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*Ménage Everlasting*

*Rescue Ranch 1*

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HEALING

*Pleasure*



## Rescue Ranch 1

# Healing Pleasure

Grief counselor Lena Conley is certain Trey Berke's cagey plan to get close to his best friend, Brit Matthews, is a bad idea. Both men are stubborn, reserved, and mouthwateringly hot. Never one to turn away from someone in need, she tactically coerces Brit to talk even as she carefully chips away at Trey's hidden pain. Little does she know, the SEALs will heal her and offer a provocative passion that will steal her heart.

When an op takes a grave turn, Brit is left with an injury that threatens to end his career and a memory of horrid images he can't erase. Recovering on Rescue Ranch adds to his misery...until the sexy, compassionate Lena comes along.

Trey was a teenager headed for destruction when Brit dragged him to Rescue Ranch. It changed his life and cemented an unbreakable bond between them. Returning to the Team without Brit isn't an option. Neither is claiming Lena.

**Genre:** BDSM, Contemporary, Ménage a Trois/Quatre, Western/Cowboys

**Length:** 48,656 words

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PLEASURE**

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**Tonya Ramagos**

# **MENAGE EVERLASTING**



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**HEALING  
PLEASURE**  
*Rescue Ranch 1*

**TONYA RAMAGOS**  
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# Chapter One

Lena Conley struggled not to gape at the super hunk sitting across from her in the booth. It was doubly hard considering he was not only one deliciously looking prime slice of muscled male perfection, but he'd actually just suggested...

She glanced at the elderly trio at a nearby table, leaned forward, and lowered her voice. "You want me to pretend to *date* you?"

He leaned forward, too, and matched his sexy drawl to her quiet tone. "I suppose I could ask you out, take you to dinner, and make it official if you'd be



more comfortable with that.”

His rusty voice sent tingles down her spine. She averted her gaze, straightened, and reached for her cup of coffee. “I don’t mix business with pleasure, Mr...”

Playing it cool, she pretended to forget his name. Not that she didn’t remember it. A woman would have to be half-dead not to remember everything about this man, from his military-regulation buzzed dark hair, perpetual Stetson crease in his masculine forehead, and potent Jolly Rancher—green eyes to his name. Yeah, no doubt about it, Trey Berke was smoking hot!

A slow, devilish grin unfolded on his too-kissable lips. “Thank you.”

Puzzled, Lena blinked at him. “For what?”

His grin turned seductive, sending a wave of do-me heat washing through her. “Admitting you’d find pleasure in going out with me.”

“I never said...I didn’t mean to insinuate...” She snapped her mouth shut and glared at him, irritated as much by his arrogance as the fact that she didn’t doubt she would find unspeakable pleasure in going out with him. “I’m sure that was not the first time in your life you’ve heard that expression, Mr. Berke. I’m also equally sure you understand the meaning of it.”

He held her gaze and she knew by the

swirls of heat and amusement in his eyes that he wasn't buying her attempts to show disinterest. "He'll let you get closer to him if he thinks I'm courting you."

Courting her? Who talked like that in this day and age? "Why is that?"

Trey tapped a long finger, surely crafted to stroke a woman's G-spot to orgasm, on the side of his coffee mug. "It's the way we work, sugar. Just trust me on that."

His gaze possessed an intensity that made her believe for an instant she was the only person in the restaurant. She sucked in her stomach, hoping to squash the fluttering butterflies, and eyed him over the rim of her mug as she sipped

her coffee.

“Let’s back up a bit.” More like a *lot*. Holy hormones, she’d gotten the sensation when she’d answered the phone that morning that she was about to get into something over her head, but she’d never in a zillion years thought it would be something like *this*.

She set down her mug, rummaged through the shoulder bag on the seat beside her, and pulled out the steno pad where she’d jotted down notes of their phone conversation. Thank God she’d gone with her gut and suggested they meet at Kelly’s, a quaint diner on the edge of Pleasure, Tennessee known for its downhome Southern cooking, rather

than inviting him to her home office back in the city. She could just imagine how the meeting would've gone then.

*Oh, no the hell you can't.*

Okay, so she better not allow herself to imagine it. Getting wrapped up in a fantasy of opening her front door to find Mr. Tall, Dark, and Supremely Drool-worthy standing there wouldn't help her hold onto her professionalism one iota. No doubt, she would've spent half the meeting picturing the two of them having wild, dark, and dirty sex all over her house. Although, if she gave herself a half second, she didn't doubt she could come up with a few intensely erotic images of the two of them trying out every tabletop in the diner.

And how ironic was that? She hadn't had sex with anything but her trusty vibrator in so many years she'd lost count. She'd given up on sex, given up on men, knowing she'd never find anyone who could make her feel the passion and ecstasy Mark had once showed her.

She flipped the cover of the steno pad, ruthlessly pushed all thoughts of Mark from her mind, and quickly glanced over her notes before looking up. Her gaze collided with Trey's and damn if she didn't have to consult her notes again to remind herself of what she'd been about to say. "You said you and your friend are in the Navy."

Trey nodded once. “We’re SEALs.”

Deciding it might make it easier to keep her thought process on track, she focused her gaze on his mouth as he spoke. It was a very, *very* bad idea. The way his lips moved to form the words, coupled with the rusty, confident tone in his voice had juices leaking from between her pussy lips to wet the cotton lining of her thongs.

Lena swallowed, checked her notes once more, and forced herself to meet his gaze. “And you’re both on leave?”

He leaned back and stretched a powerful looking arm over the back of the seat. “He’s on medical. I’m on personal.”

What would it feel like to have that arm wrapped around her waist? What would it feel like to have that arm holding her tight against the hard wall of his body? More, what would it feel like to have his large hands imprisoning her wrists as he settled his narrow hips between her legs and...

*That's not the track your thoughts are supposed to be on.*

“And your friend was injured during a mission overseas?”

Again, Trey nodded once. “He tore the ACL, the anterior cruciate ligament, in his right knee and damaged the cartilage.”

Lena winced. She pulled a pen from



her bag and jotted herself a note to talk to her father about ACL injuries. She wasn't sure what the anterior cruciate ligament was, but tearing it couldn't have felt good. "You realize I'm not a physician?"

"I wouldn't have called you if you were. Brit has a fine doctor for his knee. It's his head that's taking the real beating."

"What makes you say that?"

"He's not himself. His surgery was successful, his rehab is going okay even if he's not doing it the way we want him to, and..."

Lena lifted a hand palm out. "Hang on. What do you mean he's not doing it the way you want him to?"

“He stays inside the main house at the ranch. He’s got the equipment he needs for the home exercises, but he’s not the indoor type. Brit would rather be buried in the woods somewhere scavenging for food and shelter than he would holed up in a house.”

“Is his knee injury career threatening?”

“It can be. We have a saying in the SEALs. A team only moves as fast as its slowest member. If a teammate can’t cut it, he puts all our lives at risk.”

“And you’re worried he’s thinking he won’t be able to cut it even after his knee heals?”

Trey raked a hand over his head.

“Hell, I don’t know what he’s thinking. I guess we’re hoping you can figure it out.”

“You keep saying we. Who is in this with you?”

“All of us at the Rescue Ranch. Even our brothers who aren’t there right now.”

“You’re brothers?”

The corner of Trey’s lips lifted in a hint of a smile. “There’s ten of us and another generation getting older every day. We’re all brothers, even if only a few of us have the same last name.”

Lena didn’t quite understand, but she decided the important factor in what he was telling her was that Brit wasn’t alone. It was the best news she’d heard

since she'd answered Trey's phone call.

“What kind of mission was Brit on?”

Trey's smile turned apologetic.

“Sorry, sugar. That's classified.”

“Right.” Of course it would be. She was civilian. She gnawed her bottom lip. “Okay, can you tell me what he was doing when he tore his ACL?”

“Trying not to fall on a dead teammate.”

Her jaw dropped. Dear God, he was serious. She didn't know what answer she'd expected him to give her, but it certainly hadn't been anything like that. She stared at him, suddenly suspecting despite his calm, arrogant demeanor that Brit might not be the only one in need of

grief counseling.

“Where were you when it happened?”

“Several clicks behind. Brit was in command of Team Alpha. I was leading Team Bravo. Alpha team took point. Bravo was there just in case the mission turned to a clusterfuck.”

She had watched enough television specials and movies on the Navy SEALs to understand the term. “The mission was a disaster?”

“To put it mildly. We lost two men out there and another two, including Brit, were injured.”

“And Brit saw it happen? He saw his teammates get killed?”

“Saw and heard, sugar.”

“So did you.” She didn’t need to ask.

He might not have been on the frontline, but he'd said his team had been there for backup. He looked away, but not before she caught the shadow of the memory move through his eyes. "You saw it, at least after the fact, and yet you aren't experiencing any signs of PTSD?"

"My mind, just like the rest of me, is fit as a fiddle, sugar."

Her gaze swept over his Western-style black shirt straining over broad shoulders and a chest obviously hard toned to perfection. Yeah, his body was fit. There was no doubt about them apples. His mind, however, might be a different story.

"So you aren't having reoccurring

nightmares?” She scrutinized his handsome features, looking for signs of a lie. “You’re not waking in a cold sweat or feeling a sense of a foreshortened future?” She suspected he was, though she could already see he’d come closer to swallowing a handful of nails than he would to admit it. His gaze returned to hers, the look in his green eyes piercing, but unreadable.

“The only future I got a feeling is being shortened is the one where I expected to have my best friend at my side through my career as a SEAL. That’s why I called you, to see that doesn’t happen.”

His evasive answer confirmed her suspicions. Brit might be afraid he

wouldn't be able to cut with the SEALs once his knee healed, but Trey was afraid he wouldn't be able to cut it without Brit.

Deciding to keep that observation to herself for now, she grinned at him. "Is Brit as easy to talk to as you are?"

Trey's lips stretched in another devilish grin that had her hormones rocking. "Sugar, if you can get him to talk, you'll be worth every dime you charge and then some."

Considering she didn't charge much by most people's standards, she wasn't sure how to take that statement. Thanks to a penny-pinching and overcautious grandfather, she had plenty enough



money to live on without needing to work another day in her life. She'd started her practice as a way to help those in their time of grief and pain the way she'd been helped in the past, keeping her prices affordable so she could be there for as many people as possible.

“And you think talking to me will help him?”

“I don't know if it will or not. I can't say I honestly believe in counseling and all that mumbo jumbo.” Trey shook his head. “I was told to set up this meeting with you.”

Intrigued, Lena drew her brows together. “By whom? Your superiors or commanders or whoever they are?”

Many of her clients were referred to her by doctors, hospitals, and therapists, but she'd never had anyone come to her who'd heard about her through the military.

Trey dragged his tongue between his bottom lip and teeth. "He is my superior and commander, but he hasn't been with the Navy in several decades. Horace Hoskins, the closest thing to a father I've ever known, told me to do it. Let me tell you, sugar. When Horace tells any of us boys to jump, we all ask how high."

"If that's so, then why hasn't he told Brit to jump? Why hasn't he told him to see a therapist or counselor? Why the ruse if I decide to work with Brit?"

“Brit’s not going to accept traditional talk therapy. Horace taught us not to turn to violence or anything equally stupid when we’ve got a problem, but he never forced sensitivity or openness. May, Horace’s wife, tried to pull out the sensitive side in all of us, but it didn’t work too well on Brit.”

“But Horace thinks bringing me in under the guise that I’m dating you and putting me in a position to befriend Brit will make him open up to me?”

“Something like that.”

The hint of inflection in his drawl made her suspicious. There was more to it. He just wasn’t saying it. “What if I told Brit I was sent by the Navy? I can

tell him his commanding officer sent me.”

Trey was already shaking his head. “He’d know better, sugar, and he can’t know Horace brought you in on this either. We’ll do it like I said.”

The authoritative tone in his voice awakened a part of her she’d thought had been put to rest right along with Mark. “We’ll pretend you and I are dating.”

Trey winked. “You got it. Come out to Rescue Ranch tomorrow and hang for a while. Hell, it’s a good drive from the city. We’ve got enough space out there. Plan to stay the weekend. Spend some time with Brit and tell me what you think.” He stood, pulled his wallet from the back pocket of his jeans, and tossed

a fifty on the table.

Lena lifted a brow as she tipped her head back to look at him. “That’s quite a tip you’re leaving the waitress.”

“I’ll stop by the counter and pay the tab on the way out. That money is for you.”

“The first consultation is free, Mr. Berke.”

“Buy yourself some food and a bottle of wine tonight. Then when we tell Brit I bought you dinner, it won’t be a lie.” He leaned into his side of the booth, snagged his Stetson off the seat where he’d placed it, and returned it to his head. “And get used to calling me Trey, sugar. It’s not going to sound right

having the woman I'm courting calling me mister all the time.”

Her gaze landed on his narrow hips and tight ass encased by well-worn denim as he walked away. Exactly how far did he think this pretend game would go? How convincing would the two of them have to be for Brit to believe the ruse?

The wicked urge to find out sent whips of heat slashing across her nipples, pussy, and ass even as alarm bells sounded in her head. She couldn't shake the sensation that she was headed into dangerous territory with a man as well trained to conquer as he was to protect.

\* \* \* \*

Trey knocked back a shot of whisky, thinking the woman he'd left a few hours ago would taste just as smooth and warm. He hadn't expected to nearly be knocked on his ass at the sight of Lena Conley. He'd walked into the diner, slid a slow gaze over the patrons, and pegged the only single woman in the place to be her.

Arresting didn't begin to describe the sultry bombshell who had looked up at him questioningly through sky-blue eyes as he'd approached the booth where she'd been sitting. She'd eased to her feet and he hadn't been able to stop his attention from drinking in all five-foot-

five tempting inches of her. She'd been dressed conservatively in a peach blouse, brown knee-length skirt, and matching heels, but it hadn't taken him long to get a sense of the vixen she obviously worked hard to keep under wraps.

He set the glass on the bar, poured another shot, and glanced up as footsteps neared the parlor door. He hadn't seen anyone since he'd returned to the ranch and hadn't bothered to look, figuring the teens and crew were still out making their rounds on the land.

Horace stopped in the doorway, the older man's gaze landing on the shot glass before lifting to Trey's face. "A bit early for a drink, ain't it?"



Trey toasted the air between them with the glass before knocking back the second shot and shooting the man a grin. “It’s five o’clock somewhere. You want one?”

Horace adjusted his jeans on his hips as he walked to the opposite side of the bar. “Hell, might as well. How’d the meetin’ go?”

Trey snagged another glass from the shelf beneath the bar, poured Horace a shot, and handed it to the man. Figuring one more wouldn’t hurt, he poured himself another as he answered. “She’ll be out here this weekend.”

Horace nodded slowly, eyeing Trey over the rim of the shot glass as he

sipped the whisky. “What’d you think of her?”

Trey studied the man’s dark eyes, not missing the twinkle in their depths. “You never told me how you heard about her.”

“May’s the one who told me about her. Said she came highly recommended by the doctor May goes to for her routine checkups.”

“What do you know about her?” Trey knew damn well Horace had checked her out. The man didn’t put any of his boys in the hands of anyone he wouldn’t trust with his own life.

Horace pulled off his tattered cowboy hat and set it on the bar, revealing a head of balding gray hair. Trey remembered when the man had a head full of thick,

blond hair. Quickly approaching seventy, the signs of aging were evident in every inch of the man Trey had learned to love as his father. It pained him to know one day having a shot with his mentor and friend in the middle of the afternoon would no longer be an option.

“She hit thirty about a month ago,” Horace began. “Started her practice about five years back. May says the tactics she uses with her clients are unconventional, but effective. She’s made a strong name from herself. Sounds like she comes from good stock. Her father is a doctor in the ER at Memorial. Not from around here, though.” He

sipped his whisky and smacked his lips. “Moved to these parts about six or eight years ago, I guess. Stanley Conley, her father, got hitched to Barbara Adams not long after. Barbara’s a grief counselor, too, but she works for the system.”

Trey hid a grin as he took a swig of his whisky. As he’d suspected, Horace was a fountain of information on a woman the man had yet to meet. At least about Lena’s roots. It was the personal things he wanted to know.

“Is she single?” He’d noted she hadn’t been wearing a wedding band. He’d also taken notice of the thinly veiled attraction in her eyes. Neither of those facts meant she didn’t have a boyfriend, though.

The corners of Horace's lips twitched, making the wrinkles around his mouth more pronounced. "You interested, boy?"

Interested didn't begin to scratch the surface of what he'd been feeling since the moment he'd spotted her. He couldn't explain how a few minutes in her presence had drawn out his most basic instinct to have her, to control and dominate her. He knew women, could read the signs when one wanted him, and had seen that lust in her eyes despite her attempts to hide it. He'd kept himself in check, not wanting to come on too strong out of fear of scaring her off. The urge to devour every inch of her sultry flesh

right there in the diner had left him hungering for more, but he'd known he wouldn't come close to getting it if he didn't play his cards right.

“I'm just wondering if we'll have to deal with a jealous boyfriend showing up on the ranch this weekend.”

Horace's grin stretched, but he let it go. “May suggested we can tell Brit and the others we hired her to help in the kitchen. We've been talkin' about bringin' someone in to give May a hand anyways.”

Trey shook his head. “I've already come up with a different plan. I'm passing her off as my new girlfriend.”

He hadn't known exactly how they would get Lena close to Brit until he'd

walked into the diner. The idea of introducing her to Brit as his girlfriend was perfect in more ways than one. It had been years since he'd dated a woman without Brit and he had no intentions of it staying that way with Lena. He figured starting off solo, drawing her into a pretend relationship, and working to turn it real would reap double the benefits. Brit would know he intended to share her, thus opening the door for her to get close enough to him to make him talk about the demons ruling his head. And, all the while, Trey could tighten the rope he'd already started to tie around her, pulling her in until he got her right where he wanted her...naked,

bound, and between him and Brit.

Horace scratched his chin thoughtfully as he studied Trey. “It’s gonna piss him off, thinkin’ you’re goin’ out on your own with a woman.”

“He won’t let it stay that way for long. He’ll start making his moves and she can use that to utilize her unconventional methods to help him.”

“Does she know how things work here at the ranch? How they are in Pleasure?”

Trey lifted a shoulder. “People in the city know Pleasure is chock-full of ménage relationships, even if most of them are kept quiet outside of town. As for the ranch, I didn’t go into detail about what we do here. She knows we’re all family, but that’s about as far



as the talk went.”

“Won’t take long for her to get the gist of it. If she’s as good as people say she is, May’s thinkin’ she might be a good woman to get Dillon to open up, too. Boy’s still havin’ some trouble adjustin’.”

Dillon Stokes was part of what Trey and the other nine of the original boys of Rescue Ranch thought of as the next generation. Trey wasn’t exactly sure how Horace and May had come across the fourteen-year-old boy, but he knew Dillon, like all the boys who called Rescue Ranch their home, had been living on the streets without a soul who cared for him.

“It’s hitting May where it hurts knowing she can’t get through to him. The fact that Brit isn’t talking to her either isn’t helping.”

“Brit’s got his own thing happenin’ and I suspect May’s got somethin’ to do with it. As for Dillon, that boy’s had it rougher than most of ya, despite the hell I know all my boys went through before comin’ here.” The twinkle Trey had noticed earlier returned to the man’s eyes. “You and Brit marryin’ the counselor might be a good thing for all the boys on this ranch.”

