

Beautiful Trouble Publishing

Nikki Winter

Sweet
SURRENDER

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And here we are once again my faithful minions...er I mean lovely fans. To all of you guys who snatched up Sweet Temptations, read, and loved it THANK YOU. When I started this I had no idea where I was going or how good the responses would be but ya'll just make me feel all kinds of good. BTP you guys are awesome. Jayha and THE Jeanie, you chicks scare me but I guess that's a good thing because I need it. The more you scare me the more I write and the more I can subliminally take over the world. Probably shouldn't have said that...oh well. To my cover artists and editors down to my proofers, Thank You. I adore every single last person who has supported me and I want you to know I couldn't do this without you.

—Nikki

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CAVEAT

This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.

PATIENCE

Brianna Grayson let out a long, weary sigh when the insistent ringing of her doorbell didn't stop. She should have known he'd be back. He *always* came back. No matter how many times she told him they were done or that it was the last time they'd be together, he wouldn't stop coming around, wouldn't give up despite her wanting him to.

Telling her guests she'd be right back, Brianna headed for the front door of her condo. Not surprisingly, Sheriff Dane Halima stood on the other side, casually leaning against the outer part of the doorjamb. Ignoring how cute he looked with his messy black hair falling onto his forehead and into his eyes, she made sure to keep her expression bored. "Yes Dane?"

The easygoing grin he'd been sporting lost some of its luster. "I just came by to hang out," was his response, but the way his jade green eyes roamed over her body said something completely different.

Bri honestly didn't understand why he did this. Dane had known her policy on relationships from the day they finally gave in to the urge to rip one another's clothes off. She didn't date nor do boyfriends. It just wasn't in her to be patient during the "getting to know

you” phase. If she didn’t already know his parents, then she preferred to keep it that way.

Having had enough experiences with mothers giving her that “you’ll never be good enough for my son and eventually I’ll do something that will send you into a homicidal rage” look and having had enough fathers look at her with everything *but* fatherly love, Brianna just stopped dating. It wasn’t really a loss, considering that the men she’d been involved with were either stupid or more stupid than stupid. She just *couldn’t* do it. Acting sweet and...and nice all the time just wasn’t in her. No—saying things that other people thought were rude, and torturing her little sister, were in her. Bri and men just didn’t mix for long periods of time; take, for instance, her very short stint with Roderick Hines, the man-whore of Texas.

He’d most definitely been the dumbest of all her attempts at relationships, but he was also the one who snapped her back to reality. Not to say he was a horrible person; he and his whorish ways just weren’t for her. They’d made their amends and parted ways. She wouldn’t exactly say that they were the best of friends, but they were *friendly*, which was the only reason his arch-enemy Victory Graham’s offer to murder and dispose of him went unused.

Sadly, one thing she *had* missed was the bunny fun. That was where Dane had come in. For a whole

year Bri had engaged in all the bunny fun she could handle with the sheriff, but even the best things sometimes had to come to an end. She'd told him two months ago that they were done, but *he* had decided the exact opposite. Now here he was, once again trying to get himself back into her bed.

"Sorry, Sheriff, I already have company," she finally replied.

Straightening while his face lost all pretenses of a smile, he eyed her for a second before asking, "Anybody I know?"

"Why would it matter if you know them?"

"Because then I can give them sufficient warning," he answered, shrugging his large shoulders.

"Warning about what?"

"The maiming." And there went that shrug again.

Now frustrated, Bri gave a heartfelt sigh. "What maiming, Dane?" Was that *her* talking through clenched teeth? Why yes, yes it was, and in a few seconds she was going to slam the door so hard in his face that the frame would rattle.

"The possible maiming, by my hands, of course, that may occur if whoever you're dating decides that he wants to *keep* dating you."

She stared at the insane male in front of her, and he stared back. Wasn't there a rule about looking crazy

people in the eye? Her mind wandering off, she tried to figure out what that particular rule was before he spoke again.

“So who is it?”

Snapping back from that little space of confusion, a space that she entered often, Bri shook her head. “Huh?”

“You’re annoying me, Brianna.” Dane’s low voice was chastising.

Her brows almost touched her hairline. “*I’m* annoying *you*. When *you’ve* showed up at *my* home, *unannounced*, and threatened to maim my potential suitors?”

Smirking, he retorted, “Good that you understand.”

“You’re insane.”

Dane looked as if he were contemplating that. “There’s a possibility I am, but no more than the average person.”

Nodding slowly, she said, “I’m very glad you can admit that. Now if you would excuse me, I’m cooking dinner and—”

His amusement faded. “You’re *cooking* for him?” Voice incredulous, he glared down at her.

“Stop assuming it’s a man, and *yes*, I *am* cooking, so I have to go.”

Dane's hand shot out to push the door open wider; he shouldered his way through and was heading for the kitchen in the blink of an eye. Brianna managed to catch the back of his T-shirt. "What are you doing?"

He paused to turn toward her. "If you think for one damned minute that I'm gonna go home knowing you have some idiot here that you're cooking for, the same way you cook for me, then *you're* the crazy one. Not me."

In a way she could understand his outrage, since he was right. Cooking was something she *never* did for anybody she was involved with, even if she did own a successful restaurant. It was an intimate gesture that tended to send the wrong signals. If Bri cooked for a man in what was deemed a romantic setting, then it somehow translated into the fact that they were in a relationship. And *everybody* knew her feelings about relationships—so cooking for Dane had never been an issue, because at the time she'd *thought* he understood that they weren't together.

"Dane, you need to leave." She stood in front of him with her hands on his chest.

He just shook his dark head. "Unh-unh, I need to at least see him before the maiming starts."

Bri growled. "If you don't take your giant, corn-fed ass out of here, the last thing you *see* will be me as I pile dirt on top of you in a shallow grave."

Head tilting to the side, he answered, "When I die, don't let Evan take my favorite Stetson. I *rightfully* stole it from him when we were kids." He started to push past her. "Oh, and I'm pretty sure you're gonna want to use the shallow grave he's secretly already dug up for me. I believe there's a lovely little creek near it."

She resisted the urge to smile. It would only encourage him. "I'm serious, Dane."

