can't...Ah! Oh God."

"Look at how beautiful you are. Your tits are fuller, your nipples so desperate for some loving." Jackson sat up and stroked his fingers over the places he talked about. "Your skin is flushed and glowing. So pink. So pretty." His fingers skimmed between the flesh of her breasts and down to her belly button. "I want a taste."

Jackson lowered his head and sucked a nipple into his hot mouth, skimming his teeth over the tip. The sharp pain mixed with the gluttonous pleasure from Ethan's fingers, and she flew apart, coming all over Ethan's hand.

"Ah! Ethan! Jackson! Ohhh my God!"

"That's right. Come all over my hand." Ethan shot three fingers deep into her pulsing cunt, and she clamped down on them, relishing in the fullness of her completion. "Come, Lily. Come harder." He swirled his fingers along the front wall of her pussy, hitting that spot. The slight pressure of it hitched her pleasure higher, and when Ethan pinched her clit with his other hand, she started screaming again.

"Music to my ears," Jackson said against her breast. "So fucking beautiful."

When she came down, Lily still felt the aftershocks pulsing through her. She sagged against Ethan, who banded an arm over her belly. Her breath sawed in and out of her lips, and her breasts heaved with her effort to calm down. She was sopping wet and loved it.

Ethan nuzzled against her, and the gesture felt so intimate her breath caught. “Catch your breath now because we’re nowhere near done.” He swiped his fingers between her legs, transferring her slick release between her ass cheeks.

“Ready for another round?” Jackson had already laid back once more, his hands behind his head as if waiting for her to pounce.

Despite her shaking knees and thrumming body, Lily crawled toward him.

Jackson grinned. “Hop on, babe.”

And she did.

* * * *

Lily came toward him like a woman on a mission. And damn if it wasn’t his favorite mission in the world. Screw *Mission Impossible* and all that 007 crap. He, Jackson Stone, was on a mission to pleasure his woman, and it was one task he was always up to.

She swung a leg over his hips, and he caught a glimpse of her swollen, flushed pussy. Ah, yes. That was the stuff fantasies were made of. When she settled over him, he took his aching cock in hand and positioned it between her pussy lips, making it look as if she were kissing him there. Her eyes lit up when his cockhead brushed her wetness, and he watched with deep male satisfaction as he pressed up and she lowered herself onto him. Jackson loved watching himself sink into her. Loved the feel of her cunt sucking him in and gripping him like it never wanted him to leave.

The minute his cockhead squeezed into her pussy, Jackson’s mind went blank. Everything in the background was cricket-chirping,

white-noised nothing. But Lily's guttural groan? Now that was music to his ears. A fucking symphony. Beethoven's Fifth, for all he knew.

Dum, dum, dum, duuum...

Bring on the whirlwind craziness because Lily was gripping him nice and tight and so snug. She was like heaven. His cock was ready to explode. He felt the exquisite pressure building in his lower back and knew any background thoughts of finesse, technique, or any form of skill that took rational thought flew out the window. With her pussy lips spread wide to accommodate his cock, there was only one way he could fuck her, and it was his favorite way of all—mindlessly.

It was a meeting of bodies, a slapping of flesh on flesh as he pounded into her, heedless of anything else other than the way she squeezed him, her pussy muscles rippling down his cock in a way that tested all his years of experience. But those other women he had shared with Ethan had not pulled on him in such an elemental way. He felt every one of the tremors passing through Lily's body. He felt every sigh, every shaking gasp as if it were his own. But most of all, he felt the way her body asked him for more or a change in the angle of his hips so he could hit her clit just...right.

"Oh!" Lily gasped, and she dug her fingernails into his chest, digging in nice and deep.

Fuck yes. That was what he liked—little pinpricks of pain mixing in with the sweet, sweet pleasure of being inside her. He gripped her hips and tilted her a little lower, and—

"Jackson!" Her eyelashes flew wide, and her whole body stilled.

He felt it gathering inside her and watched the shock pass over her face a moment before her cunt started rippling around him, tempting him, begging him, to let himself go inside her. But he could not. He held off his orgasm, wanting to have the experience of watching her come all around him so he could singe it into his memory.

And, damn, was it a good one.

Lily bucked and undulated, her breasts jiggled, and her hips pumped his cock, her greedy little body eking the last bits of pleasure

from him. Ethan crowded her from behind, and when Lily's bucking motions slowed, he pushed her forward so her tits rested on Jackson's chest. Damn, he just loved the way her hardened nipples poked his chest while the rest of her pillowy flesh kissed his.

"Breathe, Lily," Ethan urged. Jackson felt the very moment his brother breached her hole. She clamped down, and her thighs tensed around his hips. "Let me in. That's right. Breathe...yes. Oh, that's so good. You squeeze me so good."

Lily buried her face in the crook of Jackson's neck, her hair tickling his face. "It burns. Ooh, Ethan, it burns."