Marry Lena? What the...“Hold up, now. I never said anything about—”

“Naw, you’re just thinkin’ of gettin’

her in bed right now. All's I'm sayin' is that ain't stoppin' me and May from hopin' one pair of our first boys will give us a couple of grandchildren before we're reunited with Hank.”

Hank, Horace's late brother and the missing heart that had completed his and May's trio. Trey still felt the pain of the man's loss though three years had passed since Trent and Bobby had found Hank's body along the back fence of the property.

The thought of losing Horace and May coupled with the idea of marrying a woman who sent his dick into hysterics had Trey knocking back the remainder of the whisky in his glass. “I'm headed upstairs to clean up. I figure I'll head out

at sundown, maybe spend a few hours at Colt's club. If Brit happens to ask where I'm at, tell him I went into the city. It'll be more believable when he meets Lena if he thinks I've been with her when I've been away from the ranch."

It would be the third night he'd gone out this week and he couldn't help but wonder if fate had been setting the stage for the whole pretend relationship game even before he'd met Lena. Every attempt he'd made at getting Brit off the ranch since their return had failed. Tired of spending every night reliving the goatfuck of a mission he couldn't change, he'd started venturing out alone, paying visits to old friends the first night

and drinking away the memories the second night as he'd kept talkative company with a willing sub at The Cowboy's Den, Pleasure's most exclusive club owned by Colt Barlow and his brothers, Seth and Darryl.

Plenty of drinks and several hours later, he'd come back to the ranch and jerked off rather than taking the opportunity to show the sub to one of the back rooms of the club. He hadn't known why he'd ignored the pleading look in the sub's eyes the whole time they'd talked. He'd only known he hadn't felt the urge to take what she had been so obviously willing to give him.

He'd felt the urge today, though, despite suspecting it would take some

smooth talking and finessing he wasn't sure he possessed to chip away at Lena's professionalism so he could uncover the submissive streak he suspected she was keeping buried deep.

Horace polished off his whisky and replaced his cowboy hat on his head. "I'll spread the word 'case he asks anyone. Probably a good idea if you enjoy yourself at the Den tonight." He lightly slapped the top of the bar as he stepped back. "Take the edge off, if you ain't done it already. If this counselor's the one, you'll wanna take your time with her, give Brit the time to move in, too, and make it right for all three of ya."

## Chapter Two

*Lieutenant Brit Matthews counted the heat blobs through his infrared glasses. Two tangos stood guard at the entrance to the terrorist compound. Another two paced the grounds on either side of the hut. He'd counted eight more who'd disappeared inside in the hour since he and his five teammates had cozied into their hiding spots on the cold, rocky ground to wait for the sun to go down. In the waning daylight, they'd been able to confirm that one of those eight tangos was indeed the terrorist leader they had been sent in to take down.*

*Now they were playing the waiting game. First, wait for the darkness to fully overtake the sun. That had happened about twenty minutes ago. Next, wait for the tangos to settle in the compound. That had happened barely ten minutes later. Then, wait for the green light from command to break their covert status and take the fuckers out.*

*The command for Team Alpha, his team, to strike came through his headset just as one of his teammates, a man they'd nicknamed Snake, slithered from his hiding spot and settled next to Brit.*

*“Platter is reporting a group of*



*tangos headed our way. ETA is less than thirty.”*

*Platter was Trey’s nickname for obvious reasons despite the implied misspelling of the man’s name. Team Bravo was under Trey’s leadership, protecting Team Alpha’s ass four clicks back.*

*“How many?”*

*“About twenty. Platter is requesting permission to move in.”*

*Twenty tangos coming up their path and ten at the compound made a total of thirty. It was an easy match for his team of highly trained, vastly competent SEALs. Brit didn’t sweat it. They could set up an ambush and take them out. No problem.*

*Brit shook his head. "Tell him to hold back. Here's what we're going to do."*

*He laid out his plan, signaling to the rest of his team his intentions. Then a boy's shout filled the air, the first bomb hit, and screams split the darkness.*

Brit bolted upright in bed, the screams of his fallen teammates still ringing in his head. Sweat dripped from the hairs matted to his forehead, his chest rose and fell in breaths that came far too quick, and his knee throbbed in agony. A glance at the digital clock on the bedside table told him he'd slept for less than two hours before the nightmare had taken over. Hell, that was a new record.

He raked his hair from his face, threw his head back, and forced his breathing to return to a normal, much slower rhythm. That clock added to the beam of sunlight peeking through the heavy curtains over his bedroom window told him it was time to start another lovely, lively day. The first thing on his agenda was food, as bland as he knew it would be. Not because May wasn't a fantastic cook, but simply because nothing had held much flavor for him since he'd returned to the states.

Forgoing a probably much needed shower, he carefully dragged his ass out of bed, pulled a shirt also in need of washing over his head, and limped out

of his room. Each step was a test of his will in itself. Though the doctor said his surgery had been successful, he rarely got more than a few minutes respite from the pain. After a month of recovering on base after the surgery and nearly that long at home on the ranch, he'd figured the pain would've left him by now. Hell, being his luck, that was all in his head, too.

He stopped at the top of the stairs and scowled at the three flights that would take him to the bottom floor. May had tried to set him up in a room on the first floor, but he'd insisted on being in his quarters on the third, stupidly convincing her the trips he'd have to make up and down the stairs would be good exercise

for his knee. Seeing as how the doctor had agreed as long as he felt he could handle it, she'd relented.

He muttered curses under his breath at the idea now as he hobbled, fucking *hobbled*, his way down each flight like a penguin. He stopped at the second floor, thankful when he found it empty, and continued down. His less than two hours of sleep had at least kept him in bed long enough for the main house to empty.

Scents he knew would've had his stomach rumbling if his life hadn't turned so sour greeted him when he reached the bottom. He followed his nose, knowing it would lead him to the kitchen where he hoped he would find it

deserted save for the leftovers from breakfast May would've no doubt set aside for him.

He found the leftovers as expected, along with May waiting for him. She must have heard him wobble in because she turned from the stove just as he moved into the room. A wide, motherly smile brightened her face and he felt a bubble of what might have been a chuckle in his throat at the sight of the flour streaked across her cheek.

“Good morning, sunshine.”

Brit snorted and made his way to the pot of fresh coffee on the counter. “It’s morning and there’s apparently sunshine out there.”

Her smile dimmed and he silently

cursed himself for being the ass he'd become lately. A fantastic woman like May with her huge, loving heart didn't deserve even an ounce of his jerkishness, but damn if he could seem to stop the shit the poured out of his mouth these days.

“All the boys wanted their eggs scrambled with cheese this morning, but I know you like yours sunny side up. They'll be ready in a jiffy.”

Brit took a deep breath and softened his tone. “I wish you wouldn't bother, May.”

“Well, I'm going to.” She pointed at him with the spatula. “And you're going to eat them.”

Yes, he would, if for no other reason than because she told him to. He poured a cup of coffee, turned his back to the counter, and leaned against it as he blew into the cup before taking a sip. “What time did Trey get in last night?”

“I don’t have a clue. It was well after Horace and I went to bed.” She shot him a grin over her slender shoulder. “He looked a little worse for wear this morning, so I’m betting he was out pretty late.”

“Yeah, I bet he was,” Brit muttered into his coffee cup. Trey hadn’t bothered to ask him to go this time. Not that he would’ve tagged along anyway. His friend had apparently found something



outside the ranch that was keeping his mind off what had happened. Then again, maybe he really wasn't as affected by the loss of their teammates as Brit was. Or maybe he'd simply found that taking it out on a willing sub at The Cowboy's Den was the medicine he needed to cure what ailed him. Either way, he knew he didn't have a right to be pissed at the man, but that didn't stop the emotion from taking hold.

The click of the toaster on the counter next to him had him nearly jumping out of his skin. May turned in time to see it, compassion swimming in her sea-blue eyes. Jesus, if was so far gone he was getting spooked by a fucking toaster, how the hell did he ever expect to return

to covert ops? Provided his damn knee ever healed enough to make that possible.

May moved to the toaster, placed the two slices onto a plate where she'd put his eggs, and handed it to him. "There's plenty of bacon, sausage, and gravy left on the table."

Brit shook his head and obligingly set his coffee cup down so he could pick up a slice of the toast. "This'll do, May. Thanks." He attempted to smile at her, but figured he'd failed by the sympathetic expression on her face. Damn it, he didn't want her pity. He didn't want to feel the way he did, but he couldn't seem to shake it.

She pulled the utensil drawer open, snagged a fork, and held it out. “You can eat your toast with your hands all you want, but you’re going to need this for those eggs.”

“No, I’m not,” Brit said around a mouthful of toast that tasted like cardboard. He put down the slice, balanced the plate on one hand, and used the other to scoop the eggs onto the untouched slice before putting the half-eaten one on top. He scooped it all up and took a large bite, holding the plate under his chin as the runny yolk slid down his beard and dripped onto the dish.

May’s giggle, so much like the much

younger woman she'd been when he'd first met her, twisted at his heart. At sixty-three, gray had all but taken over her natural chestnut hair. Her sea-blue eyes still sparkled with life, but were rimmed with wrinkles of age and shadowed with loss. Though still blissfully happy with Horace, he knew she continued to pine for Hank and suspected she waited for the day when she and Horace would be with him again.

“I heard Horace mention the younger boys could use some help in the back pasture today,” she said as she reached behind her back, untied the apron she wore over a flowered blouse and blue jeans, and pulled it over her head. “The

hired hands could probably use another pair of eyes checking the fences, too.”

Brit knew what she was trying to do, but it wasn't going to work. She wanted him to get out of the ranch house, get out on the land, and pretend everything was normal. He simply couldn't do it.

He shook his head, forced himself to take another bite of the egg sandwich, and spoke around it. “I've got enough equipment in the gym to give my knee the workout it needs.”

Horace had made sure of that even before he'd returned to the ranch to finish recuperating from the surgery. He'd spend an hour doing his home exercises, waste the better part of

another few hours watching television, and then hit the gym again before dinner. The Soap Channel was running a One Life to Live marathon today. He'd make sure to watch that in his room. He refused to think what the boys on the ranch or, God, his teammates would say if they knew he'd gotten hooked on the old soap opera.

May's expression turned apologetic. "You won't find everything you need in the gym this morning. Horace had Trey, Trent, and Bobby move the treadmill and weight bench to the front yard before they went to work this morning."

Incensed, Brit barely caught hold of his temper before he slammed the plate on the counter. "What the hell did he do

that for?”

“To get you out of the house, son. Look out there.” She gestured to the open window behind the sink with a flourish of her arm. “It’s a beautiful day. The sun is high in the sky and there’s not a cloud blocking it.”

“And, as you’ve just pointed out, all I have to do is look out the window if I want to see it,” Brit said tightly.

“Or you can feel it beating down on you while you do your exercises in the front yard,” she countered in that motherly voice he’d quickly learned long ago not to argue with.

Brit gritted his teeth so hard he was surprised not to feel bits of enamel

shooting out of his ass and looked down at himself. He hadn't bothered to change out of the sweatpants he'd worn to bed. "I guess I'd better find a pair of shorts if I'm going to be working out in the heat."

Which would require another trip up those fucking stairs. The urge to stay up there once he reached the top was far too tempting. The knowledge that, if he tried to pull that May would eventually come up there and drag him back down by his ears, would keep him from giving in.

May patted his cheek. "It'll be good for you, son, and, maybe, after you've had some time outside with your thoughts, you'll be ready to talk about them."

A lump formed in his throat, making it



hard to swallow and even more difficult to speak. He held her gaze, a woman who had taken him into not only her home, but her heart, when he had been thirteen without a soul to care for him, and couldn't find the words to tell her how much she meant to him, let alone how to explain the sorrow chipping away at his mind.

“I'll try.” It was all he could manage to say, all he could promise, but it was enough for her for now.

Her eyes glimmered with tears he prayed she wouldn't let fall as a soft smile spread her lips. “I know you will, son. You've never let anything get you down for long.”

\* \* \* \*

“Incoming call from Dad.”

Lena smiled at the computerized voice that flowed from her cell phone through her Bluetooth and pushed the button to answer the call. “It’s about time you got back to me,” she teased. She’d called her father that morning, half expecting to wake him up since she knew he’d worked the late shift at the hospital last night. She’d gotten his voice mail instead.

“I’m sorry, Duchess. My relief had a heart attack just before his shift was supposed to start. I ended up staying to

cover half of it so his relief didn't have to work a full double.”

“Is he going to be okay?”

“We believe so. It was a mild one and his test results are coming back good now. Apparently, it was brought on by too much stress.”

Lena smiled. “Imagine that.”

Her father chuckled. “Yeah, imagine that. So, you're standing me up for our weekly lunch date, huh?”

She grimaced. “Sorry, Daddy.” In the years since they'd started going to lunch every week on Friday, she could count on one hand how many times one of them had canceled the date. “I have a potential client. I'm actually on the road now to see him.”

“I take it this client isn’t in town?”

“He lives in Pleasure. A place called Rescue Ranch.”

“I’ve heard of it, though only through the grapevine, so to speak. It’s a ranch owned by a couple—well, I believe it used to be a trio, or whatever you call them—who takes in troubled boys.”

“Well, this client is troubled, but he’s not a boy any longer. He’s a Navy SEAL. He’s home on medical leave. I don’t know much about the mission he was on, but it’s my understanding it didn’t have a good outcome. From what his friend told me—he’s the one I spoke with, by the way—the client is suffering with PTSD along with trying to recover

from a torn ACL and damaged cartilage.”

“I’m assuming he’s already been through surgery.”

Lena nodded, though she knew her father couldn’t see it. “He has. According to his friend, the surgery went off without a hitch. My question for you is how successful is that kind of surgery and what the recovery process?”

Her father blew a breath through the phone. “The surgery has a good success rate. He’s likely looking at about nine months of recovery, exercises and strength training, before he’ll regain full use of the knee. After that, he could experience some lingering pain, but nothing truly detrimental.”

“In other words, he should be able to return to his job after he fully heals.”

“That’s going to be up to him and his mind. If he’s suffering from PTSD like you say and this injury occurred in battle, he may not be able to mentally get past the pain he’s feeling to physically perform the way he did before the accident.”

“I think that’s what his friend is afraid of. He was there, too. This guy’s friend. He’s also a SEAL, though he wasn’t on the front line like the client was.”

“It sounds to me like what you’re saying is you have two potential clients you’re going to see.”

Lena smiled, loving the bond she had

with her father that enabled them to communicate so well. It hadn't always been this way, but she supposed she should be grateful for that. If not for her depression over her mother's abandonment and the loss of Mark, neither she nor he would've ever met Barbara and she wouldn't have found her calling in life. She'd struggled through years of depression, barely making it through high school, and then fell even deeper when she'd lost Mark.

Not knowing how to help her, her father had found Barbara, a grief counselor who worked for the hospital, and talked Lena into making an appointment with her. Less than a year later, after countless hours of baring her

soul to the only woman who had ever been able to get through to her, her father and Barbara had sparked a relationship that had then turned into a marriage.

“I got that impression during my meeting with the friend, though he might be more reluctant than the SEAL I’m supposed to be seeing.”

“Men who go through what they do will have more than a few invisible scars, Duchess.”

Lena sighed. “I know and, honestly, I’m not sure I’ll be able to give either of them the help they need.”

“Well, if you need advice on how to handle it, you know Barbara is always here for you, too.”



Emotions twisted around her heart. “I know.”

Her father hesitated for so long, she thought for a moment they might have lost signal. “Pleasure, you realize what kind of town that is, don’t you?”

Lena rolled her eyes, glad now that her father couldn’t see her. “Men outnumber women three to one. Most of the relationships in Pleasure are ménage and it’s openly accepted for people to live that way. Yes, Dad, I know.”

“And you’re headed to a ranch that gives a home to troubled boys, two of whom are SEALs who are apparently your age.”

This time, she suppressed a giggle.

“Actually, I think they’re a couple of years younger than me.”

“That’s not the point, Duchess.”

No, but his first statement had raised an interesting question in her mind. “How do you feel about people who live that way, Dad?”

“To each their own, as the saying goes.” His answer came quick enough that she didn’t doubt the sincerity of it. “I wouldn’t share Barbara with another man, but I don’t hold anything against those who chose to do such a thing.” He waited a beat and then added, “And, no, sweetheart, I wouldn’t hold it against you either if you fell in love with these two SEALs.”

Lena was so shocked she nearly drove

off the country road. “Dad!”

He chuckled. “I just wanted to make sure you understood.”

“There’s no need to make sure I understand that. Engaging in a relationship with a client is strictly taboo.”

“Your stepmother married me.”

“You weren’t her client. I was.”

“Touché.”

“To be fair, engaging in a relationship with the father of a client is strictly taboo, too.” Barbara shrugged. “Despite that, I couldn’t help myself. I looked at your father and *client*, or anything remotely close, was the last word that came to mind. That doesn’t make you

any less professional or good at what you do. It merely makes you human.” Her lips stretched in a knowing smile. “And something is telling me the last thing you thought about when you met these men was about one or both of them being your client.”

It hadn't been the last thing, Lena wanted to argue. She'd mulled over it, had known she needed to keep a professional distance, and had let them blow every bit of willpower she possessed to smithereens from the very start all because she'd wanted them.

“All we're saying, sweetheart, is we think it's past time for you to move on and, if that means you move on with two men, then Barbara and I will fully

support your decision.”

“Thanks.” She frowned and then added, “I think. Listen, Dad, I’m getting closer to my destination. I’ll make up lunch to you next week. We’ll go to Sweet Basil.” She hated Thai cuisine, but he loved it.

“It’s a deal. I love you, baby.”

“I love you, too.” She pushed the button on her Bluetooth to disconnect the call and studied the windy road ahead. She figured she had another two or three miles before she reached Rescue Ranch, but the scenery was too beautiful to be ignored.

Thick trees lined the road on either side for as far as she could see. She

hadn't noticed how far she'd gone since she'd last seen any signs of civilization. Not that she'd been paying much attention when she'd been on the phone. She had noted the small motel as she'd driven through town. There was no way she'd consider taking Trey up on his offer—*more like order*—to stay on Rescue Ranch the whole weekend no matter how many spare rooms it had. Still, she might consider booking a motel room for a night or two.

A few minutes and lots of trees later, she spotted her first glimpse of a driveway up ahead. Slowing her speed, she gripped the steering wheel with both hands as she leaned forward to peer out the windshield. A wrought-iron sign

formed an archway over the pebbled driveway with the words Rescue Ranch intricately spelled out in the center. She made the turn and realized it was more like another road than a driveway. If not for the sign, she wouldn't have had any indication she was on the right path.

“Jeez, talk about living in the boondocks,” she muttered as she continued to drive, tightening her grip on the wheel as the tires attempted to slide on the pebbles.

A curve came into view, bringing with it signs of civilization. The trees parted to fencing lining either side and wide-open pastures beyond. She spotted several horses grazing in the field to her

left and felt herself smile at their beauty.

Dragging her attention back to the road, she finally saw what had to be the ranch house. An elaborate structure standing three stories tall, it stretched wide on either side of the end of the road. She slowed the car to a crawl as it crept forward, taking in the long porch that spanned the full length of the house, the assortment of rocking chairs and swings that seemed to be patiently waiting for warm bodies to fill them, and the array of windows standing open to let in the fresh air.

A welcoming sensation swept through her as she brought her car to a stop behind the only truck in the drive. Snagging her shoulder bag from the



passenger seat, she tossed her keys inside and slowly got out of the car. She'd attempted to phone Trey before she left the city to let him know she was headed out, but only managed to reach his voice mail. As if on cue, the cartoon melody of Scooby Doo chimed from her purse as she quietly closed the car door.