"So am I, darlin'." Then as easy as day turns to night, he lifted her and placed her behind him before heading for the kitchen all over again.

Shaking her head, she followed behind, stopping with him when he froze in the doorway. Turning, Dane glared down at her and said, "You are one sick and cruel woman."

"You act like Bianca doesn't tell me that every day, and I told you *not* to assume that it was a man." Bri glared back, folding her arms across her chest.

"Uncle Dane! Uncle Dane!"

The pair stopped squaring off enough to look over at the toddler terror that was Elijah Halima. The hyper three-year-old was wiggling in his car-like stroller while his sister Bailey snored—and yes, she

was *definitely* snoring—in her vibrating baby seat that rested safely in the middle of the kitchen’s tabletop. Dane’s brows lowered as he looked at both kids; he took a few seconds longer to stare at Elijah and then brought his eyes back to her.

“Is that a...a belt strapping him to his stroller?” He sounded more confused than anything.

“Yes, it is,” she answered simply.

“Do I wanna know why there’s a belt strapping him to his stroller?”

“Well, it’s quite simple.”

“It is?” Looking mildly interested, he leaned into the doorway, as if he was getting comfortable.

“The monster that lives inside him and evokes terror in the hearts of all family members has taught him how to *un-strap* himself from any binding material that is able to keep him from destroying homes, neighborhoods, cities, and states. Therefore the belt was quite necessary because the damned people who make so-called ‘childproof’ things are liars and should be forced to babysit a group of toddlers for a day.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Along with that, it took me three tries to catch Elijah because his demon counterpart allows him the ability to run faster than a freaking cheetah on crack.”

“Uh-huh.”

“So when I finally caught him and was able to change into my *third* outfit peacefully—”

“Wait, did you say the *third* outfit?” he interrupted.

“There was an incident where he managed to escape while I was trying to change Bailey’s diaper. I can’t exactly say what Bianca fed her before bringing them to me, but whatever it was, there was definitely an orange tint.” Feeling a little ill, she got back on subject. “I was finally able to slow him down after throwing a sheet over his head in mid-run.”

“You threw a *sheet* over him?” Now he just sounded incredulous again.

“That’s not the point. The point is that he is, in fact, a menace and shouldn’t be unleashed on unsuspecting, innocent citizens such as myself.”

“Why are my precious niece and nephew in your unstable care anyway?” Dane asked.

“Because I took the weekend off from Grayson’s Place, knowing that if Bianca doesn’t get to indulge in at least a *few* days of unrestricted, uninterrupted, dirty defiling at the hands of your brother, she is liable to kill everyone in a twenty-mile radius just to relieve the tension,” Brianna answered.

“Hey, take that back!”

“Take what back?”

“Evan’s defiling is not *just* dirty. It’s also disgusting and disturbing to think about,” he intoned in all seriousness.

Did she laugh despite knowing that he would see it as a good sign? Yes, but really Bri couldn’t help it.

Lord she was pretty when she smiled like that. But then again, Brianna Grayson was pretty when she did *everything*. She was the opposite to her younger sister’s flawless cocoa skin and champagne-colored eyes; Bri’s skin was a pretty, rich honey while her eyes were an intense copper. Tall like Bianca, the woman had legs for days, along with the *original* Coke bottle shape. Her body was a combination of soft, lush curves and a strong build that let a person know she could whoop ass and take names. She kept her thick, shoulder-length hair in small twists that complimented her heart-shaped, angelic face.

Didn’t she get it? Did she not understand that despite her insistence that they were “over,” Dane could *not* just walk away from this beautiful, kid-trapping, slightly unstable female. It wasn’t an option. Either he got her to marry him and impregnated her good and plenty, *or* he’d wear her down until she agreed to option number one. The more she said they

were done, the more he tried to prove to her that they weren't.

"Fredo! 'Fredo!" Elijah, as usual, was chanting something as he shook a box of noodles.

Dane grinned and walked over to his nephew. Kneeling, he unbuckled the belt so he could pick him up, figuring that he could catch the little boy before he tried to take off.

"Wait! Don't!"

Looking back up at Brianna in confusion, he had about a second to process the bundle with curly black hair that shot past him before he heard three things hit the tiled floor.

"Dammit!" Bri groaned before running out of the kitchen behind the fastest kid he'd ever seen in his life.

Blinking wide and standing back up, he looked at the damage Elijah had managed to do in such a short period of time. The makings of what he guessed to be a shrimp Alfredo dish were on the floor. Noodles were scattered, along with different spices and bowls.

Dane turned back toward the kitchen table when he heard a small yawn. Golden eyes set in an adorable peanut butter-colored face blinked slowly up at him right before that cute little face screwed up into a scowl. Standing there in a stare-off with a baby was a bit disconcerting, especially when that baby was looking at you with spooky know-it-all eyes.

“I’m not the one who woke you up, so you can stop looking at me like that,” he said softly. If it didn’t disturb him so much to think about it, he’d swear that Bailey rolled her eyes at him. The both of them jumped when they heard a thump and, “Gotcha!”

Curious to see what the crazy love of his life was doing, he picked up the small interloper and headed for the living room. Doing his best not to laugh, Dane took in the scene before him. Apparently the sheet trap worked again, because Bri was pulling at both ends of white linens while a giggling mass moved around in between.

“You do realize that eventually he will catch on to that, right?” His observation was, he felt, a valid one, but her look said different.

“That’s a negative thought, Dane, and you should stop thinking those.” Grunting, she reached down to roll Elijah’s body up and lift him into her arms. Everything but the boy’s head was restricted from movement, and he seemed to think it was a new game since he hadn’t stopped giggling.

“All I’m saying is, you have one child on a mission to destroy your home and one who looks like she’s plotting to take over the world. You still have a day left with them, and you need help.”

She raised a brow his way, managing to hold on to Elijah. “And who do you recommend?”

Grinning, he answered, “Me, of course.”

When her head started shaking, he knew she didn’t agree.