Ethan stopped immediately, his chest and shoulders bulging with his effort to control himself. "Jackson, ease her up."

Jackson kissed her shoulder and gripped her hips. "My pleasure." He started rubbing her back and forth on his cock, making sure his pubic bone hit her clit with every stroke.

Lily groaned against his skin, and he felt the moment she started relaxing, letting the pleasure they gave her bloom through her body. "Deeper, Ethan. Please. I can't take it."

"Just keep breathing for me. That's it. Take me deep." Ethan's voice was guttural and strained. Sweat beads popped up along his hairline, and his breath heaved.

Jackson swiped her body down along his cock again, and Lily sucked in a breath. "Oh God. Ethan, just fuck me! Please!"

There was a moment of tension, then Ethan growled. When he shoved the rest of his cock into Lily's waiting body, her pussy sucked on Jackson's cock so hard his eyes crossed.

"Fuck!" Jackson groaned.

A fresh batch of cream slicked Lily's pussy and thighs, making her ride that much easier. "So full. So good. Oooh." She pushed herself up from his chest, her hands still stuck there, and she started moving.

"That's it, Lily," Ethan encouraged her, "ride us. Just like that. Shit, that's good. Never been anything better than this."

He and Ethan fucked into her like the pistons of a freight train, in and out, in and out, taking turns, driving her higher until she was screaming again, her hips bucking and swaying to the beat they set. Her pussy squeezed the life out of Jackson's cock, and the friction was beyond anything he had ever felt. The soft flesh of her cunt sucked at him, kissed him from base to tip and did it all over again. It massaged his dick over and over until his balls felt like they were on fire from the exquisite sensation.

Lily's body moved like flame—swaying, dancing, glowing. Her breasts jiggled with every thrust, her nipples begging him to take a lick. Just one. Little. Lick.

Jackson rose up on his hand and propped himself up, his hips rolling between her splayed thighs. He reached between them with his free hand and spread her pussy lips wider, exposing her swollen clit to his every stroke.

"Ohhh, Jackson," she groaned. She threw her head back and rode them harder, and he felt her tighten around him.

Shit. Oh, shit. Holy hell that was it. Right there.

"Ride me, baby. That's it. Fuck those cocks like you mean it." Jackson barely recognized his voice. It was deep and frayed—an animal in rut.

Ethan smacked the side of her hip. "Take it, Lily. Take us. Fuck us back."

She hugged her hips against Jackson's sides and dug her nails into his chest. She would leave scratch marks, he was sure, but he would wear them like battle scars. "Oh...oh. Oh!" She tensed and then it rolled over her. She took them with her, the pulsing sensation hitting Jackson's cockhead just right so that he cursed.

"Fuck, Lily. Ah, God," Jackson groaned as he emptied himself in throbbing bursts, and Ethan roared.

* * * *

The next morning, Lily stretched nice and long and instantly regretted it. Her everything was sore. She bit the inside of her cheek to keep from making any noise.

Jackson lay sound asleep beside her. Looking at him, she felt her heart swell with such emotion that she shied away from it. Her hero in a Mustang convertible. She would never forget how he and Ethan had endangered themselves to save her. It was one thing for Ethan to throw himself headlong down the dark alley all those weeks ago, but for them to pull some *Indiana Jones* stunts? That was something she expected from Jason and Seth.

She looked down at Jackson's sleeping form, feeling her body awaken. Sometime in the night, he had thrown an arm up over his head, and the other rested on his belly. The sheet was draped across his lower body, showing off his defined chest and belly before hiding the most virile part of his anatomy. She licked her lips, thinking about what that part of his body did to her. If she was honest with herself, she had to admit she was spoiled. Even in sleep Jackson was a rascally kind of handsome, his lips forever curled into a mischievous smile.

The door opened, and she looked up to see Ethan walk in carrying a tray loaded with food. His biceps bulged, and the sight of him—tall, broad, and muscular—carrying a tray with orange juice and flowers made her smile. He would always take care of her and put her needs before his own, which both delighted and frightened her.

When he saw she was awake, his face broke into a blindingly happy grin. "Morning." He placed the tray on the nightstand, sank down next to her, then traced her jawline. "Feeling all right?"

She turned her face into his hand and kissed his palm. "Now I am."

Ethan looked at her for a moment, his eyes burning with intensity. He leaned in and kissed her, his lips soft and plush against hers. She loved the familiar scent of his breath mingling with hers and the way

his callused fingers tangled in her hair. Her heart pitter-pattered in her chest, and her clit started thrumming in time with it.

"I see you two got started without me."

She and Ethan broke apart, and she looked over at Jackson, who propped himself up on his elbows. The sheet slipped lower down his hips, and she felt her body heating up.

Jackson's eyes gleamed bright jade. "Don't stop on my account. I don't mind watching at all."