She pulled the phone from her bag, glanced at the caller id on the screen, and answered the call via her Bluetooth. "Perfect timing," she said in lieu of hello. "I just pulled up out front. Where are you?"

"In the back pastures." The sound of Trey's lazy, rusty drawl sent remembered shivers of desire down her

spine. “The front door of main house is open. Go on in. May’s probably working in the kitchen. I’ll meet you there.”

“And Brit?” He was the man she’d come here to see, after all. She glanced at the truck in the driveway as she passed it, noting the logo painted on the door that matched the one she’d seen on the wrought iron sign that had led her here. Her gaze slid over the hood as she reached the front of the truck and movement a short distance away caught her attention. “Never mind. I’m betting I just found him.”

She stopped where she stood and surveyed the sight. Christ on a pogo stick! Though she could only see the side profile of the man on the treadmill, it

was enough to have her IQ dropping into the single digits. Ratty tennis shoes and bare powerful looking legs kept a steady pace despite the brace on his left knee. Khaki cargo shorts hung on his lean hips and led to a bare torso glistening with a sheen of sweat. The man's body gave new meaning to sculpted perfection. Corded muscles, fine ridges, and etched lines accented by flesh that spent a lot of time in the sun made her head feel a bit woozy.

“If it's a guy with a knee brace working out in the front yard, then, yeah, you found Brit.”

Trey's voice ripped her from her admiring assessment of the man before

she started to drool. Thank God. “Is there a particular reason there is a treadmill and a weight bench out here?”

Trey chuckled. “Yeah, Horace had a few of us move the stuff outside this morning. The only thing Brit is holding fast to is his exercises. Horace figured, since nothing else has been getting him out of the house, putting his equipment outside would do the trick.”

Lena giggled. “Interesting reasoning and apparently it worked.”

“I’m in the middle of something here. As soon as I finish up, I’ll come to the house.”

“Take your time.” *Please, take your time.* The last thing she needed right now was a double whammy of innate sex

appeal. "I'll go introduce myself."

She ended the call before he could say anything else, pulled the Bluetooth from her ear, and shoved it in her shoulder bag as she rounded the front of the truck. The movement must have caught Brit's attention because he turned his head toward her. His gaze slammed into hers, the look in his dark eyes intense enough to make her step falter as spasms of lust ricocheted through her insides.

He pushed a control button on the treadmill and slowed his step with the machine as it came to a stop. His gaze fell from hers and he gave her a full once-over that turned her blood to a flaming flow of wicked need as he

pulled the earbuds from his ears. Then he dragged his gaze back to hers and pinned her with a stare that put in her mind a vision of sweaty bodies and rumpled sheets.

“What can I do for you?” Though he worded the question politely enough, his tone made it evident he wasn’t pleased by the interruption despite the flicker of interest she saw in his eyes.

*Take me to the nearest bed. Strip me naked, tie me down, and touch me until I’m begging you to fuck me. Oh, and don’t forget to invite...*

“Trey.” His name rolled from her lips as if completing the thought aloud.

Holy shit! Had she gone crazy? This guy was a client! Well, a potential client

since she hadn't yet given Trey her word she would work with Brit. Still, potential or not, she was a professional. She was here to decide if she could help this man through his grief, not to fuck him blind. She could do this. She could ignore the electric desire sparking in her head, sizzling through her body in a mad rush to be pleased, and focus on her job. Couldn't she?

His cheek flexed and she suspected if his face had been cleanly shaven she would've seen the muscle in the strong line of his jaw tick. "You're here to see Trey?"

She nodded once, both in answer to his question and in an attempt to jar her

mind from the quick plane to double-stud-land it seemed insistent on boarding. It fit with the ruse Trey had insisted they use. She was supposed to make Brit think she was dating Trey.

*Heaven help me. This is going to be harder than I thought.*

Brit averted his gaze, but not before she saw a spark on temper in his eyes. “He’s working. Try his cell.”

Realizing she’d walked close enough to him to invade his personal space, she stopped and knew in an instant the length of a football field wouldn’t be a safe distance from this man. His height coupled with the fact that he was still standing on the treadmill forced her to tip her head back so she could keep



looking at him. Sweat beaded on the tips of the dark hairs that nearly reached his broad shoulders. He didn't appear to be out of breath from his exercises, but she couldn't quite tell if the tightness in his expression was from pain in his knee or her presence.

"I'm Lena Conley." She extended her hand and waited for him to look at her again before she gave him what she hoped was a friendly smile.

His gaze dropped to her hand before lifting to her eyes. He hesitated, as if trying to decide whether to give her the brushoff or be polite, and finally closed his large hand around hers. "Brit Matthews."

Awareness, swift and panty-wetting, zinged through her system at the contact. She tried to ignore the embers of white-hot need that rained through her and focus on the job she'd come here to do, on the role Trey wanted her to play in order to complete the mission he'd recruited her for.

She tipped her head back further to look at the sky. "It's a beautiful day out here. I can see why you're exercising outside."

"It's not by choice," he grumbled and let go of her hand.

Because her palm burned to touch more of him, she curled her fingers into a fist at her side. "How did you hurt your

knee?”

“Horse got spooked. I fell off and landed on it.”

The lie seemed to roll from his lips so easily she wondered how often he'd used it before. She winced as if she believed him. “Ouch. That sucks. I've never been on a horse.”

His gaze dropped to her legs and her pulse spiked. She actually *felt* the look on the bare flesh of her legs. He dragged his attention back to her face and she swore his eyes were a full two shades darker. “You're short, but with the right stallion between your legs, I'm betting you'd ride you just fine.” His eyes sparked with a challenge that turned his statement into an innuendo. “I'm

surprised Trey hasn't taught a pretty thing like you how ride already."

No, he definitely wasn't talking about riding a horse. Heat filled her cheeks and she rushed to distract herself from the image of straddling his waist or Trey's. "Are you a Navy SEAL, too?"

He shot a pointed look at his knee and the sorrow that moved through his handsome face before he quickly masked it tore at her heart. "I was."

Lena planted her hands on her hips. "Was? What kind of SEAL talks like that?" *The injured kind. The kind with invisible wounds he doesn't know how to heal.* "Don't you frogmen have a saying, once a SEAL, always a SEAL,

or something like that?”

“As a matter of fact, we have a saying exactly like that.”

Trey's words were the only warning Lena got that he'd joined them before his strong arms wound around her and pulled her back against the hard wall of his body. Instinctively, she tipped her head back and turned it to look at him. She saw his intention in his eyes a nanosecond before his mouth came down on hers.

When she'd fantasized about him kissing her—and she'd done so repeatedly since he'd walked out of the diner yesterday—she'd never imagined he would take it slow. She'd expected to be devoured and possessed, not tenderly

finessed into parting her lips for him. She did so on a sigh and felt herself melt in his embrace as his tongue swept into her mouth, tangled with hers, and controlled the kiss in an easy dance that stole her sanity.

Yeah, going suddenly insane was the only explanation for the way her hand lifted and reached behind his head to cup his nape as he slanted his mouth to take the kiss deeper. It was the only explanation for way her nipples beaded to hardened points, pulsing with the need to feel his hands and mouth on them. It was the only explanation for the flame that ignited in her pussy, coaxing a flow of juices from her cunt that she

wondered didn't start to drip from beneath her skirt.

He eased back, his breath fanning her lips when he spoke and sending desire raining through her system. "I'm glad you came out today, sugar."

Lena gulped, lost in the dark promises and challenges that mixed a heady concoction in his eyes. "I..." She didn't know what to say. He'd caught her off guard to the point that she couldn't manage to gather a single intelligible sentence.

The corners of his lips twitched in a sinful smile as if he knew exactly what he'd done to her. "I see you've met Brit."

Unsure if she should slap him or be

grateful for his help, she decided to go with the latter and follow his lead. She'd give him a good smack for the stunt he'd just pulled later. Her hand was still cupping his nape and she forced herself to let her arm drop to her side, though he didn't make a move to release her. His arms stayed around her waist, holding her tightly against his front. Ecstasy, hot and intoxicating, pumped off him in waves and there was no way she could miss the impressive hard rod of his cock pressing against the small of her back.

She looked at Brit and felt a wicked thrill move through her at the hard way he was watching her. "Brit was just telling me how he'd hurt his knee when



he fell off the horse.” She felt Trey’s body tense against her back.

“Fell off a horse, huh?”

Brit’s attention snapped up, warning filling their depths as his gaze locked with Trey’s. “She doesn’t know how to ride. Why don’t you go teach her?”

“That’s not a bad idea.” Trey actually sounded pleased. “Why don’t you come with us? You can stand back and watch if you’re afraid of getting hurt again.”

It took every ounce of control Lena possessed not to gape at Trey. Maybe he didn’t understand the hidden meaning in Brit’s statement. Or maybe he did. They were men of Pleasure, after all. Then again, maybe she’d gotten it all wrong from the start.

Son of a bitch, she'd known this would happen. She'd known from the moment she'd started closer to Brit, from the way her hormones had spiked from simply looking at him, that this would happen. She'd had the same instant bodily reaction to him that she'd had with Trey yesterday. She couldn't think being this close to them. Worse, she'd stopped within inches of Brit and Trey was now pressed against her back, putting her between them. If Brit stepped off that treadmill in her direction, she'd become the main slice in a Navy SEAL sandwich.

"I'll pass." Brit pushed the button on the treadmill that got it going again, his

movements far stiffer than they'd been earlier as he started to walk on the moving belt beneath his feet. "I'm not done with my exercises."

Lena felt the muscles in Trey's chest flex against her back as he shrugged.

"Suit yourself. I'm going to take Lena inside and introduce her to May. We'll be around if you change your mind."

\* \* \* \*

Trey led Lena into Horace's office and closed the door. He'd made a pass through the house before going out front and knew the place was empty save for May in the kitchen, but with so many people on the ranch, there was no telling

when someone might decide to come in. Though he didn't mind a crowd of strangers now and then, he'd rather not get caught by people he thought of as family.

He stopped in the center of the office floor and used his hold on Lena's hand to spin her around before yanking her against him. Her chin came up, surprise and temper flashing like twin bolts of lightning in her eyes as she stared at him.

“What do you think you're doing?”

“I'm about to kiss you again. I didn't get a good enough taste of you outside.”

“You are not going to kiss me again. What you're going to do is let go of me.”

She flattened her hands on his chest

and pushed, but the lack of force left him wondering if she was really trying to push him away.

“Is that really what you want, sugar? It damn sure didn’t feel that way out in the yard.” It didn’t feel that way now either. He’d loosened his hold on her, giving her enough room to move just in case she had been trying to push him away. She stayed right where she was.

“I’m supposed to be pretending to be your girlfriend in front of him. Wasn’t that the plan?”

It was, but that didn’t mean he didn’t intend to take full advantage of it every chance he got, whether Brit was watching or not. He wanted her. He’d tried to convince himself differently last

night, figuring he might have imagined the instant need he'd felt for her. The moment he'd wrapped his arms around her out in the yard, he'd known he hadn't imagined a damn thing.

“He’s lying to you.”

She made a raspberry sound with her lips. “Duh! You already told me how he hurt his knee. I didn’t tell him I knew because I want him to open up to me on his own.”

“Sugar, I know Brit better than anybody and the only thing he wanted to open up out there was your sexy legs.”

Her cheeks turned redder than the town’s fire engine, but she didn’t back down. He liked that about her. Even

when he rattled her or caught her off guard, she managed to keep her composure.

“I’m not stupid or naive, Trey. I understood the hidden meaning in the byplay between the two of you. I also understood the hidden meaning behind the things he said to me before you walked out there.”

“Oh?” Brit had made a move on her? Hot damn! “What did he say?”

She shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. The point is, I understood what he meant by it.”

“You’re not getting it, sugar. It *does* matter. Him putting the moves on you is the first sign of the real Brit any of us have seen since the op.”

She scoffed. “I wouldn’t really call what he said a move. At least not one that would entice any woman with an ounce of standards to spr—He was being a jerk. A polite one, mind you, but a jerk, nevertheless.”

Trey didn’t think he’d ever heard a woman put the brakes on a statement so fast. Spread her legs. That’s what she’d been about to say before she’d obviously realized the context she’d started with. “Sugar, you’re full of standards. It doesn’t take a man two seconds in your company to see that.” He didn’t think her cheeks could get any redder, but they did. “It’s okay to admit you’re attracted to Brit, even if he was being a jerk.”



“You hired me to counsel him, to talk to him, and see if I can help him cope with what happened on that op. There’s nothing between you and me except this scam you concocted that’s supposed to make it easier for me to get closer to Brit.”

Trey tightened his arms around her again and slowly started backing her toward the nearby wall. “It started out that way, but it sure felt like more a few minutes ago in the yard.”

“You surprised me out there. If I hadn’t reacted the way I did, your plan would’ve been blown before it even really got started.”

She took an audible, shaky breath

when her back reached the wall. Trey didn't stop until his front was fully pressed against hers, until he had her caged between him and the wall with nowhere to go. He'd let her go, of course. If he sensed any indication in her whatsoever that she wanted to get away from him, he wouldn't make a move to stop her. What he saw in her eyes as she stared up at him was an excited hope he would keep going, a plea that he wouldn't stop.

“You want to tell me again there's nothing between you and me, Lena?”

She swallowed visibly, and his attention locked on her throat. The vein pulsed in her neck, beckoning his tongue and teeth. “There's nothing between you

and me.”

“You don’t sound so sure.” He moved his hands to her hips, dipped his head, and dragged the tip of his tongue over the line of her jaw. “Tell me you don’t want me. Tell me you aren’t ready to strip for me, to spread your beautiful legs for me, and wait for me tell you what to do next.”

Her quick intake of breath told him all he needed to know. He’d taken a gamble going this far this soon. As he gazed into her eyes and saw the wicked desires burning hot and ready in their depths, he knew the jackpot would payoff far sooner than he’d dared to hope.

“Trey, I can’t.”

Indecision and something he couldn't define, something he suspected ran closer to pain, dimmed the flames of heat in her eyes. Had someone hurt her? For all the strength and control he sensed and saw in her, he sensed and saw submissiveness, too. He'd come across her type a time or two and had found himself more drawn to those women than any of the other subs he'd found. He liked a woman who could hold her own in the outside world, one who was strong, competent, and steady in her life, but one who found pleasure in relinquishing all control to a man when the time was right. Had she done that with someone? Had she given up control

to a Dom who had taken it too far? He wouldn't push her, at least not until he figured out what was holding her back, but damn if he could let her go right now.

“I'm going to kiss you again, Lena.” He moved his hands from her hips, closed his fingers around her slender wrists, and pinned them to the wall on either side of her head. He held her that way, drawing out the moment, watching as anticipation filled her angelic face, washing away her uncertainty. “Just a kiss.”

She nodded.

It wasn't enough. “Tell me you want me to kiss you.”

She licked her lips and his gaze

dropped to follow the path her tongue took, his cock so hard and his balls so tight he feared they might rupture with the need to be inside her pretty mouth. “I want you to kiss me. Will you please kiss me, Trey?”

Her obedience to his command, the way she altered it to a request, confirmed his suspicion that she'd been dominated before. Still, he felt an uncertainty in her despite her request, as if she had buried that beautifully precious part of herself and was afraid to set it free again.

He would take his time with her and make sure Brit did, too. Together, they would show her it was okay to let that

part of herself out of the cage she'd locked it in. They would make her feel as she should, cherished and desired and perfect and...

Loved. Trey covered her mouth with his, immediately assuming control of her the kiss. He knew the needs coursing through his system for this woman weren't love. Not yet. But, as he felt the excited shiver run through her, heard her moan into his mouth, and tasted her surrender, he knew it was only a matter of time before he'd start to fall.

# Chapter Three

Brit didn't understand it. He'd made it through Hell Week, pushed himself beyond his bodily limits and conquered the five-and-a-half-day bitch special dished out by his commanders that few men made it through. BUD/S training had been a cakewalk after that. Yet, an hour too long on a fucking treadmill had whipped his ass.

No, it hadn't been the extra time that had done it. The abrupt turn he'd taken in mid-step when Lena Conley had walked her sexy ass out the front door to her car had been his downfall. He really had damn near fallen on his ass. His left foot



had come down on the treadmill belt at the wrong time, his knee had twisted, and pain had shot straight to his hip. He didn't know how he'd managed to stay on his feet as the beautiful vixen retrieved something out of her car, waved at him on her way back up the drive, and disappeared back into the house. He'd done it, though. At least until she'd gotten out of sight. Then, he'd hit the deck...or the belt, as the case turned out to be. He'd sat there, sweat dripping from every hair on his body, until the pain finally ebbed enough that he could move again.

Hobbling worse now than he'd been that morning, he stopped in the foyer and leveled a death glare at the staircase. It

wasn't going to happen. May was going to give him a good, stern lecture about overdoing it, even if that wasn't what he'd really done, but he needed to get some ice on his knee before he attempted the grueling battle up those stairs again. Pride kept his lips sealed. He made it to the doorway of the front parlor before he swallowed it and made the shout.

“May, I need you. Please.” He choked the last part out, feeling yet another ding to his pride as he continued through the doorway to the nearest chair equipped with an ottoman. Sinking into the chair felt like a slice of paradise. He guided his leg to rest on the ottoman and then carefully removed the knee brace.

Closing his eyes, he threw his head back and decided paradise had now taken on a whole new meaning.

“Are you okay?”

The voice was decidedly not May and had his eyes flying open. He jerked his head up too fast, wrenching his neck toward the sultry sound, and felt a different pain shoot from his shoulder to his temple. Fuck! The last thing he needed was to injure something else.

“I’m fine.” He glared at Lena who stood so close he could easily pull her onto his lap. His gaze slid down to her full skirt and he got a quick image of it flying up as he yanked her down, exposing whatever panties she wore beneath. Was she even wearing panties?

His cock came to life at the question, stiffening hard enough to bust the button fly of his cargo shorts. “Where’s May?”

“She’s in the kitchen preparing lunch.”

Lena’s gaze shifted to his knee, then her eyes narrowed as she studied his face. “You’re in pain, aren’t you?”

“I’m fine,” he said again. He’d had enough of people’s pity and he damn sure didn’t want it from her. He’d rather have her on top of him, her beautiful breasts bouncing and pleased screams rolling out of her throat as she rode his aching cock to oblivion while Trey fucked her tight ass. “Never mind.”

She shook her head and he expected her to argue. Instead, she spun on her

heel and swayed her sexy hips back out of the room.

Infuriated, he snagged the television remote off the nearby table and punched the power button, wishing it was Trey's face. Why the hell did the man have to bring her out to the ranch? It was bad enough he best friend had decided to go solo after all these years, but did he have to parade the prize in front of him?

He didn't doubt Lena Conley was a prize, from the roots of her long flowing hair the color of autumn leaves to the tips of her shiny red painted toenails he'd noticed peeking from the open-toed sandals she was wearing. Her pink blouse could've fit a little more tightly to suit his taste and her khaki skirt

could've been shorter instead of stretching nearly to her slightly knobby knees. Still, the woman was a walking temptation he couldn't chase.

A soft snicker pulled him from his thoughts of Lena only to replace him with the vixen incarnate once again standing beside his chair. Her beautiful head was turned toward the television, her sultry lips tilted in pure amusement.

Shit. He hadn't realized he'd been surfing the channels, but it must have been because he'd stopped on the One Life to Live marathon he'd been planning to watch upstairs.