CARE

How in all hell did she let him talk her into this? Why was it that she didn't show him to the door as soon as that crazy suggestion left his mouth? Perhaps it was the way Dane sat in her guest room on the full-sized mattress, with a drowsy Elijah tucked into his side, a sleeping Bailey resting comfortably on his chest, reading his nephew's favorite story before they had to put the pair to bed. It was the first time all day since either kid woke up that everything was peaceful. Dinner had involved another makeshift belt trap to a high chair and trying to keep clothes clean while feeding a baby who apparently thought she was too good for food that came from a jar. At least Brianna now knew *why* Bailey's diapers were full of multicolored prizes.

Bathing the mini-people had been easier, since they both seemed to like the idea of splashing water anywhere it could reach, but getting them into pajamas proved to be a little harder. Bailey hadn't been a problem, but her brother, on the other hand... Really, Bri hadn't lived until she had a three-year-old streaking through her home.

Now her mind settled as she was drawn into the soft murmur of Dane's baritone while he read. Bri

smiled when the strong arm tucked around Elijah lifted a bit to allow his hand to sweep over the boy's head affectionately. Damn, he was good. At six six with a wide, muscular build, the last thing she expected of the city's sheriff was his ability to be so gentle. He'd confessed to her before that he wanted to be the same type of father his papa had been to him. Dane's mother had done the same as Evan's and skipped town when he was nothing but a baby, leaving Evan Sr. to raise yet another son all on his own. It sometimes baffled her that he didn't have a boatload of trust issues with women and that he was so sweet and loving. Then again, she'd experienced those sweet and loving moments more often than not when they'd been involved.

Those were the times that scared Bri—the encounters that left her wanting him the next morning and throughout the day. The more she found herself actually missing him, the more she tried to distance herself from him. She didn't put the sins of others on one man, but she didn't want to find out what his sins were either, so confining him to sex was her method of keeping away from possible heartbreak. Even though she liked to think herself stronger than that, Bri still knew her weaknesses, and Dane was definitely one of them.

Sensing her presence, he looked up with a crooked grin. “You gonna let me to do all the work here?”

She found herself smiling as she walked toward the bed and reached down to take Bailey from him. Bri tucked her into the small portable crib near the full-sized mattress that Elijah would be sleeping on and switched on the baby monitor that rested on the nightstand. Looking up at Dane, she pressed a finger to her lips when she noticed that Elijah’s eyes were now fully closed and his mouth was open, soft snores pouring out.

Grinning now, he stood and very carefully tucked the toddler in, and the both of them tiptoed out of the room. Dane closed the door behind them. “You look like hell,” he whispered, quietly chuckling.

Being right was the only thing that saved him from an ass whooping. Bri’s T-shirt had stains, which she didn’t even want to question the origin of, all over it and was partially soaked. The bandana she’d been wearing over her twists was long gone, her face, with Bailey’s help, had most of what they’d eaten for dinner on it, and she was sure she looked like a sleep-deprived psycho.

What made her feel better was the fact that Dane looked the exact same way. “You, my friend, are in the same boat.”

If anything, his grin grew wider. “This is true, but you gotta love ’em.”

She nodded. “Yes, but I love ’em way more when they’re sleeping.”

Pulling her body into a warm hug, Dane rocked her back and forth, rubbing the tired muscles along her shoulders and back. “Aw, my darlin’ is worn out, huh?”

He was teasing, but the nickname still made her heart beat a little faster. “Don’t call me that,” she said softly.

Pulling back a bit, he stared down at her. “That’s what you are.” His lips pressed to her forehead and the bridge of her nose.

“Dane.” It was a whisper.

“Huh?” Nibbling kisses slid across her lips and chin.

“What are you doing?”

“Well, I’m gonna get you to loosen up all these tense muscles by running you a nice hot bubble bath, and then I’m gonna have my filthy, disgraceful way with you while the future destructors of our universe are asleep.”

Large, warm hands slid down to her waist before taking firm grip of her behind and kneading both halves. “Do I have any say in this?” Bri murmured as his lips hovered right above her own.

Smirking, he answered, “If it involves you saying, ‘Yes, Dane. Oh yes, Dane,’ then sure, you can have all the say you want.” And when he kissed her, she knew it was a bad, bad idea, but what was a girl to do?

Okay, so his seduction tactics were underhanded, *very* underhanded, but what was a man to do? She was standing there looking so cute and disheveled that she brought out all the instincts that made him want to pamper her. Dane had watched the way she dealt with Bailey and Elijah all day, and although the two obviously got on her last nerve at moments, he could tell she adored them. Those small spaces of time that he’d catch her rubbing noses with Bailey or tickling Elijah made him look forward to their future—and they *would* have a future.

Dane grunted as he stood up from pouring bath salts and some fruity smelling bubble maker in the too-small tub. Frowning, he stared down at the space and wondered how he’d get his, as Bianca often described it, “giant corn-fed ass” into the tub comfortably with Brianna. “This thing is too damned small,” he grumbled.

“Not when it’s just one person inside of it.”

Turning, he raised a brow at Brianna, who was leaning against the doorway.

They stared at one another until she pouted and said, “I don’t stand a chance at taking a bath by myself, do I?”

“Honey, if I thought for one second that you really wanted to take one by yourself, then I’d have no problem getting a chair and watching...possibly with a video camera involved, but I’m almost sure you wouldn’t appreciate that.”

Her sigh was long and heartfelt. “Why am *I* the target of your sordid fantasies?”

“Have you looked into a mirror lately?” His gait was relaxed as he walked barefoot across the bathroom, closing the space between them.

“Yes, and what I saw made me want to hide under my bed,” she answered.

Chuckling, Dane checked the receiving monitor that he’d placed on the sink’s countertop and gently gripped the front of her worn T-shirt. Pulling her as he walked backwards, he stopped at the tub’s edge. “Well, what I’m seeing makes me wanna hide *in* your bed...under the covers...preferably with you on top of me, keeping me warm and safe.”

She snorted, and he smiled as he lifted the edge of the shirt, bringing it up over her head. Dane undressed her slowly, enjoying the fact that she was

letting him take care of her. His clothes followed the pile of hers that lay on the outside of the doorway. When they eased into the hot water, sighs of appreciation left them both.