"Ease off for a second, Jackson. We've gotta give our girl some time to rest up." A beat of silence passed, and she knew she had missed out on their telekinetic twin-speak thing.

She yawned and looked around the room, remembering exactly where they were. The honeymoon suite. She could think of a million other things to do in this room than eat breakfast, but the look on Ethan's face told her this was more important.

"After last night, you need your strength. Now eat up or the higher-ups will worry."

"Higher-ups? I don't think you have to worry about Jason and Seth anymore."

"Who said I was talking about your brothers? It's Lena and Edie I'm worried about. In *Liebling*, the women here are all higher-ups as far we're concerned," Jackson responded.

Lily made an unladylike noise. "You're singing a much different tune than you did when you were younger, Jackson Stone."

"Well, I think you made me change it." He tucked a loose piece of hair behind her ear.

"You sweet-talker. I can't believe Edie made us stay in the honeymoon suite. We're not married, and I know there was an actual honeymooning couple who were interested in this room. Edie told me last night."

"We're not married *yet*," Jackson said.

The way he looked at her—fixated, as if putting his whole self into gauging her reaction—startled her.

“Jackson...”

Ethan climbed off the bed and knelt on the floor in front of her. She covered her mouth with her trembling hands.

“You’ve been the woman of our dreams since we were kids—” Ethan opened a black velvet jewelry box. “—and I don’t think we’ve ever stopped loving you since, despite Jackson’s protests.”

“Hey!” Jackson interjected.

“And we’ll never stop,” Ethan continued, his lips quirking despite the serious, tender look in his eyes. “Lily Rose Chisholm, would you do us the honor of being our wife?”

“Yes,” she managed to whisper despite the burning in her throat as she fought tears.

Ethan took her left hand from her mouth and slid the ring on it—a classic princess cut with what looked like a platinum band.

Jackson rested his chin on her shoulder. “We thought it was like you. Understated but beautiful nonetheless.”

Ethan slid the ring up her finger until it sat snug against her knuckle. Then he lifted her hand and kissed the place where her ring lay. “We love you, Lily. You’re staying with us now.”

He said it like a statement, but the look on his face and Jackson’s sudden tenseness suggested otherwise.

“Yes. Forever. But when did you...”

“We’ve had the ring for a couple days now,” Jackson chimed in. “We were just waiting for the right time. Then last night we realized there was no time like the present.”

Then it dawned on her. “Ethan, you sneak! You told Jason last night.”

He peeled the sheets away from her body. “You bet I did. We were going to marry you either way, but I wanted to make absolute peace with your brothers first.”

“And what did Jason say?”

His hands slid up her calves. “That he’ll put out a hit on us if we hurt you. But I told him we’ve got it under control.”

Lily licked her lips and let her arousal grow with their every touch. “And how do you figure that?”

Jackson pulled her sleeping shirt over her head, leaving her naked between them. “We figure we can just keep you in bed all the time.”

“My sentiments exactly.” Ethan rose from his crouching position and kissed her full-on, not even trying to seduce her gently. He leaned into her, giving her his body weight, and she let herself fall into Jackson’s waiting arms.

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ava Mitchell grew up on the Texas coast and has had a love affair with words ever since she could read. As an only child for the first seven years of her life, Ava made up stories to entertain herself and drove her mother crazy with her personalized renditions of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Peter Pan*, just to name a few. Ava firmly believes that a bad day can be cured with dessert and that inspiration can be found anywhere, especially when discussing hunky heroes with her writing partner and dear friend, Sydney Holiday.

Ava feels blessed to have the opportunity to share her words with her readers and would love to hear from them at AvaMitchell.author@gmail.com.

Sydney Holiday was born and raised in Central Texas. As may be evidenced in her writing, she has a great love of food and baking. She has two small lap dogs, a Pomeranian and a Boston *terror*, and is lucky enough to be married to a wonderful man with nearly infinite patience.

The eldest child of restaurateurs, Sydney spent much of her youth making up stories to entertain herself while she folded napkins, polished silverware, and refilled water glasses. As an adult, she's honed her imagination to craft what she hopes are fun and sexy erotic novels. Sydney is working on several romance novels and collaborates with her bosom buddy and sounding board, Ava Mitchell. She hopes readers enjoy her stories as much as she enjoys writing them.

Sydney would love to hear from her readers: SydneyHoliday.author@gmail.com.

Also by Ava Mitchell

Liebling, Texas 2: *Edie Earns Her Saddle*

Also by Sydney Holiday

Liebling, Texas 1: *A Perfect Fit for Three*

Also by Ava Mitchell and Sydney Holiday

The Male Order, Texas Collection: *A Bride for Two Tycoons, Part 1:
The Courtship*

The Male Order, Texas Collection: *A Bride for Two Tycoons, Part 2:
The Promise*

Liebling, Texas 3: *Corralling the Stones, Part 1: The Chase*

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