"Daytime television sucks donkey balls," he muttered and quickly resumed

channel surfing. He saw her grin at him out of the corner of his eye.

“You don’t have to change it on my account. I used to love Soap Operas.”

He looked at her in time to see a shadow move through her amazing blue eyes. “Used to?”

She shrugged. “I haven’t watched them in years. Not since my mother left us.”

“Where’d she go?”

She lifted a shoulder. “Who knows? She decided me and my father weren’t what she wanted, packed her bags, and headed for parts unknown. Neither of us have heard from her since.”

Hell, there were plenty of boys on the ranch who could relate to that. “You don’t sound too upset by it.”

“Believe me, I was for a number of years. I was barely a teenager when she left. I blamed myself, thought I had done something to make her leave, and prayed every night for a chance to do it all over again.”

“Why’d you stop blaming yourself and all that?”

“I met a fantastic woman who now happens to be my step-mother. I could tell her things I couldn’t seem to tell my father. She helped me learn to cope, to process everything I had been feeling since my mother left, and understand I hadn’t done anything to drive my mother away.” She rounded the ottoman, careful not to brush his foot, and perched on the



edge of the coffee table. “I thought this might help.”

Oh, holy of holies. The woman was truly a goddess. He felt the chill of the cold pack over his knee. It only took a few minutes for the pain to turn to a much less hideous haze.

“Is it getting better?”

He'd let his head fall back on the chair and had even closed his eyes again. He opened them, not bothering to lift his head, and looked at her from beneath his lashes. “Yeah. How'd you know?”

She shrugged. “I guessed.” She slid off the coffee table and dropped to her knees next to his leg.

Brit lifted his head along with a brow at that. “What are you doing?”

“I’m about to karate chop your knee until you tell me the truth about how you injured it.”

She frowned at him when he jerked as her delicate hands neared his knee. “Really, Brit? A big, tough Navy SEAL like you is going to be afraid of a little slip of thing like me?”

“You terrify me.” The words were out of his mouth before he thought to stop them. Lucky for him, she thought he was joking. In reality, he realized she really did scare him to the soles of his tennis shoes.

He felt said tennis shoes, the right one, anyway, leave his foot she carefully removed it and set it aside. “I wouldn’t

do that if I were you.”

She giggled. “Don’t worry. I can hold my breath longer than most if the smell gets too bad.” Her small hands closed over his foot and gently but firmly began massaging it through his sock.

Her touch felt magical, as if her fingers were equipped with tiny needles that injected his flesh with the best healing medicine on the planet. She worked her way from the arch of his foot to his heel, up his calf and shin, skipped over his knee, and got dangerously close to his groin before moving back down again. Slowly, the tension and pain in his leg started to ease, replaced by relaxation, pleasure, and heady need.

“Better?”

It was until she stopped. He wanted her to keep going. He wanted her to curl her fingers around his shaft and jerk him off with the same gently pressured motion she'd used to massage his injured leg. "It'd be better if you'd pull up that sex skirt, straddle my lap, and work on my middle leg."

She got to her feet, planted her fists on her hips, and angled a glare at him. "Are you being a jerk on purpose or is this the normal you?"

The expression on her face actually made him chuckle. Damn, the sound had become so alien to him lately he was surprised to hear it come from his own throat. "That was me being half serious

and half a jerk.”

“Well, how about you drop the jerk, keep the seriousness, and tell me how you really hurt your knee.”

Shit. They were back to this again. “What makes you think I didn’t tell you the truth the first time?”

“The look on May and Trey’s faces when I brought it up.” She eased to sit back down on the edge of the coffee table and leaned forward, resting her forearms on her thighs. “Neither of them corrected your fib, but it was obvious they know you didn’t fall off a horse.”

Brit cocked a brow. “My fib?”

Amusement twinkled in her eyes. “I didn’t want to be rude and call you a liar.”

“Isn’t a fib and a lie the same thing?”

She wrinkled her nose. “Fib is a sweeter word, don’t you think?”

Brit snorted. “If you say so, darlin’.”

“You’re avoiding the question.”

“And you’re not really dating my best friend.” Well, that statement got the reaction he’d expected. He timed it perfectly, waiting for the moment when he thought she was comfortable enough with their conversation before dropping his suspicion bomb. And, what do you know, it had worked.

She stiffened, took a quick, audible breath, and her dazzling eyes widened. “Yes, I am.” She tried to play it off, but beautiful plus sexy as hell didn’t equal

Oscar nominee. “What makes you think we aren’t?”

“For starters, you aren’t dating me, too.” It wasn’t exactly the best reason he could give her. Hell, it wasn’t even the first thing that had made him suspicious. It might have been years since Trey had dated a woman without him, but it had happened in the past.

“I just met you today.”

“When did you meet Trey?”

“Last week.”

Brit shook his head. “Darlin’, Trey stayed on this ranch day in and day out until this week.” He ticked off the nights Trey had been gone on the fingers of one hand. “He went out Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday morning, and Thursday night.”

“I met him Sunday night. I know the physical calendar begins each week on Sunday, but my week begins on Monday.” She shrugged. “Which means I met him last week, like I said.”

Brit pushed a hard breath from his lungs. “You’re a terrible fibber, darlin’. Tell you what, when you’re ready to be honest with me, I’ll tell you how I really hurt my knee.”

“Wait!” The delicate hand she place on his shin as he started to rise from the chair stopped him. She sighed as he settled back in the chair. “All right. I met him yesterday morning.”

“Where?”

“Kelly’s Diner.”



“Why?”

“I was having breakfast. He came in, saw I was alone, and...” She trailed off when he started shaking his head. She huffed another breath. “Fine. I asked him to meet me there.”

Brit scratched his bearded chin. “Darlin’, are we going to sit here and play twenty questions all afternoon or are you going to cut to the chase?”

She gnawed her bottom lip, drawing his attention to her mouth. His cock danced behind the button fly of his cargo shorts at the sight and the image it created in his mouth of her luscious lips gliding up and down his shaft.

“That depends.”

“On what?”

“Whether or not you promise you won’t get angry with me or Trey.”

“Sweet thing, it takes a hell of a lot for me to get angry with a woman. Now, Trey...” He shook his head. “I ain’t making no promises on that one.”

She turned her head, rested her chin on the front of her shoulder for a long moment as if trying to decide if she was really going to answer him or not, and then finally met his gaze. “I’m a grief counselor.”

Red outlined Brit’s vision as he stared at her. The son of bitch had tried to trick him.

“Do you always have a scraggly beard

or are you trying out a new look?”

Her question came from so far out of left field he blinked at her. “What?”

“It’s just something I’ve been wondering since I saw you on the treadmill. Not that you don’t look good with a beard... Well, if you’d trim it up a bit, it would look good.” She shook her head as if to get herself back on track. “I think you’re gritting your teeth right now, but I can’t quite tell if your jaw muscles are moving through all the hair.”

“Trust me, I’m grinding them to stubs,” he said tightly.

“Yeah, I thought you were.”

“How did he hear about you?”

She made a “who knows” face. “Got me? My step-mother I just told you

about, she's a grief counselor, too. The help and guidance she gave me showed me that was how I wanted to spend my life, helping other people through their troubled times. I have a private practice I run out of my house. I get referrals from hospitals, doctors, previous clients...all sorts of people.”

Brit lifted both brows. “Are you done?”

She raked a frustrated hand over her forehead. “I can't get anything past you, can I?” When Brit continued to simply glare at her, she slapped her thigh with her hand and groaned. “Fine. Trey said Horace told him to call me.”

Brit nodded slowly. “Which means

May told Horace about you.” May was the last on the ranch to visit a doctor recently and Lena had just said many of her referrals came from doctors.

She got to her feet again, this time moving to stand near his head, and put a soft hand on his shoulder. “Brit, they were only trying to help you. I’m sorry we tried to trick you into think I’m dating Trey, but—”

“You will be.” He looked up at her and saw her snap her lips shut at his statement. “That kiss he laid on you in the yard, that wasn’t just for show, darlin’. Neither was the way you melted in his arms.” He hooked an arm around her waist and yanked her into his lap the way he’d been thinking about doing

since she'd first walked into the parlor. The move surprised a squeak out of her that turned to a quiet gasp when her gaze locked with his. "The way you look at me ain't for show either."

Panic moved through her eyes and he felt her start to quiver in his arms. He'd scared her. Fucking hell! That hadn't been his intention. He cupped her cheek, momentarily at a loss for words as his palm absorbed the soft heat of her flesh.

"And I promise you there's no fib, lie, or show in the way you've seen me looking at you." He caressed her cheek with the pad of his thumb, marveling at the satiny feel of it. He had no right to be touching her. He had no right to expect a

woman to accept the half of a man he'd become. Well, he was physically three quarters of man, but mentally...Hell, he'd started to wonder if there was any man of him left there. "I want you." The admission was out of his mouth before he could stop it. "I wanted you the second you started walking across the yard toward me and, the instant you told me you were dating Trey, I wanted you even more."

Her lips tilted in a shaky smile. "Competition?"

Brit gave her a half laugh. "Not even close. That's not the way Trey and I work, darlin'. We take women together."

Her throat worked in a visible gulp. "Does that mean you're not angry with

him?”

This time, Brit threw his head back and laughed. Funny how he'd barely been able to manage a smile before she stepped onto the ranch mere hours ago. “You want honesty, sweet thing? If I can manage to stand on both legs in front of him, I'll kick his ass as soon as he returns from the field.” She made a protesting sound, but he cut off her words. “And once we're done kicking each other's ass, you can nurse both our wounds before we take you to bed tonight.”

Her jaw dropped, but there was no way he could miss the wicked excitement in her eyes. “That's not how



this is going to play out, Brit.”

“Are you sure?” He inched his face closer to hers, stopping a breath away from her mouth. “Because I didn’t hear any form of an option in what I just told you.”

She shivered again, but this time he didn’t sense any fear in it. Only anticipation. “Are you going to talk to me? As a counselor, I mean. Will you let me help you?”

Brit growled and threw his head back, smacking the chair. “Darlin’, talking ain’t going to do be a damn bit of good.”

It wouldn’t bring his teammates back. It wouldn’t change the order he’d given for Team Bravo to hold back instead of moving in where they could’ve been in a

better position to spot the kid who'd been hidden in the group of tangos until they'd gotten close enough to his men. That kid had wandered out of the group, stumbled on one of his men, and the clusterfuck had begun.

Her hand snaked behind his neck to cup his nape and she pulled his head up. She leaned over him, her breath fanning his lips when she spoke. "You would be surprised how healing it can be when you talk about the grief in your mind."

Before he could say anything to that, she kissed him. He couldn't remember the last time a woman had kissed him without permission. It was nice. He wouldn't necessarily let her make a

habit of it, especially not the way she attempted to control the kiss, sliding her tongue into his mouth and taking possession of his soul. Still, it was nice.

He let her have her fun for a few seconds before he fisted a hand in the back of her hair and assumed control. He closed a hand over her breast, felt her nipple already beaded to a hardened point through her thin bra and shirt, and ground the pad of his palm over it, enjoying the way she slithered on his lap.

Then he heard the back door of the house open and footsteps pounded down the hall. The next generation, as they often called them, had returned from the land for lunch. Somebody needed to

teach those boys about timing.

\* \* \* \*

Lunch at Rescue Ranch consisted of sandwiches, chips, and sweet tea served in the main dining room. Though the setting was more elaborate than the meal, Lena quickly understood why. Ten teenage boys and six adults, not including herself, gathered around an enormous custom-made table that seated thirty. The additional spaces were necessary when all of the original ten boys of the Rescue Ranch were all home at once, especially if they brought guests home. Today the original boys present

were Brit, Trey, Trent, and Bobby. Conversation went from rowdy to calm and touched on every subject from working to be done on the ranch to how the boys wanted to spend the remainder of their off time during their summer vacation.

It was a family, Lena realized as she kept quiet through most of the lunch, content to listen to the byplay and occasional banter between the boys and men. It helped her to keep her mind off the completely ludicrous thing she'd done in the parlor. She'd kissed Brit. What the hell had she been thinking? She'd let Trey goad her into another kiss in Horace's office and then she'd turned around and planted a big wet one on

Brit. She often used unconventional methods to get clients to open up, but throwing herself at a man had never been one of them.

Though her and May were the only women at the table, she never once felt out of place. If anything, she felt at home, as if being on the ranch for less than half a day had already made her part of the family. May certainly seemed to think so, enlisting Lena's help to clean up when lunch ended, then cajoling her to stay in the kitchen and aid in the dinner preparations.

Lena pulled an onion from the bag on the counter and placed it on the cutting board. "Is this what you do all day?"

“Not all day.” May winked as she passed her on the way to the stove. “I take out an hour here and there to read, take a dip in the pond, or go horseback riding.”

Lena ignored the echo of the conversation she'd had with Brit that morning about riding a horse. “I can't imagine cooking for the crew you do day in and day out. An hour here and there away from this kitchen wouldn't be near enough for me.”

“It would, if it's what you enjoy doing. I love to cook.” She patted the back of Lena's shoulder as she moved by her again. “Besides, I get help from sweet things like you when I ask for it.”

Lena shot the woman a smile over her shoulder. “How did Rescue Ranch start? Are any of the boys your real son?”

“They’re all my real boys, honey, even if I didn’t give birth to a one of them. The good Lord didn’t put me on this earth for the purpose of birthing children. He put me here to raise them.”

In other words, she couldn’t have children. At least, that’s what Lena took from that comment. Figuring that would be a touchy subject for a motherly woman like May, she didn’t put voice to the thought.

“We didn’t plan Rescue Ranch to become what it is.” May settled in beside her, dumping ingredients for a



homemade chocolate cake in a large bowl. “We were gifted with Trent and Bobby first.” She slid Lena an ear to ear grin. “Can you believe they wanted to be here so bad they tried to rob us?”

Lena gave her a you’ve-got-to-be-kidding look. She’d sat across from Trent and Bobby at lunch. The impression she’d gotten of the handsome cowboys had leaned far more toward two well-mannered, well-educated, very levelheaded men rather than thieves.

May nodded. “May the good Lord strike me dead if I’m lying? They broke into the house. Not this house,” she add, casting a quick look around at the room behind them. “Horace, Hank, and I lived in the little place where the hired hands

live now. We hadn't built this house yet."

"Did they try to hurt either of you?"

"Oh, no." May shook her head vehemently. "They told us later they'd just planned to take whatever they could get their hands on that they thought they could sell." She paused, her expression warming with a mother's love. "They didn't know any better." This time the look Lena gave her had a half laugh bursting from her lips. "They knew it was wrong. What they didn't know was any other way to live. Both of them came from thieving parents. That's the way they'd been raised. They grew up with parents who were partners in crime

together, as the saying goes, and that's what they had become."

"Where are their parents now?"

May shrugged and started stirring the mixture she'd created in the bowl. "Jail, I suspect. Neither pair of them put up a fight when Horace, Hank, and I petitioned for custody. We thought they might at first. You know, because of the lifestyle Horace, Hank, and I were leading. They didn't, though." She shrugged again. "The courts didn't say much about it either seeing as how we wanted the boys and no one else did. I think they were happy to have them off the streets and out of trouble."

Lena put down the knife she'd been using to chop onions and leaned a hip

against the counter. “You took in two boys who tried to rob you, sued for custody, won, and raised them as your own children.” She put a hand on May’s shoulder. “You know, even if Brit won’t talk to me and I end up not taking him on as a client, I’m really glad I got the opportunity to meet you.”

She meant it. There were far too few women in the world like May Hoskins.

“My Brit will talk to you, honey. The key to handling that man, *any* man, is patience.”

Lena would get Brit to talk one way or another. It was the “another” that had her concerned. She’d already guessed exactly what it would take. He wanted to

have sex with her. Trey wanted to have sex with her. Men like them would require her total submission, something she'd only done with one other man in her life.

“What’s his story?” She turned back to the cutting board, vowing to keep herself in line despite the desires both men were awakening inside her. She picked up the knife and moved on to chopping the green onions May had set out for her. “How did he and Trey come to live here?”

“That’s not my story to tell.” She bumped her shoulder lightly against Lena’s. “Use that question as an ice breaker to get them to talk. Trey’s got some emotions he needs to let out, too,

you know? He's not struggling as bad as Brit, but he could use a good pair of willing ears."

"Yeah, I suspected that when we met at the diner yesterday morning." Had it really only been yesterday morning since she'd met him? Of course, it had. She'd barely been on the ranch eight hours. It was surreal how she felt as if she'd known Trey and been here for so much longer than that.

"You brought clothes with you, right?"

Lena blinked at the change of subject. "I have a small bag in the trunk of my car. I figured I would head back to town once we clean up after dinner. I saw a small motel I fi—"

“You will do no such thing.”

Though May’s voice remained sweetly conversational, the firmness that outlined the words had Lena snapping her mouth shut.

“There’s plenty of empty rooms in this house, especially with six of our oldest boys gone. You’ll stay in Rowdy’s room on the third floor. I’m sure he wouldn’t mind a bit knowing a pretty thing like you will be sleeping in his bed tonight.” She widened her eyes dramatically and wagged her brows. “On second thought, he probably would mind seeing as how he’s off on a boat somewhere instead of in that bed with you. But that’s his loss,” she hurried on. “You’re not meant for

him anyways.”

\* \* \* \*

She fit in as if she'd been with them her whole life. Trey rested an ankle on the opposite knee, angling his ass in the rocking chair to get a better view of Lena, and felt himself grin. Most of the family had ventured out onto the front porch after dinner as they often did to simply shoot the breeze and enjoy the evening air. Four of the younger boys had gathered at the end of the porch with their box guitars, fiddle, and harmonica and had struck up a good ole' bluegrass song.

Lena sat closest to the boys, leaning



comfortably back in another of the rocking chairs with one leg tucked beneath her and the other foot on the floor, her toes keeping time with the beat. Even in the pale light of the porch lamps, the dazzling smile on her angelic face brightened the night. She'd pulled her long autumn strands into a ponytail at her nape, exposing the slender column of her tantalizing neck.

Though he thoroughly enjoyed the conservative skirts she wore, he hoped she'd brought along some blue jeans or shorts. He hadn't taken a day off since he'd returned to the ranch, more out the necessity to keep his mind busy than because the hired hands and younger

boys really needed his help. Maybe he should tomorrow, though. He could take her out on the ranch, show her around, and maybe even teach her how to ride.

His attention dropped to her ankle at the idea and his gaze did a slow climb up her shapely leg to the hem of the skirt riding high on her thigh, but not so much that it revealed any glimpse of the sweet treasure between her legs. He'd start with a horse, of course, and work his way up to teaching her to ride what he really wanted. Baby steps. He'd already moved faster than he'd intended with her and had sensed her unease and uncertainty because of it. Hitting the ground running with her wasn't the best plan.

*Neither is letting her in too far.*

He heeded the warning and understood its cause. Falling for her wasn't the best plan either, though he already knew it would be a sure test of his willpower not to let it happen. In less than a month, provided Brit's knee and mind heeled as they should, they would both be returning to the Navy. Brit would likely have to spend a few weeks in the office pushing a pencil and aiding the SEALs in other areas before he could return to full active duty, but he'd be there and that was all that mattered.

*He won't be there because of you.*

Trey didn't want to acknowledge the chilling truth of the thought. The fact that

Brit was sitting here now both had everything to do with him and nothing to do with him at all. Brit had gotten hurt because he'd held Bravo team back. If he hadn't done that, if he had followed one simple order, his friend wouldn't be going through the hell he'd been going through since the clusterfucked op. Brit had been there for him years ago, but the one time Brit had needed him, he'd fucked up. It was knowledge that was eating at his soul.