“Wow, that feels good.” Brianna’s head tipped back, hitting his left shoulder as he adjusted her to fit comfortably between his thighs.

“The water feels good or my athletically built, nicely sculpted thighs?” he teased.

One wet hand reached up and lightly tapped the side of his face. “Do me a favor and stop talking, please.”

Grabbing her bottle of vanilla-scented body wash he quickly lathered his hands and brought them up to cup her breasts, strumming his thumbs over the tight buds of her nipples. The erection he’d been sporting jumped against her lower back at the sound of her moan echoing off the tiled walls. “You’re right. Talking is completely overrated, especially now.”

She nodded her agreement, slightly panting. Slipping his lathered hands down her torso and making sure to rinse the rest of the soap off, he parted her thighs wide. One of Dane’s long fingers slid between the lips of her sex as his mouth found her earlobe and tugged, the dual sensations making her arch. Bri’s hips kept lifting, trying to get his hand right

where she wanted it, but he retreated with a murmured, “Unh-unh.”

Her hand gripped the one he had resting between her legs. “Please,” she whimpered.

“As much as I like to hear you beg, I also wanna hear you say the words.”

Not hesitating, she answered, “Please touch me, Dane.”

“I am touching you.”

She growled. “Dane.”

“Yes?” He tried to keep his chuckle to himself as his hand continued the lazy strokes.

Letting out a frustrated whimper, she finally said, “Please put your fingers inside me.” The request was so quiet that he almost missed it. Where his cheek was pressed to hers, he could feel her face heating.

“That’s my darlin’.” Deciding that he’d tortured her enough, he easily slid two fingers inside her, delighting in the gasp she let out.

“That feels so good.” She easily matched the thrusts of his hand, her short nails biting into his forearms.

“I wanna make you feel good, wanna make you explode. You gonna explode for me?”

Head nodding vigorously, she demanded that he go faster, and he complied. Her moans almost made him forget this was supposed to be for her, that she

was supposed to come first. Going deeper, he curved his fingers upward to that space right underneath her pelvic bone and rubbed her G-spot. Bri's soft cries spurred him on, and he pumped his hand just that much harder. Her back bowed as she came, biting hard on her bottom lip, and Dane watched the absolute bliss that covered her features.

Now it was his turn.

Eyes opening wide, Brianna had a few seconds to catch her breath before she was almost up to her neck in water with Dane's large body rising over her.

"Wait! My hair!"

"I swear I'll help you wash it later...*much* later." He groaned as he entered her in one smooth thrust.

"Oh, so you know how to braid now too?" The words were halted, her focus spilt between his movements and talking.

"I'll learn...oh God...I swear I'll learn."

AND GOOD LOVING

Dane's lids slowly parted as the weight that was resting on his chest registered, and he could honestly say that Bailey's gaze was really starting to disturb him. A baby shouldn't look as alert as she did. Weren't their only goals supposed to be crapping and eating so they could do *more* crapping? Bailey looked as if her only interest was taking the President's spot in the White House so that she could move on to taking over countries one by one.

"Why is our future ruler, of all things Earthly, on my chest?" he asked, looking up at Brianna, who was holding a bib and a jar of some concoction. "And why does that baby food look like it's going to assist our future ruler with filling her diaper?"

Brianna's only answer was the curling of her lips.

"That smile is beginning to remind me of the Grinch, right before he started stealing hopes and dreams," Dane said.

"It should, because any hope that you have of sleeping in is about to be crushed." She lifted one of his hands and placed the feeding items into his palm. "The other destructor has not risen from his sleep yet, but when he does, he's all *yours*. Enjoy." And with

another grin that suddenly gave him the urge to hide, Bri flounced off into the bathroom.

Sighing, Dane looked down into the golden eyes staring up at him so intently. The concentrated look they gave while studying his features was enough to give him his daily dose of disturbance. “I guess I’d better get on your good side now, so when you start running things I can at least have a position as security. I *am* qualified.”

Bailey’s grin, complete with eight small teeth, was the only response he got as one tiny hand reached up and gripped his nose. He chuckled as he sat up. “The only reason I’m *not* screaming and running from the room is because I’m sure you’d find me afterwards.”

Bri’s head throbbed. Why was her head throbbing? Maybe it was from the way she continually bumped it against the tile walls in the bathroom when she was taking a shower. What the hell had she been thinking last night? She had *specifically* put herself on a *no* Dane diet. So how was it that she found herself either flat on her back, stomach, or side the night before, engaging in bunny fun with none other than *him*? And dammit, why’d it have to be just as good as

it was months ago? It was entirely *his* fault for coming around and being helpful and sweet, while looking so freaking sexy.

Yeah, he *had* to do that stupid airplane ride with Elijah, lifting the toddler on his shoulders and zooming through the house, making him giggle. He *had* to play the “tickle monster” with Bailey, making her laugh so hard that she needed her diaper changed. And he *had* to make Bri feel so good the night before. All in all, the man was a danger to her psyche. How was she supposed to keep insisting that they weren’t together if she kept letting Dane slide his way right back in between her sheets *and* her thighs?

“You’re a mean one, Mr. Grinch.”

Facing the entrance of the kitchen at the sound of the low yet nasal voice, Brianna barely stopped her laughter in time. There stood her poor disheveled sheriff, Bailey holding on to his nose in a grip that looked like it hurt, with Elijah wrapped around his calf muscle.

“Is he...is he actually sleeping?” Maybe sounding so amused wasn’t helping the situation.

Dane slowly blinked at her. “Yes, because apparently I am now his personal tree house hangout for taking naps. He latched on when you abandoned me, like the coward that you are, and decided that ‘sleeping on Uncle Dane’s leg is fun.’”

She took a deep breath, trying desperately to keep a straight face. “And why haven’t you simply pulled him off?”

“Oh, well, he seems to like screaming like a damned Tasmanian devil on steroids whenever I try. He also has a hell of a grip.”

“I see. And Bailey’s sudden interest in your nose?”

“Our future ruler seems to think that the way it turns a shiny red is funny.”

When she started laughing, it was nobody’s fault but his.

“Your children are evil,” Dane said with absolutely no preamble as he opened Brianna’s front door to his older brother.

Evan jerked back, his gaze widening in surprise. “I told Daddy the same thing about you, but he never listened, so now I’m returning the favor. Besides, what are you doing here, accusing my children of being evil, anyway?”

Gleefully, Dane answered, “I spent the last two days with my woman. That’s why I’m here and able to accuse your children of being merchants of evil to your face.”

“Now they’re merchants? I thought they were just evil.”

Dane shrugged his shoulders. “It varies, depending on what they’re doing.”

Evan’s brows rose. “Uh-huh. And where are my evil merchant children now?”

“In the kitchen being fed a lunch to fuel their evil,” Dane responded, heading in that direction.

“Maybe we should stop calling my precious rays of sunlight evil now,” Evan said, following behind.

Dane snorted as they stepped into the doorway where Brianna was managing to get both kids fed without ending up with the majority of their food on her clothes. It might have had something to do with the rain slicker she was wearing, but Dane wouldn’t delve too deeply into that. Bri looked up after giving Bailey a spoonful of food and raised a brow in her brother-in-law’s direction. “Come to finally pick up your evil children?”

Evan threw his hands up in the air and cuffed Dane in the back of his head when he started laughing. “Yes, and why is my son trapped to his chair by a belt?”

Dane and Brianna simultaneously answered, “Don’t ask.”

“Freeze!” Brianna demanded as Evan was about to climb into his truck, because of course Bianca *still* wasn’t letting him drive hers, right after strapping in Elijah and Bailey. Having already almost smothered them with kisses, she was turning her attention to their big-mouthed father.

The giant-sized rancher turned back toward her and gave his pathetic attempt at an “innocent look.” “Yes, oh dear and sweet big sister?”

“If you tell Bianca that Dane spent the weekend here, I *will* make your life a living hell.”

The look worsened. “Now would I, your innocent and sweet younger brother-in-law, do something so underhanded and just wrong?”

“Yes,” she answered without hesitation and then added, “And if you follow through with it, I swear that I will *hurt* you...badly.”

Evan pouted and hung his head. “I never get to have any fun.”

“You had all your fun this weekend while I was tending to your merchants of evil.”

“Stop calling them that!”

Waiting a few seconds after Brianna closed her front door, Dane slowly made his way to her as she leaned back and let out a relieved sigh. “Happy they’re gone?” he murmured.

Shaking her head, she answered, “No, but I *am* happy to have peace and quiet again.”

He stepped closer, smirking down at her. “I wouldn’t exactly say that it’s about to be quiet again.”

Blinking her wide eyes up at him, Brianna shook her head. “No, Dane.”

“No what?” Leaning in closer, his lips found the pulse point on the side of her neck. Then he slid upward to find that specific spot right beneath her earlobe.

Brianna’s hands found his shoulders and pushed, but he wouldn’t move. “We aren’t doing this again, Dane.”

“And why is that?”

“Because I’m smart enough to know *not* to repeat mistakes that are bad for me.”

“I don’t think I’m bad for you, honey. As a matter of fact, I think I’m *great* for you.” Unerringly his lips found hers, and the moan she let loose sent a shudder down his spine.

Pressing his lips to her ear as he gripped the back of her thighs and lifted the long limbs to wrap around his waist, he whispered, “You and I both know

that you want me to take you, fast and hard, right against this door. So that's exactly what I'm about to do."

And once again she found herself with him between her thighs. She just wanted to know how he managed to do it. How in all hell did this keep happening? Bri thought she had an answer—until her eyes rolled to the back of her head with his mouth's insistent tugging at her clit. Somewhere along the way, Dane had managed to deftly remove her clothes, and now he rested on his knees, mouth glued to her sex as she ran her fingers through his hair with needy whimpers pouring from her throat.

And when she was just a few seconds away from seeing stars and singing the National Anthem...he pulled his head up and stopped. Eyes opening, she glared down at him. "Why in the hell did you stop?"

He leered. "Still think I'm bad for you, darlin'?"

"You want to discuss this...like, now?"

His tongue finding her sensitive inner thigh, Dane pulled back and replied, "Not particularly, but I can't have you thinking that I'm bad for you. It doesn't really show me in the best light, now does it?" His

warm breath fanned out, touching her clit. She felt it swell, reaching for him.

“Dane, I swear on all things good that if you don’t stop screwing around and...oh...” His French kiss between the lips of her mons halted her words.

He released her once again. “I’m hearing a lot of talk, Bri, but I ain’t hearing what I wanna hear.”

“You, Dane Halima, are *great* for me...freaking amazing, even. Now please...” He apparently understood the plea, because he redoubled his efforts, and her explosion nearly made her pull his hair out.

Giving her one last lick, he stood with a wolfish grin and undid the top button on his jeans. Bri pushed his hands aside and unzipped them before pushing them, along with his boxer briefs, down his hips. His length jutted forward; the large mushroom head had already gathered pre-cum and was pointing upward, past his belly button.

“Uh...Bri?” He sounded amused.

Not taking her eyes off the prize, she simply said, “Huh?”

“My eyes are up here, darlin’.”

Raising a brow without looking at him, she retorted, “And your point would be?”

His chuckle warmed her from the inside out right before her legs were wrapped around his waist and he was pounding into her so hard that the door

was thumping. Briefly she wondered what her neighbors would think. Then she so did *not* give a damn when he so very slowly ground his hips into hers, the base of his member rubbing against her clit. What was if that she had been thinking about again?

ALL CREATE

“I am *screwed*,” Brianna said, walking into her younger sister’s patisserie. Sweet Temptations wasn’t as busy as usual since it was the later part of the evening, so she had no problem announcing that she was, in fact, *screwed*. Three pregnancy tests had proven that not only was she screwed, but apparently screwing Dane definitely had results. For the past month they had pretty much been at it every other night, her place, his place and any other place they could get to. Some nights they just climbed into bed after a particularly hard day working and held each other.

Other nights, they found themselves shaking bed frames and making a *lot* of noise. Brianna had no clue when it happened or how Dane managed it, but they were now in a...relationship. She cringed, thinking about that word. One weekend and this was the result. A week ago she’d become friends with her toilet, coming face to face with the porcelain throne every day. Then she’d noticed that her very *best* friend hadn’t come to visit in a while. These signs led her to the local pharmacy, where she prayed that her purchases didn’t somehow get back to her mama.