Brit didn't blame him, or at least Trey didn't think he did. He should though, and Trey could only hope once the man passed his physical tests, which he had no doubt Brit would do as soon as he got his head on straight again, things would

go back to the way they were before.

*And what if they don't?*

The question tightened a knot of fear in Trey's gut. The man sitting in the rocking chair adjacent to him wasn't the man he'd known nearly half his life, but that man would come back. It was only a matter of time and he knew a sexy, desirable woman who was going to help make that happen.

He tore his attention from Lena long enough to cast a quick glance at Brit, amused and pleased to see his friend's focus locked on Lena. Brit's lips were slightly tilted in the closest thing to a smile Trey had seen on his friend's lips in a while.

They hadn't been earlier, though. Trey pulled his gaze from Brit and looked out over the railing into the front yard. The other six younger boys had enticed Trent and Bobby into a game of football. They didn't see the play that had Dillon pumping his fist in the air as the memory of Brit's angered face filled his vision. Brit had cornered Lena in the front parlor and she'd told him the true reason she was on the ranch. If Horace hadn't threatened to take every bit of Brit's exercise equipment away, Trey figured he'd still be eating dirt right about now. As it turned out, he'd only suffered a punch to the jaw that continued to throb like a bitch before the old man had

stepped in.

The four boy band completed their song and a comfortable silence fell over the porch, broken only by the grunts and smacks of the football game. Movement out of the corner of his eye had Trey looking back in time to see Horace and May rising from the porch swing to his right.

“It’s time to call it day,” Horace announced loud enough to be heard by the athletes in the yard. “Rooster is gonna crow awfully early in the mornin’.”

May stopped by Lena’s chair to bid her goodnight before moving to Trey. “You take her up and show her to Rowdy’s room. She can stay in there

tonight.” She turned her head toward Lena, but not before Trey caught the sparkle of mischief in her eyes. “Don’t be afraid to speak your mind if you don’t like something about that room, honey. You’re more than welcome in any room on that third floor aside from Trent and Bobby’s.”

Trey bit back a grin at the color that rose to Lena’s cheeks bright enough to shine red through the darkness. He pushed to his feet and pulled May in for a hug. “Thank you, ma’am. I’ll see to it she gets settled in comfortably.”

May patted his cheek as she pulled back. “I know you will, son.”

Obviously taking the cue it was time to



head inside, Lena unfolded herself out of the rocking chair and walked to his side.

“I have a bag in my trunk.”

“Where are your keys? I’ll get it for you.”

“It’s unlocked. There’s a button inside by the steering wheel that will release the trunk.”

Trey glanced at Brit who hadn’t moved. “Why don’t you and Brit head on up? I’ll be right behind you after I get your bag.”

He took the steps to the yard two at a time to her car. By the time he’d retrieved the overnight case she’d brought and returned to the porch, she and Brit had already disappeared inside. He found them inches from the stairs and

slowed his step as he listened to their conversation.

“How is your knee feeling?”

“Better than ever.”

Trey heard the lace of pain in his friend’s voice and knew damn well he wasn’t telling Lena the truth. Apparently, she knew it, too.

“Are you lying?”

Brit shot her a look as he held onto the handrail and moved gingerly up the stairs. “No, I’m fibbing.”

Lena’s laugh was full of sultry amusement and music. “Should I get another ice pack? Maybe some pain meds? Both might help you sleep.”

“Darlin’, the only way you’re gonna

put another ice pack on my knee is if you're planning to do it while you're lying next to me all night. That'll help me sleep.”

She fell silent until they reached the third set of stairs as if she were actually considering what Brit had said. “I would, if thought you'd keep your hands to yourself.”

“If memory serves, darlin', you kissed me first earlier.”

“In a moment of insanity, yes. And, if memory serves, you didn't keep your hands to yourself then, either. I wonder why it is I'm thinking you wouldn't be a good boy tonight.”

“It's just because you don't know me well enough yet, sweet thing. Stay in my

room and I'll show you what a good boy I can be."

Trey snorted before he could stop himself. Both of them stopped at the top of the stairs to turn and look at him. "Sorry." He really was. Maybe if he hadn't interrupted them, she might have changed her mind. Hell, *she'd* kissed Brit. That was news to him. It was good news despite the jealousy that twisted in his gut.

Brit turned first and headed down the hall, stopping just outside his door. "This is my room," he told Lena, shooting a quick glance at Trey over her head. "I'll let your boyfriend show you the room you'll be staying in tonight."

Trey heard Lena's quiet sigh as Brit disappeared into his room, closing the door behind him. "He's still pissed at me." He placed his free hand on the small of her back and gently urged her toward the next closed door. "He'll be over it by morning."

Lena's expression said she hoped so as she reached to take her bag from his hand. She glanced down the hall before looking back at him. "Which room is yours?"

"We've already passed it. It's the one on the other side of Brit's." It took every ounce of control he possessed not to offer to show it to her. After listening to Brit's rejection, even if the man had

issued it in his best jerkish mode, combined with the knowledge that she'd apparently made the first move on Brit, he knew any offer like that he could make would be met with the same refusal.

“I hope he is over it by morning, though it probably won't last long after what I intend to do.”

Intrigued, Trey lifted a brow. “Oh? What you got in mind, sugar?”

She winked at him, her blue eyes dancing with mischief. “You'll see, but I'll need your help. Any chance you can take the day off from working on the ranch?”

“I'd already planned on it.”

“Good. We'll talk about it more

before breakfast.” She found the knob behind her and opened the bedroom door. “I’ll see you in the morning, Trey.”

Trey stood for a long moment staring at the now closed door, his cock aching painfully as his mind conjured up images of her getting naked as she prepared for bed. Morning was too damn far away.

\* \* \* \*

*Lena couldn't move, couldn't see, and could scarcely breathe. They had positioned her on her knees, her upper body supported by what felt like a stack of pillows, her wrists bound behind her back, and her ankles tethered with what*

*felt like a spacer strap between them.*

*Something touched the bottom of her left foot. A callused fingertip, she realized as it tickled over her heel and dragged excruciatingly slowly up her calf, the back of her knee and thigh, and stopped to draw lazy circles on her ass cheek. Another hand glided over her cheek, the fingers lacing in her hair before fisting the strands and pulling her head up.*

*She couldn't see either of them through the darkness of the blindfold over her eyes, but she felt the warmth of their bodies and the control that pumped off them in waves, sending a river of anticipation and wickedly dark excitement washing through her.*



*“Tell me you want what we’re about to do to you, sugar.”*

*Trey’s calm, cool, authoritative command sent ripples of need sizzling through her.*

*She swallowed, licked her lips, and eagerly obeyed. “I want what you’re about to do to me.”*

*“Do you know what we aimed to do to you, darlin’?”*

*Brit’s thickened drawl came from farther away. That was his hand on her ass, his callused palm working her cheeks into a needy frenzy of heated lust.*

*“No.” She only knew she was at their mercy. It felt so good to be here again,*

*at the control of a man, or men, as the case turned out to be. She'd never submitted to two men at once. The wicked sensations barreling through her at the realization that no inch of her flesh would go untouched or untormented were indescribable.*

*“You're about to get your first riding lesson.”*

*She smiled even as a white-hot bolt of trepidation shot through her. An arm pushed beneath her, curled around her waist, and she felt her upper body being lifted. She shivered as her body was guided into a new position, this time straddling one of them. The way their hands moved as they shifted her, she lost track of which pair belonged to*

who.

*“Relax, sugar.”*

*Trey’s voice was the one that came further away now. She obeyed, not realizing she’d tensed until he’d given her the order.*

Don’t fight them. This is what I was training you for.

*Her breath caught in her throat as a third voice reached her ears. Mark. She had to have imagined it. He couldn’t be here. It was impossible because he was...*

“Snake’s been hit! Fuck!”

The terrified cries ripped Lena from sleep. She sat up in bed, disoriented, her pussy wet and her body aching from the

dream. She raked her hair from her face and waited for her mind to clear. The second scream split the night and she knew in an instant that part hadn't been a dream.

“We’re being fucking ambushed.”

She hurried out of bed, realizing the sounds were coming from the room next door. “Brit?”

She stepped into the hallway at the same time Trey came out of his room. The silvery light of the full moon outside the window at the end of the hall enabled her to see his face. She watched as his gaze locked with hers before slowly falling down the length of her body, no doubt seeing straight through the thin, white silk teddy she'd worn to

bed.

Behind her, more doors opened, tearing her attention from the delicious sight of Trey's bare shoulders, rock hard pecs, totally ripped abdomen, and the line of his groin that disappeared beneath the elastic waistband of the jogging pants riding low on his lean hips. She spun on her heel to find Trent and Bobby stepping out of their respective rooms. Both men froze at the sight of her and it was plainly obvious by their expressions they were doing their damndest to keep their gazes on her face.

Trent looked away from her first, his gaze lifting over her head. "You got

this?”

“Yeah, I’ve it,” Trey answered behind her.

“Lena, you come get us if he doesn’t,” Bobby told her.

She nodded as Brit’s next cry split the air in the hallway. She turned her back on the other men, bolting into action and reaching the door to Brit’s room at the same time as Trey.

“It’s a nightmare.” Trey’s rusty voice was thick with sympathy. “He’s reliving the op.”

“Does this happen often?” The pained expression on his handsome face told her it did.

“Almost every damn night.”

She eased the door open to find Brit

sitting up in his bed, his eyes huge in his face and seemingly unseeing. Like Trey, he wasn't wearing a shirt and a layer of sweat had collected on his flesh, glistening in the moonlight spilling in through his window. His long, dark hair was matted around his face and his chest rose and fell in rapidly heavy breaths.

“You fucking cocksucking tango!”

She jolted at the shout, at the vehemence in his voice, and winced when he jerked and slammed a hand on his injured knee. The sound that left his lips was one of pure agony and, yet, even the real pain wasn't enough to draw him out of the horror show in his mind.

Needing to do something, though she didn't have a clue what, she started toward the bed.

Trey stopped her with a firm, but gentle hand on her forearm. "Let me. He might lash out at you, not realizing who you are."

Lena nodded wordlessly and hung back, letting Trey take the lead. She folded her arms beneath her breasts as she watched Trey ease closer to Brit's bedside.

"Brit, snap out of it." Trey's words were clipped and firm. "We're on the ranch, man. We're not there anymore."

Brit's head turned Trey's direction, but his eyes still held that wild, horrified



look. “Take cover, damn it! Bravo Team, where the fuck are you?”

“Not there, man.” Trey’s limps trembled on the words. “You ordered us to hold back.” He shook his head, as if attempting to jar the memory from his mind, and reached out to give Brit’s shoulder a hard shake.

Lena gasped, her hand flying over her mouth as Brit’s balled fist caught Trey square across the jaw.

Trey’s head jerked to one side from the force of the blow, but he didn’t step away. “Brit, come back, man. It’s over. You did what you could.”

“We’ve got to get the fuck—”

“You did what you could,” Trey repeated, his tone softening. Lena swore

she saw his eyes glisten as he started repeating the words over and over until Brit's eyes slowly cleared. "Welcome back, buddy."

It took several moments for Brit's facial features to start to relax, for his breathing to return to normal, and his stiff posture to loosen. "You're bleeding," he muttered, his voice scratchy as if his shouts had made his throat hurt.

Trey gingerly touched his forefinger and thumb to the sides of his jaw. "That's the second time today you've cold cocked me."

"You shouldn't have touched me."

Trey shot a pointed glance Lena's

way. “Better me than her.”

Brit’s gaze snapped to her and a new horror filled his eyes. “Fuck.” The oath left him on a whisper laced with equal parts anger and embarrassment. “You shouldn’t be in here.”

“Why?” Lena let her hands fall to her sides as she eased closer to the bed. “Are you afraid the sight of you naked is going to make me swoon?”

She hadn’t allowed herself to acknowledge the fact that he was indeed naked until now. In his thrashing, the sheet had fallen low until it barely covered his legs to his upper thighs, leaving everything else, his fully hard, magnificently long cock included, exposed. She knew the adrenaline and

fear of the nightmare had caused his erection. She'd meant it as a joke, hoping it would lighten the intense tension blanketing the room, even if the sight of his cock had left her feeling lightheaded. The look of sheer vulnerability that moved through his eyes made a lump form in her throat.

He fell back on the bed, covered his face with his hands, and growled. "It used to work on women before."

The swift wave of jealousy that rushed through her system surprised her. She didn't want to know how often it had worked before. "Should I go get that ice pack now? You hit your knee pretty hard when you were—"

“No. It hurts like hell right now, but I’ll live. Go back to bed.”

She knew that was one command she should follow and she did, even if it wasn’t in the way he likely intended.

He stiffened, his hand fell from his face, and his head jerked off the pillow beneath it as she crawled into bed next to him. “What are you doing?”

It was a good question and one she didn’t stop to think about giving a true answer. “Going back to bed.” She settled on her side, drawing the sheet up to cover them both, and rested the weight of her upper body on one elbow. “Just like you told me to do.”

His eyes flashed with something akin

to anger. “I meant *your* bed.”

Though her heart was suddenly pounding a million beats a second, she didn't back down. “Yeah, see, there seems to be a problem with that. The bed in the room I where I was assigned is too hard.” She lay on her back and stretched languidly, allowing herself a soft moan. “Yours is so much softer.”

He sat up, turned his upper body toward her, and leaned over her, bracing his weight on one hand on the mattress next to her shoulder. “Darlin’, I don’t know what the hell kind of game you’re playing, but now is not the time. My dick is harder than a rock, but I’d hurt you in ways you damn sure wouldn’t enjoy if I fucked you right now.”

The look in his eyes as he stared down at her was intense, full of heat and restraint and an authority that brought the dark and dirty dream she'd been having back to the forefront of her mind. Wanting to touch him, needing to take away the pain that lingered behind the flames in his eyes, she dared to put her hands on his shoulders. The heat of his flesh seeped into her palms and she felt the slight quiver of his muscles, as if holding himself off of her was taking all the restraint he could muster.

“No games, Brit.” She licked her lips and saw the flames in his eyes rise higher. “And no sex.”

*This is what I was training you for.*

Mark's words from her dream reverberated through her mind. They couldn't be true. They were merely a wacked up part of a fantasy world she'd created in her head. She pushed it all away, realizing she suddenly felt more alone than she had in years. She wound her arms around Brit's thick neck and buried her fingers in the back of his hair. "Just sleep."

He closed his eyes briefly and bowed his head, turning his face away from her. He sighed and his eyes opened, but he didn't look back at her. She realized his gaze had locked with Trey's who hadn't moved from the bedside.

God, for those few brief moment,



she'd actually forgotten he was in the room, too. She met his gaze and the torment, sadness, and pain she saw in his eyes brought tears to her own. She dragged her hands back to Brit's shoulders and gave him a soft nudge. "Make room for Trey."

Brit glanced down at her, one brow lifted.

"His bed is too soft."

Brit's other brow rose to join the first and she caught the first sign of amusement move through his expression. "You've got the wrong color hair to be Goldilocks, sweet thing."

Lena gave him a shrug and a smile. "Humor me. I'm working with what I've got here."

He snorted, which was close enough to a laugh for her, and pushed himself off her. He turned to Trey as he scooted over and gave his head a jerk to beckon the man to the other side of the bed.

Lena scooted, too, making room for Trey on her opposite side. She didn't allow herself to think about what she was doing. There would be time enough for that later. Tonight, for the first time in so very long, she'd found herself needing to be close to someone as badly as she suspected both of these men needed to be, too.

Brit pinned Trey with a steely gaze as Trey crawled into the bed. "If I do fall asleep and I start doing that shit again,

you get her out of this bed ASAP.”

Trey nodded. “I won’t let you down.”

It might have been an odd response, but Lena understood it held more meaning than Trey simply agreeing to protect her. She’d been wrong about Trey. Well, not completely. She still felt he was afraid he couldn’t cut it in the SEAL teams without Brit, but the demon eating at him was far bigger than that. She’d realized it in something he’d said when he’d been trying to bring Brit back.

*Not there, man. You ordered us to hold back.*

Trey believed he’d let Brit down. He was blaming himself for following an order he’d been given and, by the look in Brit’s eyes, his friend knew it, too.

Brit sighed as he lay down next to her. “You never have.”

He said the words so softly, Lena wasn't sure Trey heard them. She hoped he did. They were words he definitely needed to hear. She vowed to make sure Brit said them again, louder next time.

“Turn toward Brit, sugar,” Trey drawled. “That way I can spoon against your back.”

Lena lifted her head as she rolled onto her side. Brit's arm stretched over the pillow, hooked around her, and pulled her down to lay on his shoulder. Trey lined his front with her back. His hand slid over her side and down to flatten on her belly as he settled his groin against

her ass.

Her hand was on Brit's chest and she didn't realize she'd started drawing lazy circles with her fingertip in his chest hairs until his free hand covered hers. He dragged her hand down, over the ridged planes of his abdomen and the solid smoothness of his stomach to his cock.

She tried to pull her hand away when his cockhead brushed the edge of her pinky, but he turned his head into her hair and made a soft "Shush" sound. Then he was guiding her hand to his shaft, closing her fingers around it, and applying a tad bit of pressure to her fist.

"Just like that, darlin'." The words were equal parts whisper and moan.

“Just hold it for me like that. That’s all I want.”

She forced herself to relax, only to feel her body slither on its own accord when Trey’s hand started to skim from her belly up to her breast. He covered her breast with his large palm, gave it a gentle squeeze, and relaxed.

“Trey?” she whispered his name questioningly.

“I’m just holding on, sugar. That’s all I want.”

Lena smiled as she closed her eyes. In seconds, she drifted off to sleep.

## Chapter Four

Brit woke up alone. It wasn't unusual. He hadn't awoken with a woman in his bed since before he and Trey had gone through BUD/S. Oh, they'd had women, and plenty of them, before and after they'd become SEALs, but they lived by one hard and fast rule. They never spent the night.

He looked around as he carefully crawled out of bed. He definitely hadn't spent the night anywhere but the ranch. That was good. He'd gone to bed alone. But he hadn't stayed that way.

The realization came to him along with bits and pieces of memory as he

made his way out of the room and down the hall to the bathroom shared by everyone who stayed on the third floor. He remembered the episode first. He refused to think of them as nightmares. Those were the kinds of things brought on by watching a scary movie or fearing vampires or the zombie apocalypse. What he had since the op were episodes brought about by memories he wished to God he could forget. Trey had come into his room, but he hadn't been alone. He'd brought Lena with him.

And she'd stayed. They'd both stayed, and slept with him through the night.

He closed the bathroom door behind him, stopped in front of the mirror over the sink, and rested his hands on the wall



on either side. Christ, he'd actually slept. After the episode, in any case. He'd pulled Lena into his arm, put her delicate hand around his throbbing cock, and fell asleep.

As he stared at the reflection glaring back at him, he realized for the first time in months, the guy didn't have bags under his eyes. He still looked like shit, though. His hair had gotten too long and the beard and moustache had to go. He straightened, lifted his arm to open the medicine cabinet, and caught a whiff of his pits. The stench damn near knocked him on his ass. And he'd actually held an amazingly beautiful, sexy, sensual woman like Lena in that arm? Jesus, no

wonder she didn't want to ride him. How could he expect her to want to have sex with a stinky wooly mammoth?