Bianca looked up from where she was scrubbing down a counter. “What are you, crazy woman who randomly proclaims things, talking about?”

Walking around the counter, Bri grabbed the front of her sister’s apron, pulling her in close. “I’m pregnant, B.”

Eyes going wide, Bianca jerked backward. “Oh shizz...does Dane know?”

Bri growled. “I am gonna kill Evan. I sincerely hope he has a will laid out.”

Bianca giggled. “Oh no, my wide-assed sister, I already knew you and Dane were making hot monkey love. Evan had nothing to do with my knowledge.”

Frowning, Bri turned to look over her shoulder. “My ass isn’t *that* wide.”

Plucking her in the forehead and ignoring her yelp, Bianca said, “It’s freaking huge. Now *focus*—are you positive?”

“It is not huge! And that’s what all those damn tests say, so I’m betting on yes.”

“Well, I would be prepared, because if you think your ass is wide now...”

“Watch it, B.”

“...then it’s gonna be getting a whole lot bigger in the next nine months,” her baby sister finished with a wide smile.

“This is so *not* the time to make jokes.”

“Dude, you should be excited right now. You now have your own little interloper. When are you gonna tell Dane?”

She stared at Bianca.

Smile slowly fading, her baby sister folded her arms across her chest. “I am *not* telling him *for* you.”

“Oh, c’mon!” Bri threw her hands up.

“No.”

“*Please*. You know I’m uncomfortable talking and stuff.”

Bianca snorted. “Yeah, she with the mouth that runs like tap water is uncomfortable talking. I think not.”

“I’d do it for you!” she shouted.

“No, what *you’d* do is blurt it out in front of Evan and then cackle like a nutcase!” Bianca shouted back.

“That was one time, and you said you forgave me for it!”

“It was my first pregnancy, and I had every intention of telling him in a romantic way. You *ruined* it!”

“Well, you wanted him to know!”

“Yeah, but saying, ‘Congrats, corn-fed, your nefarious defiling has finally resulted in making a brat,’ was not the way for it to happen!”

Bri had a rude response good and ready for her little sister when a throat clearing behind them

stopped their argument. Turning, they both looked into a familiar face.

Victory Graham, known as Vic to her friends, had a grin on her pretty chestnut face. “I don’t want to interrupt the slap fight that I *know* is about to happen, but I’m kinda craving a few of the strawberry scones that smell so good, Bianca.”

Bri watched her sister’s scowl fade into a smile. “No problem, just give me a sec.” Bianca headed for the kitchen.

Turning toward Victory, Bri said, “I would’ve won that slap fight, you know.”

Solemnly, Vic replied, “Of that I have no doubt, although in your condition I would advise that you *don’t* slap fight.”

“It’s not nice to eavesdrop, Vic.”

“It’s not eavesdropping when somebody’s screaming the info free and clear.”

Did she *really* have to say that? Wasn’t Bri bugging out enough? “Well, since you’re so nosey and whatnot...”

“I am *not* nosey.”

“How about you help me out and tell him for me?”

“Oh, no. You wanna tell the sheriff that you’re pregnant, then that, my friend, is on *you*,” Victory replied.

Pouting now, Bri said, "Why won't you guys help me?"

"Remember when I asked you to help me kill and dispose of Rod?" Vic questioned.

"That's different!"

"How?"

"That's murder, you psycho!"

"You have a motive," Vic said calmly.

"No, I don't, and all I'm asking for is some help with telling him!"

"No, wide ass, you don't want help, but you do want an easy out to avoid the issue at hand," Bianca said, returning with a small box of fresh pastries.

"Which would be?" Brianna snarled.

Bianca smiled and answered, "The fact that now Dane *has* you. He finally got you to drop that stupid shield and love him back."

She held up a hand to stop Bri's protest.

"And the pregnancy just seals that. It's scaring the hell outta you because you know that if you tell him face to face, you *will* in fact end up on your back and promising to marry him within the next month."

Scowling, Brianna said, "When did you become Ms. Cleo, B?" If she admitted that Bianca was right, and that she *was* in love with Dane, then that would freak her out more than being pregnant did.

Her sister raised a brow and retorted, “Around the same moment you started making hot monkey love with my sweet, innocent brother-in-law.”

Vic laughed.

“*Stop* calling it that! And he is *not* innocent.”

“You should be so ashamed of defiling that man.” Bianca shook her head sadly.

“Firstly, the only defiler in that family is Evan, and secondly, I am this close to smacking the dimples outta your cheeks.” Bri held her thumb and forefinger an inch apart.

Leaning forward, Bianca pointed to her face. “You see this expression? This is my ‘I’m not scared of you’ look. You wanna see what I can do with this look?”

Before the slap fight could start, Vic screamed out, “Wait!” They froze, and she reached over the counter to grab the box full of scones. “Respect the fresh pastries, for goodness’ sake.”

Brianna’s nervous energy was starting to bug him out. She hadn’t sat still all night, and she wouldn’t look him in the eye. For his darlin’, that was *not* normal. If Bri had something to say, then she said it, and it usually involved a level of blatant honesty that

most people would find rude. Dane just found it cute. Except for now when she was avoiding coming to bed by holing up in the bathroom. The door was open so he could easily see that she wasn't doing anything important

"Darlin,'" he called softly.

Busy fiddling around in a drawer, she didn't look up. "Huh?"

"You gonna come to bed anytime soon?"

"Yes, as soon as I'm done organizing the stuff in this drawer."

Chuckling, Dane rolled out of bed and headed in her direction. There she was, as adorable as ever in an oversized T-shirt, trying to act like she *wasn't* avoiding him. "I know what you're doing, Bri."

Bri shrugged. "I don't know what you mean."

Standing behind her, he wrapped his arms around her waist, waiting for her to meet his eyes in the mirror. "C'mon, darlin', and talk to me."

"This is weird for me, Dane." She sighed.

"What?"

"This...*relationship*." Her face screwed up as she waved at the picture they made.

Dane couldn't help it; he smiled. "Did you, the great avoider of relationships, just admit to being in one?"

"Yes, and it's freaking me out!"

“Why?”

“Because I have all these...these...” Bri’s words were stilted, like she couldn’t quite get it out.

“Feelings?” he supplied.

“Exactly! How in the hell am I supposed to deal with that?”

“Maybe you can, uh...feel and enjoy it?”

Staring at him through the reflective glass, she slowly blinked those wide brown eyes. “That’s a stupid idea.”

Dane bit his lip so he wouldn’t laugh at her. “Darlin’, I think it’s a good idea because I feel some of everything when I’m with you.”

Suddenly she was avoiding his gaze again, playing with things in that drawer. “Yeah, like what?” Her voice was soft, hesitant.

He pressed his head against hers and answered, “Need.”

“Need?”

“Yes—I feel the need to be around you or hold you or kiss you. Sometimes I just wanna hear you talk, even when it’s rude or ornery.”

She snorted. “I am *not* ornery.”

“Yes, darlin’, you are. Probably one of the most ornery people I know, and you like slap fights with Bianca way too much.”

Now she was laughing, the sound warming him from the inside out. “But that’s what makes you Brianna, and I love you for it.”

Her head snapped up so fast that it banged into his. “Ow,” Dane said slowly.

Bri turned to face him. “Did you just say that you love me?”

“I’m not too sure, since I might have a concussion now.”

“Dane, I’m not kidding right now. My nerves can’t handle it,” she said, talking real slow.

He brought his hands up to frame her face. “Yes, darlin’, I said that I love you.”

Her hands covered his. “Three pregnancy tests, Dane, and all of them say positive.”

It wasn’t a proclamation of love, but it was enough to have his mouth open with no sound coming out. Swallowing, he tried to find some kind of words, especially with her standing there looking so vulnerable. “You aren’t saying anything. I need you to say something.”

“I...you...pregnant...” Giving up on all pretenses of talking, he dropped to his knees and pulled up her T-shirt. Dane stared at her soft belly, looking for some sign that she was really carrying his child.

"I can't swear by it. I mean a doctor's appointment would be the final confirmation, but I think we're having a baby."

Bri's whisper made his hand shake as he reached out to touch her stomach. "I put a baby in there?"

Chuckling softly, she said, "I believe you had some help, Mr. Halima."

"Okay, *we* put a baby in there?"

"I won't know for sure until Dr. Balcomb tells me."

He kissed her belly button. "I don't care what Dr. Balcomb says. With all of the bunny action we've been getting in, I *know* that we made somebody new."

"You sound happy."

"Happy doesn't even begin to describe me right now, darlin'. I could lose my mind right now and act a plum fool, but I'm taking the calm approach." He tore his eyes away from her midsection and stared up into her face. "Marry me?"

She started. "What?"

"I asked you to marry me."

They stared at one another before she pulled away and walked back into her bedroom. He stood and followed. "What are you doing?"

"Going to bed," Bri tossed over her shoulder.

"What about what I just asked you?"

She stopped, sighed. "I don't want you to marry me because I'm pregnant."

"What?"

Turning back toward him, she said, "I don't want you to marry me because I'm pregnant."

That just pissed him off. Didn't she get it? Marrying her had been on his mind for the past few months. "What in the hell is wrong with you?"

His yell didn't startle her, but it did seem to piss her off. "Nothing is wrong with me!"

"Then why do you think I wanna marry you just because you're pregnant?!"

"Because, you jackass, you hadn't even mentioned marriage until I told you that *I'm pregnant!*"

"Ah! I swear that you drive me insane!" Stomping over to the duffel bag he'd managed to smuggle in under her nose, he yanked open the zipper and dug around until he found what he was looking for. Grabbing the small velvet box, he walked back to her and opened one of her hands before putting it into her palm.

Brianna looked down at it and then swallowed. "What's this?"

"Open it and find out."

Dane watched her face as she popped the lid. He could clearly see the two-carat, princess-cut diamond

set in white gold with smaller diamonds surrounding it. “Oh, Dane.”

It was the first time he’d ever heard her voice take on a breathy quality without his hands on her. “I’d been saving for months before I was finally able to get it.”

“It’s...it’s beautiful.” She looked back up at him.

“I wanted you to have the perfect ring. I had a nice romantic plan laid out, but because you’re so damn slow at times...”

“Hey!”

“It’s ruined now,” Dane finished. “And I haven’t heard the words that I need to hear.”

He watched a gorgeous smile grace her features. “What words?”

Growling, he answered, “The ones that will get your ass tanned, if you don’t say them.”

If anything, her grin widened. “My ass is *already* tan. It’s called melanin.” She backed up, and he followed.

“Brianna.”

“Dane.”

“Darlin’, I’m on edge right now.”

“Really? I am too. What a coincidence.” Bri was still backing away, still baiting him.

“Bri, I’m gonna count to five and if you aren’t telling me how much you love me by the time I’m done, you’re gonna be sitting on ice packs for a week.”

Giggling, she retorted, “That is *not* the way to endear yourself to me.”

“I don’t give a damn about endearing myself to you. I want you to tell me what I already know.”

“I don’t really feel like it,” Bri answered, shrugging.

Dane nodded his head for a few seconds before he was charging toward her. Laughing, she turned, ready to bolt from the room, but it was too late. He had her up and in his arms in seconds.

“Dammit, Dane! Put me down!” She was still giggling.

“Nope. I warned you, and now it’s time to pay.”

“This is not funny!”

“Not meant to be, darlin’. I have a goal in mind.” Sitting on the bed, he easily put her stomach down on top of the mattress with her bottom stretched out in his lap. Just the sight of her beautifully rounded ass peaking from beneath her T-shirt had him standing at attention.

“You’d better not, Dane! I’m serious.”

“Stop wiggling, and you are *not* in any position to make demands.” Pulling up the tee with one hand and gently but firmly holding her in place with the

other, he ran his palm over both cheeks. Bri's head dropped forward on a moan, and he chuckled. "Darlin', if I'm not mistaken, I do believe that you're enjoying this."