Twenty minutes later, he'd taken care of everything except the hair on his head. He'd have to wrangle May into giving him a haircut, but at least it was clean now. Satisfied, he wrapped a towel around his waist and returned to his bedroom where he changed into a clean pair of cargo shorts, a muscle shirt, and tennis shoes. Not yet ready to face Lena after the episode last night, he decided to alter his schedule. He'd exercise, then find breakfast.

No, scratch that. He'd exercise, shower again, and then find breakfast.

Figuring his equipment was still in the

front yard, he headed that way, noting the only voices he heard in the house as he made his way through it sounded like they were coming from the kitchen. He heard Lena's melodic laughter, Trey's gruff timbre—why the hell was he inside?—and May's unmistakable motherly tone.

Ignoring them, he walked out the front door only to turn right back around and head for the kitchen after all. He found them sitting around the kitchen table sipping coffee with a plate of cinnamon buns between them.

“What the hell did Horace do with my exercise equipment this time?”

All heads turned his way at the

question. Trey smirked. Lena's jaw dropped as her gaze slid over him like a physical caress that made his cock hard. May lifted both brows and gave him a stern look. That's the one he paid attention to first.

He cleared his throat and tempered his tone. "My apologies. May, could you please tell me where Horace put my exercise equipment?"

May nodded once. "That's better. However, these two will have to answer your question because I don't know, son."

Brit shifted his attention to Trey's still smirking face before locking gazes with Lena. The look in her eyes had him narrowing his. "Why am I getting the

feeling you had something to do with this?”

Her bottom lip disappeared between her teeth. It was bad enough he had the remembered torment of her slender fingers wrapped around his cock last night, but now her luscious lips were moving into the picture. He ignore the way his balls drew up painfully between his legs and continued to glare at her.

“You shaved.” Her gaze moved over his face, lust filling her eyes. “And you’re definitely gritting your teeth.”

“Lena?” He made her name part question and part warning and repeated his question. “Why am I getting the feeling you had something to do with

this?”

“Good instincts?” she suggested sweetly. “If you’re going to be angry with anyone, I’m your culprit. I asked some of the boys to hide it for me.”

“You d—” Realizing his tone had risen again, he quickly dropped to his normal speaking voice before May put his head on a platter for the day’s lunch. He took a deep, calming breath and then asked, “Where did you have them hide it? Please.” He added the last for May’s benefit and saw her smile out of the corner of his eye.

Lena shrugged, turned back to the table, and reached for a cinnamon bun. “I’m not telling you.”

Brit gritted his teeth. “Darlin’, you’ll

tell me or I'm going to—" *Turn you over my good knee and paddle your ass a beautiful red until you scream the location of my exercise equipment.* His gaze snapped to May's as he smartly and silently finished the threat.

She'd turned back to face him and was holding out one of the sweet breakfast treats. "Cinnamon bun?"

"No, I don't want a da—" Her eyes twinkled with equal parts mischief and challenge. Was the damn woman trying to get him in trouble with May?

No, he realized. The little vixen knew exactly what she was doing. It likely the reason Trey was still in the house when every other boy and man except himself

was out on the ranch. She knew he wouldn't blow his top in front of May and, if he did, Trey was there to knock him down a few pegs.

"I'll take some coffee, if you don't mind."

"Sure." She was out of her chair and across the kitchen in a flash, looking back at him over her shoulder. "Black?"

Still gritting his teeth, he nodded. "Yes, please." All the *pleases* were making May's grin widen so he grudgingly gave her a few more. "Could you, please, tell me, please, where my exercise equipment is, please, so I can do my morning exercises? Please?"

Lena shrugged as she came back across the kitchen to hand him the cup of



coffee. “I can’t. I don’t exactly know where it’s at.”

Doing his damndest to control his rapidly rising temper, he tightened his grip on the coffee mug almost hard enough to shatter it. “Who does?”

She made a considering face. “That’s a really good question. I made it a point not to know so that, when you asked me, I wouldn’t be forced to tell you another fib.”

“Darlin’, I’m trying really hard to hold onto my temper.”

She nodded. “I can see that. Thank you.”

“I don’t suppose you’d care to tell me why my stuff is being hidden from me.”

“You need to get out of the house, Brit. It’s a beautiful day outside. The fresh air and sunshine will do you good.”

“I got out of the house yesterday. As a matter of fact, I was in the front yard when you met me. I’d be out there again now if you’d tell me what you did with my treadmill.”

“Lena has something different in mind,” May commented. “And I think it’s a fabulous idea.”

“I’ve never been on a working ranch. I’d like a tour of the place. Horace has graciously given Trey the day off so the two of you can show me around.” She paused, hooked her thumbs in the front pocket of the figure-accenting jeans she

wore, and rocked back on the heels of a pair of boots he recognized as belonging to May. "I'll even help you look for that treadmill while we're out and about if you want."

What he wanted to do was toss her over his shoulder, carry her to his room where he'd strap her to the bed and torment her sweet pussy till sundown for trying to pull one over on him. Except, she hadn't tried anything. She'd succeeded. Without his treadmill, he didn't have any other way of giving his knee the walking exercise it needed to heal. Not to mention, he figured if he wouldn't get very far at carrying her anywhere before his knee would likely buckle and he'd drop her on her sexy

ass.

“Fine,” he muttered grudgingly. “We’ll do it your way.” He leveled a glare on her that would’ve had most women squirming in her skin. Vixen that she was, she met his glare with one of her own. “This time.”

“I’ll load the picnic basket with some sandwiches and a thermos of sweet tea,” May announced as she got to her feet. “That way the three of you won’t have to head for the house when you get hungry for lunch.”

\* \* \* \*

“See? Isn’t this much better than

walking in one spot for an hour?”

Brit made a noncommittal sound.

He wanted to be angry with her, but she could tell by his easy gait and the relaxed expression on his handsome face that her plan had worked. Trey had warned her it probably wouldn't be a good idea to poke the bear, as he'd put it, after the night Brit had. She'd disagreed. Sure, he'd had the nightmare that had drawn her and Trey to his room in the night. But, once she and Trey had climbed into bed with him, he'd slept like the proverbial rock. He hadn't budged when she and Trey had carefully and quietly crawled out of the bed this morning. They'd been up for a good hour and a half before Brit had come into the

kitchen.

She'd taken one look at him this morning and the only coherent thought she'd managed at first had simply been *whoa*. He'd cleaned up. His long dark hair had still been slightly wet from his recent shower, the strands hanging in straight, silky looking waves around his face. His very smooth, clean-shaven face. It had been all she could do not to gawk at him...and melt into a puddle of horny mush at his feet.

“Come on.” She bumped his arm lightly with her elbow. “You can't tell me it's not. Look at this.” She gestured to their surroundings with a flourish of her arm. “Everything is so green. You've

got all these trees around this wide-open space and you can listen to the sounds of the animals and nature instead of the constant hum of a treadmill motor.”

“Earbuds and some good ole’ George tune that out.”

Lena threw her head back and growled before looking at Trey, who was walking on her opposite side. She hooked a thumb at Brit. “Can I deck him?”

Trey grinned. “Sugar, there are some things I require my woman to ask permission to do, but decking him when he deserves it isn’t one of them.”

Whips of heat lashed through her at the calm lilt of authority lacing his rusty voice. She ignored the anticipation

shimmering through her and dragged her attention back to Brit. He wasn't grinning at her, but a smile was toying with the edge of his lips and sheer heat had turned his dark eyes nearly cobalt.

“Deck me and I'll paddle your sexy ass until you come.”

It was more than a warning. It was a promise. She got the impression it was a hope, too, as if he was merely waiting for her to give him a reason to discipline her in a variety of creatively sexual ways.

She focused her attention straight ahead as her ass erupted in a fit of tingles that coaxed juices from between her feminine lips. There was something



different about both of them today. Trey hadn't wanted to go along with her plan when she'd told him about it this morning. She'd sensed it hadn't just been the whole hiding-the-treadmill-from-Brit that he hadn't wanted to do. He'd been having second thoughts about taking the day off and she suspected she knew why.

It was amazing the things a woman could learn about a man while helping his mother in the kitchen. Though she hadn't intentionally pried May for information, the woman had been more than open about her feeling when it came to both her boys. Trey hadn't done much but work since he and Brit had returned to the ranch. Lena was inclined to agree with May's assumption that working

kept his mind off the op, Brit's injury and mental wellbeing, and his own fears of not only returning to the SEALs without Brit, but of his feelings that he'd failed his friend when Brit had needed him most.

As for Brit, she figured the good night's sleep he'd enjoyed likely had a lot to do with the more relaxed posture and cleaned up look he was sporting today. He seemed to be in a better mood, too, despite his earlier irritation at her over hiding his exercise equipment. She chalked that up to his finally really getting out of the house. A walk in a familiar setting with a soft breeze blowing and the sounds of nature all

around them. Trey had told her Brit was the outdoorsy type. She hadn't been able to think of anything more therapeutic for him than this. Judging by the expression on his face, she'd been right.

He pointed toward a line of trees slightly to their left up ahead and she saw him exchange a glance with Trey over her head. Slowly, as if being magnetically drawn to those trees, their walking course veered that way.

“What was it like growing up here on the ranch?”

“Hard,” Brit answered at the same time Trey said, “Scary,” then both of them added, “At first.”

Their answers surprised her, not just in the sincerity of them, but the words

they'd used. "What was hard about it?" she asked after a few steps when neither of them seemed intent on elaborating. Watching both the older and younger men on the ranch yesterday had showed her all were expected to work. She didn't think for an instant any labor to be done on a ranch was easy. Yet, she'd gotten the impression from all the men and boys yesterday that they loved every second of it. Unless Brit had meant...

"The difference," Brit finally said. "The change."

"Learning to accept it, to understand it, and believe we could be a part of something like this," Trey chimed in. "Once we did, it got scary thinking we

might somehow fuck it up and lose it.”

Lena got it. Of course, she'd never quite understand what it felt like to be in that situation, but their answers made sense now. Nothing about the way Horace, May, and even Hank—a man she'd heard so many fond things about, but would ever get to meet—treated them had been hard. What the three of them had done was give Brit and Trey something neither of them apparently ever had...a loving family.

“How did you end up here? What about your real parents? Are they still alive?”

“I couldn't give a rat's ass in hell if they are or not.” Brit winced, shot her an apologetic look, and flattened his hand

on the small of her back as he steered her down the narrow path through the trees. “Sorry. I guess that sounded pretty harsh.”

She bit back a grin, knowing the apology was May’s influence coming out in him. “It did, but I’m betting you wouldn’t feel that way if you hadn’t been given good reason to.”

He barked a half laugh that held more derision than humor. “Do you consider thirteen years as a punching bag good reason enough?”

*Oh, you poor man.* Her years of training and experience in helping people in various stages grief enabled her to keep a steady step and composed

expression even as her heart broke for him. She'd worked with people who struggled with depression over abandonment or the loss of a loved one. She helped people work through feelings of inadequacy and what she'd come to think of as the left-behind syndrome, a battle she still thought Brit was fighting as he found himself unable to reason he'd been spared during that horrible op when his teammates had perished before his eyes. But the kind of physical abuse he was speaking of fell outside of any training and experience she'd ever gotten.

“I definitely consider that reason enough.”

The corner of his lips tilted in a hint of

a smile. “Don’t worry, counselor. I’m passed all that.”

Was he? Did a person really get passed something like that, or did they simply learn to accept it and move on the way she’d accepted and moved on after her mother had abandoned her?

“You ran away,” she guessed. “Maybe fell into the system?” she added slowly.

He shook his head. “Didn’t do either, at least not for a while. I was a good boy, did what I was supposed to, and took care of myself.”

Trey’s snort made her smile. “Is he fibbing to me again?”

“Well...” Trey drawled as he reached in front of her to push aside a tree branch



hanging over the trail. “That all depends on how you look at it, sugar.”

“And just how should I look at it, lemon drop?”

\* \* \* \*

Brit’s laughter echoed off the trees, catching Trey off guard as much as the fact that she’d just called him...

He shot her a disbelieving look. “Lemon drop?”

Her beautiful blue eyes twinkled with mischief and humor. “You keep calling me *sugar*. What goes better with that than a lemon drop?”

He glanced at Brit over her head to find the man grinning like a loon. Though

it was an awesome sight to see his buddy so amused, it wasn't so cool that it had come at his expense. He hooked an arm around Lena's waist and drew her shapely body against his. The move surprised a soft gasp out of her and her head tilted back, the mischief and humor in her eyes replaced by a heady, needy heat.

“Lemon drops are usually covered with sugar.” He dipped his head, stopping with his mouth a mere breath from hers. “Is that what you're planning to do? Cover me with your sugar?”

Her throat worked in a visible gulp. She licked her lips and his cock hardened to the consistency of stone

behind the zipper of his jeans.

“You haven’t told me about your parents.” Her tone was breathy, hot, and gave him every reason in the world to think that suddenly the last thing she wanted right now was to hear about his childhood.

Still, he slowly released her and started walking again. They weren’t too far their destination now. He’d wait until they got there before grabbing hold of her again.

“They’re dead.” He said it simply because, to him, it was.

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m not.” He didn’t feel an ounce of love lost for the man and woman who had created him. A flash of surprise

moved through her angelic face, but it was almost immediately replaced by an obvious struggle to understand. “I’m sorry if that sounded harsh, but like Brit, it comes with good reason.”

“Were you abused, too?”

Trey shook his head. “Not like him. My mother OD’ed when I was five. I heard my father was gunned down by a druggie he owed money to about a year after Horace, Hank, and May took us in. Neither one of them ever did shit to raise me, feed me, or, hell, even put clothes on my back. I guess Jane, that was her name, did some when she came down off her high, which wasn’t often. I had a hell of a lot more to eat before she

overdosed. After that, I was on my own. Paul didn't give a shit.”

He'd told him he was worthless, that he wanted to him to die so he didn't have be burdened with him anymore. When Trey had begged him to buy a loaf of bread instead of an ounce of cocaine, Paul had told him to starve. Then he'd be rid of him.

“You just said you were five when your mom passed away,” Lena said as if he needed a reminder.

Trey nodded. “A five-year-old boy can con just about anyone into a bowl of pudding or a plate of spaghetti. It's a little harder when five turns into twelve, especially once he realizes how to really fend for himself.”

“You turned to stealing.”

Though her tone made her words more statement than question, he repeated, “I turned to stealing. I had to eat somehow, though the people I stole from didn’t quite see it that way.”

The trees opened and he bit back a grin at the soft moan that escaped her throat as she caught sight of the pond. Her lips parted on a smile, and he followed her gaze as it swept over the open area. A blue jay perched on a branch high in a tree gave a song, breaking the surprised silence.

“This is amazing!” She stepped away from them, turning slowly as she walked, taking it all in. “God, I can’t imagine

what it was like to grow up here.”

“Far different than the city, darlin’.” Brit had stopped at the tree line and leaned a shoulder against the trunk as he watched her.

Trey moved further into the clearing, stopped a few feet from the water’s edge, and set down the picnic basket he’d been carrying. “Have you ever been out of the city, sugar?”

“Not really. I mean, I’ve passed through country like this, but never stayed.” She turned to face him and Brit. “I’m guessing both of you lived in the city before coming here. Did you go to school together? Is that how you met?”

“Neither of us did much school back then.” Brit pushed off the tree and moved

to Trey's side. "We met on the streets. This dumbass nearly got caught shoplifting at a convenience store. Dude behind the counter would've called the cops on him if I hadn't passed him off as my brother and fed the guy a line about intending to pay for the things Trey had shoved in his pockets."

Lena's eyes narrowed. "You pretended a boy you didn't even know was your brother and paid for what he stole to keep him out of jail. Where did you get the money?"

"My father's wallet. The bastard was gonna beat me anyway. I started figuring I might as well give him a reason. Some weeks I took from him, others I took



from my mother. I saved most of it. I thought I could con my way into buying a car off some poor sap even if I wasn't old enough to drive and get the hell out of dodge."

"Did it work?"

"Naw, I got impatient."

Trey kneeled to pull out the blanket May had rolled up inside the picnic basket. Brit hadn't gotten impatient. He hadn't been able to save fast enough because he'd spent half the money he stole each week feeding Trey.

"So you..." Lena prompted.

"Thought I'd take a page out of Trey's book and steal one. I saw this old pickup outside a hardware store. It looked like easy pickings. Turned out, it belonged to

Horace and Hank. Long story short, instead of calling the law on me, they took us to lunch, needled us into bearing our souls, and offered us a home on the ranch.”

Her gaze shifted to Trey. “You were with him?”

Trey straightened and unfolded the blanket on the ground. “I was waiting for him around the corner. He wouldn’t go with Horace and Hank until they came for me.” That had been the second time Brit had changed his life. He’d refused to go with Horace and Hank unless they took Trey in, too.

He didn’t like the knowing look that moved through Lena’s eyes. She was a

sharp one. She'd no doubt figured out how indebted he'd always felt to Brit. She'd probably figured out how guilty he felt over the whole clusterfucked op, too. He'd get passed it, though, and he didn't need any bit of counseling to help him. All he needed was for Brit to get his head straight, for his buddy to return to the teams with him, and then everything would be all right.

Brit saved him from the questions he saw forming on Lena's lips, yet again coming to his rescue. His friend moved to her, drew her in, and dipped his head to cover her mouth with his. "Enough talk about all that," he told her as he ended the kiss. "Let's go for a swim."

Lena blinked at Brit as her mind tripped and stumbled over his words. One thing about it, the man knew how to shut her up. Her lips tingled from the kiss. The heat of it shimmered through her system, hardening her nipples until she pressed insistently against the hard wall of his chest. Apparently, the walk through familiar ground had worked like a charm. The shadow that had been so apparent on his handsome face wasn't so dark anymore. She hated to bring it back, but she knew the only way to get rid of it once and for all was to coerce him into talking about the op.

“I didn’t bring a swimsuit.” The devious glint in his eyes had the heat spreading to her pussy.

“Neither did we.” Trey’s easy gait brought him closer. He rounded her and Brit, moving in at her back. “They aren’t necessary when you’re in the country on private land, sugar.”

Were they crazy? And what was Trey doing following Brit’s lead?

*He’s doing like he’s always done.*

Yeah, she’d figured that out. She wouldn’t have pegged Trey for a follower, but, when it came to Brit, that was obviously what he did. He had to know she’d been using the talk about how they’d grown up and come to live at

Rescue Ranch as a way to get Brit talking. Except, that talk had revealed things about Trey he'd apparently not wanted her to know.

“All right,” she said slowly, her mind frantically working even as her hormones went haywire. Being between them again, feeling the hard walls of their bodies against her front and back, absorbing the heat and strength of their embraces, pulled things from her mouth she knew she shouldn't say. “I'll get in that pond, but the talk keeps going.”

“Darlin', once you get naked, I promise you talking will be the last thing on my mind.”

“Trey and I will help you keep your thoughts straight.” She leaned her head

back on Trey's chest and angled it to look up at him. "Won't we, lemon drop?"

Trey snorted. "You're going to be on your own with that one, sugar."

Well, hell. He wasn't going to be any help. She left her head laying on his chest, but turned her attention back to Brit. "Tell me how you really hurt your knee and I'll take off my boots."

The shadow returned to his expression in full force. "You're not gonna let up, are you, darlin'?"

She cupped the side of his face. "Try it my way, okay?"

"What is this, your version of strip poker?"

“The way I figure it, we’ll be both holding a royal flush when it’s over.”

He sighed, but she caught the amusement that mixed with a dark dread in his eyes, creating a dangerous concoction that sent equal parts trepidation and excitement racing through her. “Add the shirt to that and I’ll play along for a while.”

She was getting in too deep, but it was too late to back down now. Shutting off the warning bells sounding loudly in her head, she shifted between him and Trey and pulled off the boots she’d borrowed from May.

Satisfaction sparked a new heat on Brit’s handsome face as he eased back,



giving her room to take off her shirt. Trey's hands stayed where they'd come to rest on her hips, but he moved back a fraction as she fisted the hem of her shirt and pulled it up and over her head.

Brit's gaze felt like a physical caress as his attention dropped from her face and did a slow glide over her chest. "Damn, darlin', you're one sexy woman."

"Thank you. I believe you owe me an answer now."

He puffed out a hard breath, raked his fingers through his hair, and nodded once. "I tripped, felt myself going down, and twisted. The knee took the impact."

"What did you trip over?"

"Take off the bra."

She held his gaze and reached behind her back. Her hands glided over Trey's solid chest as she found the clasp of her bra, reminding her of his continued presence. It was funny how his holding her helped her follow through with her part of the game. It somehow steadied her and made her feel safe. She couldn't explain it and didn't bother to try.

She unfastened the clasp and let the bra fall to the ground at her feet. "What did you trip over?"

"A dead teammate."

She didn't like the way his tone had lost all inflection, as if he were recounting a fact that meant nothing to him. "How did he die?"

He held her gaze for a long moment, his eyes unreadable. This time when he spoke, his tone took on an authority that sent a wicked thrill straight to her pussy. “Pants.”

She shook her head. “Not yet.” She was losing her clothes fast and he was picking apart her questions, only giving bits of the full answer. “How did he die?”

His gaze flicked over her shoulder before returning to lock with hers. “IED. Improvised explosive device,” he clarified. “Terrorists use them a lot. He was too close when one hit. The explosion took out a chunk of his torso.”

Oh, God. How close had he been

when the IED had gone off? She started to ask when he repeated his command.

“Pants, Lena.”

The fact that he called her by her name rather than *darlin'* or *sweet thing* compelled her to obey as much as the hardness in his tone. He was using this, she realized, not just as a way to get her naked, but to keep himself from completely falling into the nightmare in his mind.

She unfastened the button of her jeans with hands that had started to shake. She should have never agreed to this, should've never come here. She'd known she was getting in over her head. For the first time since she'd started her practice, she felt helpless. No amount of

her schooling and experience had prepared her to help someone with these kinds of haunting memories.

Trey's hands slid from her hips to her sides as she lowered the zipper of her jeans and wriggled them slowly down her hips. He must have felt her shiver, maybe even sensed her fear, because he nuzzled his face in the side of her neck and whispered in her ear.

“You're safe, sugar. You wouldn't be doing this, you wouldn't be following his orders, if it wasn't what you wanted to do.”

How did he know that? Was she so transparent that he could see into her soul? She wanted Brit to talk about the

op, firmly believing it was the best way to help him heal. Yet, she no longer understood the game she'd started. An article of clothing in exchange for an answer to a deep, probing question... What had she been thinking? It was wrong on so many levels, but that didn't stop her from letting her jeans fall in a pool around her ankles.

“Kick them out of the way,” Brit ordered as he closed the distance between them again. She did and he didn't wait for her to ask another question before hooking his thumbs in the thin strips of material holding her panties on her hips. Rather than pushing them down, he twisted the straps around his fingers until they snapped, and tossed

her panties over his shoulder.

“You’re breaking the rules, cowboy.”

“Naw, just changing them. I need a break. Will you give me that, darlin’?” One hand moved from her hip, turned, and wedged between her legs. “I don’t want to see Snake blown apart. I don’t to feel my hands covered in his blood.” He slipped a finger between her sodden folds and raked the pad of his fingertip over her clit. “This is what I want to feel. I want to see you writhing for us while I taste your sweet pussy and Trey devours your breasts.” Even as he said the words, Trey’s hands slid up her sides, dipped between her body and Brit’s, and covered her breasts. “I want

to hear you begging for us instead of the screams that keep echoing in my head.”

He'd told her more without prodding than he'd given her in any answer so far. But could she do it? Could she give herself to these men knowing the part of herself she would be unleashing?

*It's what I was training you for.*

Mark's words, though contrived by her dream the night before, reverberated in her mind once again. Mark hadn't known either of these men existed. Sex between her and Mark had been a means to an end of the loneliness they'd both felt, an exploration of a demon they'd both kept carefully hidden, and a discovery that had benefited them both. They'd been friends, best friends, who had



agreed to nothing more beyond the comfort and pleasure they had given one another. Yet, standing here now between Brit and Trey, consumed by the erotic sensations radiating from the bodies in front and behind her, it felt as though this was truly where she'd been headed all along.

\* \* \* \*

Brit needed her. Christ, he didn't think he'd ever needed a woman so badly. Talking to her was coming easier than he'd thought it would, but saying the words was only bringing the images more clearly back to his mind.

He delved his hand further between her legs and sank a finger into the hot recesses of her pussy. Her head fell back on Trey's shoulder as he wiggled the digit inside her cunt, stroking the sodden walls of her channel. Her eyes closed on a soft moan and he lit his attention slide to Trey.

*Careful.* Trey mouthed the word, his eyes flashing with warning.

Brit gave him a curt nod. He'd already figured out he couldn't go full-force with this woman. Though she made brazen moves with him and obeyed his commands, he saw the hesitation and a pain he didn't understand move through her each time she did as he told her to

do.

One of her hands was in his hair and the other was latched onto his shoulder. Her nails dug into his flesh as he pulled his finger back, added a second, and drove them both side by side into her pussy. Her hips bucked, meeting the thrust of his fingers and drawing them deeper.

“Is this you saying yes, darlin’?” He wouldn’t force her. If she told him to stop touching her now, that’s what he would do. Though he preferred to give the commands when it came to sex, that was an order he would obey. “Is this you telling me I can have what I want?”

“Yes.” She sighed the word and followed it with a soft moan as Trey

nuzzled his face against her ear again.

“Tell him, sugar. Tell us what you want.”

Brit felt the backs of Trey’s hands fall between his body and hers as the man released her breasts. Understanding the need for her to say the words, he eased his fingers from her pussy and replaced his hand on her hip.

Her eyes flew open, panic swirling with desire in their depths. “It’s what I want. I want your mouth on me. I want Trey’s hands on me. I want both of you. Please.”

Brit exchanged a pleased look with Trey and jerked his head toward the blanket his friend had stretched on the

ground. He laid down, reached for her, and grinned. “Time for your first riding lesson, sweet thing.”

She half gasped, half giggled as she let Trey use his hold on her hips to guide her to straddle Brit’s face.

Brit turned his hands and gripped her inner thighs, holding her in place while he examined her pouty pussy. Cream slickened her shaved folds. Her clit was engorged and seemed to beckon for attention. He took a deep breath and marveled in her sweet, hot scent. His cock pulsed in the tortured agony of knowing it wouldn’t get to slide inside the tight opening awaiting his mouth. His tongue would get that pleasure for now.

He felt Trey move in to straddle his

torso behind Lena, saw the man's arms come around her, his hands covering her breasts. Her body jerked as Trey caught her nipples between his thumbs and the sides of his forefingers and Brit lifted his mouth to her pussy to double her pleasure.

He relaxed his hands on her inner thighs, allowing her body to lower onto his face as he probed her cunt with his tongue. His hunger for her blazing out of control, he feasted on her pussy, driving his tongue in and out of her tight channel and gazing up her sultry body to watch the expressions of passion consume her face.

They worked her body together,

Trey's hands on her breasts and Brit's mouth on her pussy, until her hips bucked and her soft moans turned to ragged pleas. He felt her body tighten, felt the muscles in her pussy constrict, and knew he was about to topple over the edge.

Brit tightened his hold on her inner thighs again and lowered his head to the blanket. She gasped and reached for him, but Trey was faster. His friend's hands shot from her breasts to her wrists, catching them in a firm hold.

“What do you think you're doing, sugar?” Brit heard Trey ask gruffly.

“I...oh, God. Please.”

“It sure is sweet to hear you beg, darlin'.” Brit lifted his head, swiped his

tongue over her clit, and pulled back again. “Do it some more.”

He watched as Trey pulled her arms behind her back. He knew the man had shackled her wrists in one of his hands when his other hand came around her face, a finger hooking her chin to turn her head to face him.

“Do you want to come, Lena?”

“Yes.”

Brit felt the muscles in her inner thighs quiver in her attempt to push against the hold he kept firm. If he relaxed again, her pussy would pound down on his face. It pleased him that she wanted his mouth on her again that badly.

“Then ask for permission,” Trey told



her.

They could keep this up till the sun went down. They knew how to read a woman's body, understood the signs when she was close to the edge, and were masters at pulling her away from that brink until they were ready for her to fall.

Brit turned his face against the inside of her leg and let his lips graze her flesh as he spoke, adding another level of teasing to her anticipation. "We control your body, darlin'. You won't come until we're ready for you to."

Every inch of her satiny flesh quivered visibly at that. He enjoyed the sight of her excitement, of the way her bottom lip disappeared between her teeth as if she

were concentrating on keeping the anticipation mounting even as her body demanded she beg for release.

“Please,” she whispered after a long moment. “Brit, please put your mouth on my pussy again.”

Brit smiled as he gave her what she requested, working her cunt into a frenzy of need and losing himself in her delicious taste once more. In seconds, her inner muscles were tightening around his tongue again, her body trembling, and soft moans of sheer pleasure rolling from her lips. He nearly stopped when he heard the words he and Trey required.

“Please, Brit, Trey, can I come. Oh,

God. I'm about to come.”

“Then do it now, love.”

The words were no sooner out of Trey's mouth, then juices were flowing freely into Brit's. He lapped them up as Lena thrashed in their embrace, her strangled scream joining with the bird's songs around them as she fell over the edge.

## Chapter Five

Trey pulled off his boots and set them aside as he watched Lena disappear beneath the surface in the pond.

“I guess I should thank you for bringing her home.”

Trey shot a glance at Brit and lifted a brow. “It’d be a nice change considering you decked me for it yesterday.”

Brit sat up on the blanket, dug into the picnic basket for the thermos of sweet tea, and drank deep. “I decked you for trying to pull one over on me. You didn’t have a right to force a counselor on me, bro.”

Trey shrugged and took another swig

of the tea as Lena came up for air in the pond and dove again. “Probably not, but we do what Horace tells us to do, don’t we?”

“He tell you to pass her off as your girlfriend?”

Trey grinned as he put the lid back on the thermos. “That was my idea. I figured you’d let her get closer if you thought I was stepping in to claim her instead of telling you she was someone May had hired for the kitchen or something.” Brit shot him a look that told him he wasn’t buying it. “Yeah.” He chuckled. “That’s the line I fed her anyway.”

Brit grinned. “Killed two birds with one stone, I suppose. It got her where

you wanted her and pissed me off enough I went after her, too.”

Trey pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it onto the edge of the blanket. “Whatever works. We were getting pretty desperate. You can’t say she hasn’t done a lot in less than twenty-four hours. Hell, you’re talking to her, you not scowling every damn minute, and you’re finally out of that damn house.”

Brit nodded, his attention focused on the pond. Lena chose that moment to break the surface of the pond and stay awhile. Water rained off her bare flesh, some drops staying behind to sparkle like tiny diamonds in the sunlight on her shoulders and breasts. She pushed her

hair away from her face and tipped her head back. Only then did her eyes open. Her lips parted on a smile as she stared at the cloudless sky, watching the flock of birds fly by overhead.

“So she did her job faster than you expected,” Brit commented. “What happens now?”

Her job wasn't over. Brit still had far too many emotions and memories he hadn't set free, but Trey didn't point that out. “I'm far from done with her, if that's what you're asking.”

“We broke a rule with her last night. Doesn't matter the reason behind it or the fact that the two of you were out of the bed before I woke up.”

Trey had a feeling they were about to

break every rule they'd ever made about spending time with a woman when it came to her. "She's something special." As if to prove his point, she threw her arms out wide and spun in a circle. Her quietly delighted laugh floated to him on the air, making him grin. "I'm not scared to admit she's getting to me more than I expected."

Brit looked up at him. "You sure it ain't just your cock she's getting to?"

Trey lifted both brows as he stared down at him. "You sure it's not just yours?"

Brit snorted. "Hell, she's getting into my head, but that's what you brought her here for, ain't it? Might do you some



good to let her in yours, too.”

“Hey.” Lena’s shout saved Trey from having to comment on that. “I thought you two were going to join me in here.”

“We’re on our way, sugar.” Trey unfastened his jeans and lowered his voice so only Brit would hear him as she shucked them down his legs. “She’s not like the other subs we’ve played with. She’s pretty quick to obey, but I get the feeling it causes her some kind of pain when she does and it’s not physical.”

“You thinking someone hurt her?”

“I don’t know. I’m thinking if someone did and I find out who, he’ll go into his grave with a permanent print of my hands around his damn throat.” He pulled off his briefs and tossed them and

his jeans on top of his discarded shirt. “I’m also thinking there’s a sexy woman waiting for us in that pond and it’s my turn to get my hands on her.” He paused and glanced at Brit again. “You coming? This whole swim thing was your idea.”

“Yeah, but it got me what I wanted for now. I think I’ll hang back here on the bank and watch.”

\* \* \* \*

Holy mother of hormones. Lena’s gaze locked on Trey’s naked body as he sauntered toward the edge of the pond. She’d seen him without a shirt last night, but in the brightness of midafternoon, the

sight of him fully naked sent her body in a whirlwind of wickedly excited, full-blown submission. She dragged her gaze over his latch-on-to-me-while-you-ride-me shoulders, skimmed it across his chest speckled with dark curls, and down his outrageously toned abdomen to the part of him she hadn't been able to see last night.

His cock, every long, thick, hard inch of it, was simply delicious looking. She swallowed as her taste buds zinged. Everything about the man was devastating to a woman's senses and damn if she could stop herself from enjoying the damage it was causing to her willpower.

“Something wrong, sugar?”

Her attention snapped to his handsome face and she noted the intensity swirling with amusement in his eyes as he waded through the pond on a direct course toward her. She dragged her gaze up, focused on the trees high above his head, and did her damndest to find her scruples among the lust that kept clogging her head. “That shouldn’t have happened earlier.” She righted her head and dared to look at him again, forcing her gaze to stay on his face. Not that it helped. Even his face was enough to send her thoughts scrambling. “I was making good progress with him. Then I ruined it.”

He studied her as he closed in,

stopping within arm's reach, though he didn't touch her. "What you did was get through to him. That's the most I've heard him talk about the op since it happened."

"I need to keep him talking and doing it like this isn't the way to go."

His arm latched around her waist beneath the water before she could make a move to walk by him. He pulled her in like a cowboy reeling in a roped calf, his grip equal in gentleness and strength.

"It's an unconventional tactic, but I've heard you're pretty damn effective at using them."

"I don't use games on clients." She closed her eyes and sighed. "Then again, this whole client-counselor relationship

started on a sort of game.”

“At my suggestion,” he admitted.

Suspicion had her opening her eyes, only to narrow them as she stared at him. “Horace didn’t have anything to do with the plan to pass me off as your girlfriend, did he?”

Trey clucked his tongue and failed miserably in his attempt to look innocent. “Afraid I can’t say he did.” He hands dropped to cup her ass. “That was all my idea, sugar.”

“Why?”

He bent his knees slightly, putting his thick cock in almost perfect alignment with her pussy. “Because I wanted you.”

“So you tricked me?”

A mischievous grin toyed with the corners of his mouth. “I used an unconventional tactic to get what I wanted.”

She rolled her eyes. “Maybe you’re the one I should deck instead of Brit.”

He threw his head back and laughed. “Maybe, but tell me you didn’t want me, too.”

Damn it, apparently she really was that transparent.

“I’m about to make love to you, sugar. Are you going to tell me you don’t want it?”

She couldn’t, any more than she’d been able to tell him she didn’t want him when he’d cornered her inside the ranch

house yesterday and pinned her to the wall. “What happens when someone on the ranch come across us here?” She couldn’t believe she hadn’t wondered that before. They might be on private property, but there were ten young boys and who knew how many other adults working on various tasks nearby.

“They’ll take a quick peek, realize it’s the last place they need to be right now, turn tail, and run.”

“And Brit? Isn’t he going to join us?” She realized it was the wrong time to ask that question when Trey’s eyes sparked with satisfaction.

“Is that what you want, sugar? Do you want me and Brit to make love to you at the same time?”



She attempted to backtrack the conversation. “I meant, isn’t he coming for a swim?”

“Answer my question, Lena.”

The authority was back in his voice, leaving her no room to evade. “Yes,” she admitted, though she knew she would damn herself for it later.

One sexy brow winged up. “Yes, what?”

She took a deep breath and let the whole confession spill. “Yes, I want you and Brit to make love to me at the same time.”

“Have you ever been pleased by two men at once, sugar?”

She shook her head.

“Turn around.” Trey spun her in his arms and pulled her back to his front. “You will be tonight, but for now, all you’re going to get is me. Is that okay with you?”

His hands skimmed her flesh, arousal turning his voice gravelly. It grated over her sensitive flesh, teasing nerve endings and exciting erogenous zones she’d forgotten she’d possessed until meeting him and Brit. She angled her head, tilted it back to look at him, and met his gaze. His dark eyes swam with a predatory desire that thrilled her to her toes.

“It’s more than okay with me.”

He turned them both in the water until they faced Brit. “He’s going to watch.”

The idea of Brit watching as Trey fucked her sent a wicked thrill she'd never experience before racing straight to her pussy.

Trey nuzzled his face in the side of her neck, his breath hot and raspy in her ear. "Then tonight, you're going to submit to us. Anything we tell you do to, you will do without question. Do you understand?"

Did she have a choice? She knew deep down that she did, of course, but her body, mind, and...No, her heart was not going to betray her, too. She'd come to this ranch to help Brit and she would do that. Maybe she was giving into urges and desires she shouldn't with him and

Trey, but what would it hurt to console the needy part of her she'd kept buried for so long? Once Brit came to terms with the horrors eating at his mind, he and Trey would return to the Navy, she would go back to her life, and the adventures the three of them shared would one day simply be distant memories.

“Yes,” she said obediently, her gaze locked with Brit's and every sense she possessed consumed by the feel of Trey behind her. “I understand.”

Surrender had truly been her only option since the moment Trey had walked into the diner and it proved itself again as she relaxed against him. The hard weight of his erection pressed at

the small of her back and she wriggled against it, delighting in the low growl that rumbled from his throat. She looked back at him, her breath catching at the predatory glaze in his eyes. The animal inside him realized he'd caught his prey and she didn't get another second to think before he crushed his mouth to hers.

White-hot hunger seared through her as he devoured her, controlled her, and stole her sanity through her mouth. His hands moved, one covering her breasts while the other skimmed to her pussy. She moaned into his mouth when one finger inched between her folds. He raked that fingertip over her clit, and she

bucked her hips, groped for something to hold onto, and found his thighs. He broke the kiss in favor of licking his way over her jaw, nipping her jawbone, and continuing on to the side of her neck.

She couldn't keep up. The sensations ricocheting through her proved too much. His mouth worked her neck, teeth grazing and biting. His hand weighed and caressed her breast, the thumb and forefinger finding her nipple to add further torture. His finger pushed on her clit, a delicious pressure that set her boiling, and abandoned the aching bud to thrust inside her weeping channel.