"Am not." Her protest sounded weak.

"Uh-huh, now you gonna tell me what I wanna hear?"

"Nope."

Smack! His hand came down in a firm tap that made her arch up.

"Dane!"

"Are you about to tell me what I wanna hear?"

"No."

Clucking his tongue, he brought his hand down onto the other cheek. "C'mon, darlin', say it."

"I'll say it when I'm good and damn ready," Bri mouthed. In the next breath, she groaned when he smacked her ass again.

"You *are* enjoying this," Dane said in awe as his fingers found her wet slit. "And apparently, you're enjoying it very much."

"Dane." She pushed back into his hand.

"Yes, darlin'?" He turned his hand and thrust two fingers inside her, delighting in the way she let out a cry and spread her thighs wider.

"Please."

“Oh, I intend to, just as soon as you say what I wanna hear.”

One hand slapped at the comforter under her. “Dane.”

His middle finger teased her clit, and she started panting. “Still not hearing it,” he sang.

“All right! All right! I love you. I. Love. You. Now *please*.”

Dane cut her words off when he flipped her over to her back, her T-shirt along with his boxers gone in a flash. Her legs were on his shoulders within seconds and he was inside her. Rolling his hips slowly, he demanded, “Say it again.”

“Love you, love you, love you, so please don’t stop,” Bri begged.

He didn’t. Dane just thrust harder, listening to the needy whimpers pouring from her mouth. Her nails dug into his forearms, but he paid it no mind, just kept going until her heat squeezed him in an almost painful grip. She had finally said it, had finally admitted to the fact that she loved him as much as he loved her. To top everything off, she was going to have his baby. Even if those tests were wrong, he *would* be getting her good and pregnant.

Her hips ground up into his, and he had to clench his jaw to keep from shouting out. “Look at me.”

Brianna's eyes opened, staring up at him with so much love that it brought tears to his eyes. "Marry me."

She nodded her head.

He stopped his movements. "Say the words. I wanna hear it."

"I'll marry you! Tomorrow, dammit! Just please keep moving."

Grinning, Dane reached between the two of them to find the swollen bundle of nerves begging for his attention. His thumb circled it in time with his thrusts, and before he knew it he had Brianna screaming his name in two-part harmony. Letting go, he came so hard that for a moment he went deaf, dumb, and blind. And Dane could honestly say that nothing had ever felt better.

THE SWEETEST SURRENDER

Four years later...

Whistling and happy to be home from work, Dane swung the front door of his two-story home open and came to a halt. His gorgeous wife was in mid-run, chasing their oldest son, Daniel, through the house. The strange part was *not* the chasing, since she had to do that often. No, the strange part was the net she had in her hands *as* she chased a *naked* Daniel through the house. He couldn't exactly say where she got the net from, but Bri had been threatening to get one for months, so he wasn't very surprised.

A garbled sound caught his attention, and he turned his head to find his youngest son, Blaine, comfortably rocking back and forth in his automatic swing set and doing his best to devour his small hand. Smiling, Dane went and scooped him up. "How's my officer in training doing today?" He took a deep breath of the downy black curls on the top of Blaine's head, enjoying the smell of baby powder that clung to him.

In answer, Blaine just pushed that drool-covered fist into Dane's cheek. He grinned down at the adorable face staring up at him. The both of them jumped when they heard a thump and a, "Gotcha!"

Shaking his head, Dane suddenly felt like history was repeating itself and headed for the hallway where the sound had come from. There on the floor was Brianna, calmly rolling his son up in that damned net and humming over Daniel's giggles. "And you don't think that this is strange, at all?"

Bri looked up at him with a wide smile as she picked up Daniel. "Hi, baby. Have a good day at work?"

"Why is our son being trapped like an animal in the wild?"

"I'm really not sure I can answer that without insulting you and our son," she answered, turning to go upstairs to the nursery.

Dane followed behind. "Oh, so *now* you're working on filters."

"Yes, because they're important, and with two more babies coming into the house I'm gonna need them."

Freezing in the doorway, he looked down at the year-old toddler in his arms and then toward the three-year-old whom Bri practically had to wrestle just to get clothes on him. "Uh, darlin', last time I checked, we only have two out and one in so far." She was only around three months pregnant again and had just started showing.

Continuing her task, Bri calmly shrugged and replied, “Dr. Balcomb seems to think differently.”

He stood there for a few seconds, trying to gather his thoughts. When she had dropped the news about Blaine, she had been calm, but he didn’t get what she was saying... At least he didn’t until another more disturbing thought occurred. “She thinks we’re having twins, doesn’t she?”

“Yep, she said there were two heartbeats.”

“More boys?” Dane whispered.

“As far as she can tell.”

He leaned a shoulder against the door frame, feeling as if the wind had been knocked out of him. Briefly Dane wondered why in all hell she was so damn calm; then he thought of something else. “You’ve already started planning booby traps, haven’t you?”

Bri’s grin was purely sinister. “If you see a toy in the middle of the hallway, don’t pick it up.”

Panic forgotten, Dane smiled and then he laughed, long and hard. How could he not? He was married to a child-trapping, mouthy, slap-fight-loving, ornery-but-loveable insane woman, who had to be the best thing that had *ever* happened to him. A few years ago he would have never thought he could get her to this point. She was his wife, his best friend, his lover and the mother of his children; the best part being that

she was all of this *willingly*. Being sheriff had allotted him to stop his share of bad guys, but getting Brianna Grayson to become Brianna Halima, without having to drag her to the altar, had to be the *sweetest* surrender. It was one he would certainly never take for granted.

****NW****

Nikki Winter

When Nikki wrote her first story in the tenth grade, she knew without a doubt she was destined for greatness. Now if she could just convince everyone else...

Buckling down, she's taken the time to polish what she refers to as her "writing superiority." She hopes that the tales she has created grab the readers' attention, and make them devoted ~~slaves to her will~~ fans. If you want to let her know just how absolutely, positively awesome she is, you can always e-mail her at nikkiwinter19@gmail.com, friend her on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/people/Nikki-Winter/100002445230428>, or follow her on Twitter as @NikkiWinter19.