“Oh, God, Trey, yes.” A second finger joined the first and she rocked her hips in time with his thrusts, wanting it

deeper, needing to feel the rigid erection pressing against her back inside her body. “Please.”

“Jesus, you’re wet.” His hot breath against her neck sent excited shivers raining through her. “I figured the water would keep you from getting wet for me. Your pussy is so tight, sugar. It’s primed and ready. Your muscles are gripping my fingers.”

He thrust his fingers deeper, lifting her and pulling her more firmly against him. Her knees went weak, but it didn’t matter. He held her, controlled her, and possessed her. His teeth raked the sensitized flesh where her neck and shoulder met, and she sucked in a breath

as slivers of demonic lust spiked to her core.

“Trey.” Her head fell back on his chest and whipped from side to side as she fought to breathe. Her body yielded to his manipulations. Pressure built in her womb. She wanted more, needed to be filled by the thick shaft resting against her back.

“Come for me, Lena.” The order came in a gruff whisper that bordered an animalistic growl as he raked his thumb over her clit in time with the thrusts of his fingers inside her channel. “Let me feel you shatter again.”

She couldn't have refused him if she'd dared. The pleasurable pain of his callused fingers to her throbbing nipple



and engorged clit and the width of the fingers he spread inside her cunt demanded she obey as much as the authority in his command. She panted for air, gasping in the inferno he created until the orgasm burst from her in a sharp wave that left her shaking. She crumpled in his embrace as her body rocked inside and out from the force of her release.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that was amazing.”

She barely heard him over the drumming of her own pulse. Her eyes fluttered open and her gaze locked with Brit's. He still hadn't left his place on the blanket, but he had moved enough to unfasten his cargo shorts. He sat there

watching them, his fist closed around his cock, moving up and down his shaft.

“Do it again.”

Before Trey’s words could register, he turned her in his arms and lifted her off her feet. Her quivering legs wound around his waist more out of reflex than thought. His hands splayed her bottom, cupping her cheeks and holding her steady. Then he kissed her, his mouth taking hers with a domination that bruised even as it aroused. His tongue plunged between her lips as, between her legs, his cock drove into her channel in a single thrust that drew a strangled scream from her throat.

Intense, red-hot pleasure swamped her as her inner muscles made room for his

thick shaft. He filled her, igniting a firestorm that spread through her soul. All fears fled in a maelstrom of passion and heady lust. Only when he wrenched his mouth from hers, his grip tightening on her ass cheeks as she felt him begin to pull out, did she snag hold of some semblance of rational thought, just enough to utter a protest.

“No, don’t stop.” She wriggled in his embrace, locking her ankles behind his back. “Please. I’ll beg. I’ll scream. I’ll do whatever you order, just please don’t stop.”

“Holy shit, Lena.” Something very akin to fear shot through his eyes. “You’ve got to let me pull out, sugar.”

“To hell I do.” No way would she let him stop this now. Dying ranked a high possibility if he didn’t finish what he started. She didn’t care how needy she sounded, how fully she was submitting to him, or how deeply she could feel him seeping into her soul.

“Lena.” He said her name again, his tone hard and commanding, as if doing so might make her listen to reason. The only reason she knew in that moment belonged to the orgasm dangling on the precipice. “I’m not wearing a condom.”

She shook her head wildly and bucked her hips, trying to find even a modicum of the friction he started but now denied her. “Can’t let go. Can’t stop,” she

panted. *I can't think either*. She knew if she did every fear, every ounce of uncertainty, and every bit of insecurity would come back with a vengeance and likely send her scurrying for the mountains. "I'm on the pill and I'm clean. I swear to you. I haven't had sex in over five years."

He stilled, his eyes wide with shock. "Jesus, Lena. You're shitting me. It's been that long?"

She nodded, held his gaze, and knew exactly what to say to get him moving again. "I want this. Please, Trey. Will you please fuck me harder?"

"Christ almighty," he growled through gritted teeth. He stared at her, the position he held her putting them almost

at perfect eye level. “I’m clean, too. I get tested regularly.”

“Then stop talking and give us both what we want.” She flattened her hands on his shoulders, dug in her nails and watched a lightning bolt of pure male supremacy flash in the dark depths of his eyes.

“I should make you pay for this later.”

She didn’t understand the statement, but his grip on her ass tightened, his fingertips pinching into her flesh, and she forgot all about it as he pistoned his cock inside her channel and reached a depth he hadn’t moments before.

Lena’s head fell back on her shoulders as fireworks of bliss exploded in her

very being. The water sloshed around them as he fucked her. He took her with a primitive, forceful, mind-altering invasion of his cock into her sodden cunt that intensified the things within her that he and Brit had brought back to life. Wicked, wanton feelings erupted in her bloodstream, ideas forming in her mind that breached all practical realms.

“I’m not going to last, Lena.” His gruff confession surprised her. “You feel too good. Too hot. Too tight. Do it again for me. Let me feel your body milk my cock as you come.”

His words, the command in his rusty tone coupled with the rough way he claimed her, sent her over the edge yet again. She screamed with the power of

the orgasm that tore from her body. She lifted her head, only to freeze in the act of lowering it once more as she locked gazes with him. The unreadable pits his eyes stole her breath. She fell under some sort of spell as she stared at him, as her own orgasm continued to rack her body, as she felt the vicious jets of semen spew into her when he finally gave in to his release.

\* \* \* \*

Brit slipped an arm around Lena's waist as they headed to the ranch house. Watching her with Trey in the pond had been better than any porno he'd ever



watched and far better than any show he'd seen at The Cowboy's Den, even if Trey hadn't chosen to fully dominate her. He had a feeling his buddy had lost control far sooner than he'd intended. Not that he could really blame the man. Lena possessed an ability neither of them had come across in a woman before. She was getting to them, not just to their heads or their cocks, but their hearts, too.

“Bravo radioed a warning that a group of tangos were headed up the path toward us.” He felt Lena startle and saw Trey's head snap his way, pure surprise written all over his face.

Yeah, Brit was surprised he'd said it, too. He hadn't wanted to talk about it to

anyone. Yet, Lena had opened the can of worms today and damn if he didn't feel like it might have actually helped some. Since he'd already started and neither of them had uttered a word, he went on.

“I can't tell you what we were doing there or where we were.” He stared straight ahead, not really seeing the barn up ahead or the horses that had been let loose to graze in the gated field nearby. He saw darkness broken by flashes of gunfire and explosions. “Hell, I can't even disclose the extent of why we were sent there.”

Lena's arm wound around his back as she snuggled closer. He saw Trey move in, too, out of the corner of his eye,

likely because Lena was holding his hand with her free one. “Just tell me what you can, okay?”

Brit took a deep breath and pushed it out hard. “I ordered Bravo Team to hold their position. They were on lookout. They did their job.”

“I shouldn’t have listened.”

Trey’s muttered words had Brit stopping in his tracks. He whirled on his friend, pinning him with a hard glare over Lena’s head. “Yes, you fucking should have, and you did. Until the overruling command came from central, you did exactly what you were supposed to do.”

“Yeah, and what was that?” Trey fired back. “Sit there hidden at our

coordinates while Alpha was being blown to pieces? While you were out there tripping over pieces of our teammates and taking on damn near thirty tangos alone?”

Brit lowered his gaze to Lena's, hating the sympathy swimming in her eyes. “I wasn't alone. I lost two men, but I still had three more. Do I think I could've done something to prevent that? Yeah.” He barked a humorless half laugh. “I could've ordered my man to fire on that kid who spotted us.”

Lena quietly gasped.

Brit raked his free hand through his hair and started walking again. “There was a kid hidden in the group. Bravo

team couldn't have seen him the way the rest of the tangos had him surrounded. Hell, Alpha team didn't spot the boy until it was too late." He paused and briefly bowed his head. "The kid spotted Snake first, gave away his location, and the tangos reacted. Gunfire broke out, then the IEDs start falling. The whole shit storm alerted the other tangos in the compound."

They'd been fucked then. With their locations revealed, there had been nothing they could do but come out with their guns blazing.

"If I'd given the order to kill the kid..."

"Chance are he still would've had time to alert the tangos and your

teammates would still be dead,” Lena finished softly.

Brit nodded, knowing deep down she was right. “That doesn’t keep me from thinking I could’ve stopped it.” He angled his head down at her and tapped a finger to his temple. “It doesn’t keep this thing in here from going through episodes like the one you witnessed last night. It doesn’t keep my mind from replaying it over and over and fucking over again.”

“No.” She took a deep breath and let it out slow. “And I can’t promise you talking about it will either.”

Wanting to hold her and needing to lighten the dark mood he’d created, he

stopped and spun her into his arms. The move didn't unlatch the hold she had on Trey's hand. She simply pulled him in with her.

Brit slid his gaze to Trey and cocked a brow. "This coming from the counselor that fed me some line about how healing it can be when I talk about the grief in my mind."

Lena's delicate hand cupped his cheek and he shifted his attention to her, his heart warmed by the smile on her luscious lips. "I didn't say it wouldn't help, but it's going to take time, too, Brit."

Time was something he didn't have much of left. He had less than three weeks to return to base, less than three

weeks to get his knee and his head as close to normal as he could get...

*Less than three weeks to make her yours.*

He realized, as he stared down at her, it was exactly what he wanted. Before he and Trey returned to the teams, they had to do whatever it took to make sure this woman would be waiting for them when they came back.

Keeping those thoughts to himself, he dropped his hand to her ass and gave it a pressured squeeze. "You ready for your next riding lesson, darlin'?" The flames that erupted in her eyes pleased a chuckled out of him. "I think Pennyroyal would be the best horse for her, don't



you think?” he asked Trey, not missing the bolt of disappointment that moved through her face when she realized he was talking about a real horse.

“Yeah.” Trey delved a hand beneath her hair to cup her nape. Lena’s eyes turned to desire-filled slits at the touch. “I think Pennyroyal will give her some good practice before tonight.”

“You boys lookin’ to teach that city girl how to ride?”

Brit slowly released Lena as Trey eased back at Horace’s shout. He spotted the man walking toward them and sent him a nod, not missing the rosy color that filled Lena’s cheeks out of the corner of his eye. “Yes, sir. You wanna help?”

Horace made a raspberry sound with his lip and swaggered to a stop in front of them. “Had enough on my hands the last time I tried to teach one of the boys when he first got here. Trent’s been takin’ over that job since.” The old man’s eyes glinted with a knowing mischief as he glanced at Lena. “I suspect he won’t mind if you two are the ones to teach this pretty lady, though.”

“Is Pennyroyal in the barn?” Trey asked.

Horace pushed the bill of his hat up an inch and frowned. “She is, but there ain’t gonna be no ridin’ for her today. She’s under the weather. Don’t think it’s anythin’ serious. Trent’s in there with

her now.”

“I’ll go see if he needs some help,” Trey volunteered. He turned to Lena, leaned in, and brushed a kiss to her lips. “We’ll teach you to ride later, sugar. I’ll catch up with you back at the house, okay?”

She nodded. “Okay.”

Brit saw Horace nod, the mischief in his eyes morphing to a deep understanding. “Why don’t you go with him, Brit? I’ll see your girl makes it back to the house in a bit.”

Not quite sure what to make of that, but knowing better than to argue, Brit reeled Lena back in and planted a kiss on her mouth. “I guess I’ll see you after a while, darlin’.”

\* \* \* \*

Lena watched Trey and Brit walk away and felt an immediate loneliness that left her disconcerted. You're not only in over your head, she told herself as she turned and flashed Horace a smile. *You're getting in way too deep.*

She put her hand in Horace's extended one, surprised by the warmth and fatherliness of the touch. He started to walk and she followed, settling into step with him as he led her away from the horse barn.

"I hope you don't mind I sent them away," Horace finally commented after

a long moment. “We’ve barely got a chance to talk since you came to the ranch.”

Lena smiled at him. “I don’t mind at all. Thanks for giving Trey the day off. They’ve been showing me around today. To a city girl like me, this place is absolutely amazing.”

He chuckled, sounding so much like an older version of Trey that she found it hard not to believe Horace wasn’t Trey’s real father. “We do our best. We got a lot of help from the neighboring ranches and the townsfolk. They know what we do here, how we take in boys who are down on their luck, and they donate a lot to keep us goin’.”

“That’s incredible! What you do for

these boys is even more so.”

He lifted a nonchalant shoulder. “I may not have provided the sperm that created them, but they were all put on this earth to be my sons. It just took me a while to find them.”

“Will you stop when the youngest ones grow up?”

“Ten at a time is about all we can handle. I wish it wasn’t. We’ve talked about takin’ on more, but we ain’t got the space or the means. A couple of the younger ones we got now came to us before a couple of the older ones were grown enough to go on their own way. Royce and Rowdy, you haven’t met them yet, they were still here when we started

bringin' in the new batch.”

He shot a grin at her when he said that and she laughed.

He puffed out a long, audible breath. “I’d love to take in more when these grow up, but May and I ain’t gettin’ any younger.”

“Aw, come on.” Still holding his hand, Lena gave his arm a playful swing. “You’re only as old as you feel, right?”

He laughed. “Some days, sweet thing, I feel older beyond my years.” He stopped near the wooden fence where a few horse grazed on the other side, turned her to face it, and released her hand to drape his arms over the top board. “Trent and Bobby’ll take over when May and I can’t handle it anymore.

They served their country, but their heart's been on this ranch since the day they stepped foot on it.”

Lena folded her arms on the fence and rested her cheek on her hand as she looked at him. “May told me how they tried to rob you.”

Horace slowly nodded. “They just needed to be shown a different way. That’s all.”

“Do all the boys you take in serve in the Navy?”

“Not all the Navy. A couple of them are in the Army, Marines, Coast Guard...” He shrugged. “Whichever branch suits their fancy. We...Myself, May, and Hank, when he was still



around,” he qualified, “don’t require much out of any of them. No trouble with the law.” He stressed the point by lifting a stiff finger. “We won’t tolerate them doin’ anythin’ like that. They have to finish school and we encourage them to serve our country.” He shot her a grin. “By the time they’re old enough, they serve at least one term. Some stay. Some don’t. That choice is left up to them.”

“Did you serve?”

He nodded. “Yes, ma’am. I was a frogman just like Trey and Brit. Hank was, too.”

Lena sighed. “I’ve heard a lot about Hank. I wish I could’ve met him.”

He gave the back of her shoulder a soft pat. “I wish you could’ve, too. I’m a

pretty good man, but he was far better.”

“Somehow I find that hard to believe.”

He hung his head, his shoulders shaking with a quiet laugh before he looked at her again. “He would’ve liked you. I know our boys sure seem to.”

“I...well, I...” *Have absolutely no clue what to say to that.*

Horace threw his head back and roared with laughter. “No need to stutter, girl. I didn’t weasel this time with you to pry into what’s goin’ on between you and those boys. You and me got business to discuss.”

Lena felt her eyes widen. “We do?”

“Well, yeah. The whole reason you’re here on the ranch is to help Brit, ain’t

it?”

She briefly closed her eyes and bit back a smile. “Yes, sir.”

“Seem to be doin’ a fine job at it, too. I ain’t seen him out of that house since he got back.”

“You mean except for day I arrived and found him in the front yard on the treadmill?”

Horace grinned at her. “Yeah, that was my doin’ there.” He poked her arm. “May tells me it was your doin’ that had all his stuff hid this mornin’, though.”

She gave him her best innocent look. “Who? Me?”

He barked a laugh. “It worked. May said you had some unconventional ways at reachin’ people. You got him out of

that house. Is he talkin' to you yet?"

She nodded. "More than I expected after such a short time, actually."

Horace looked immensely please. "That's 'cause you're good at what you do and you're good for him. What I need to know is what I'm supposed to be payin' you. Whatever it is, you're damn well worth every penny and then some."

"Thank you, but..."

"Now don't give me no buts, missy. I sent Trey to hire you to do a job and, from where I'm standin', you're doin' a damn fine one."

"Again, thank you, but this one is on the house."

He lifted a brow as he studied her for

a long moment. “Do you do a lot of work on the house?”

“Well, I...uh...”

“We take some charity from the neighborin’ ranches and townsfolk like I told you. That’s to keep this place runnin’. But, when I hire someone to do a job, I expect to pay for their services.”

“Yes, but...” This time, when she trailed off, he simply looked at her. “Things between Brit and I haven’t exactly been the normal client-counselor relationship it should be. We...uh...”

*Kissed.* No, that was the wrong thing to say even if it was true. *He ate me out by the pond.* Oh, hell, no. That was definitely not something to say to a man that might as well be Brit’s father. “I

can't take your money, Mr. Hoskins. It simply wouldn't be right."

"But you're gonna keep workin' with him, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir," she answered far too quickly. In truth, there wasn't much more she could do for Brit. She could make sure he knew she was around if he needed a pair of willing ears to listen, but, after the amazing progress he'd made today, she was starting to believe the rest of his healing would be solely up to him.

"Good." Horace nodded, obviously please. "That's real good. Now, about Dillon."

Lena blinked at him. "What about

Dillon?”

“I’ve been thinkin’ he might could use someone like you to talk to same as Brit.” He straightened, pulled his cowboy hat off his head, and raked a hand through his balding hair. “I gotta admit, I don’t think you’ll have such an easy time with that boy as you have with Brit. It’ll probably take a lot more of those unconventional methods you got under your sleeves to get that boy to talk. But, if you’re willin’ to give it a shot, I’d like to hire you on.”

She wasn’t sure what to say. She’d met Dillon, of course. She’d watched him at lunch and dinner and last night on the porch, but that was about as far as their interactions had gone so far.

Working with him would mean spending more time on Rescue Ranch, possibly staying around longer than she'd intended. It would mean...

"You ain't gotta give me an answer right now." Horace put his cowboy hat back on his head and turned to fully face her. "You think about it and let me know what you decide."

"Yes, sir. I will."

"Good." He extended a hand and gave her a crooked grin. "Now, I believe I promised those boys I'd see you back to the ranch house. May'll have dinner ready shortly and she gets fit to be tied if we ain't all there on time."



## Chapter Six

Trey followed Lena up the stairs with Brit taking the lead, his gaze locked on the sway of her sexy ass the whole time. He bit back a smile when Brit stopped outside the closed door of his room only to have Lena walk past him.

“Where do you think you’re going, darlin’?”

Lena hesitated with her hand on the doorknob of the room she’d been staying in and glanced at Brit. “I need to change and do a couple of things. I’ll just be a few minutes.”

Trey moved next to Brit, exchanging a look with his friend as they both leaned

a shoulder against opposite walls of the hall, folded their arms, and waited.

Lena expelled a quick burst of breathy laughter. “Really, guys? You’re going to stand there and wait for me?”

“Do what you’ve got to do, sugar,” Trey told her. “We’ll be right out here when you’re finished.”

She rolled her eyes, shook her head, and disappeared into the bedroom.

“One,” Trey muttered softly and Brit chuckled. “Two. Three.” He count the seconds and didn’t make it to five before she poked her head out the doorway, confusion and suspicion alight on her angelic face.

“Where are my things?”

“You mean they’re not in there?”

Brit's drawl sounded as innocent as it could be.

Trey stifled a chuckle.

Her gaze slid from Brit to Trey and back again, her beautiful eyes narrowing. "Why am I getting the feeling you had something to do with this, cowboy?"

It was the same question Brit had asked her that morning when he'd discovered his exercise equipment had gone missing. Obliging, Brit gave her the same questioning answer. "Good instincts?"

Her eyes closed briefly as her shoulders rose and fell in a slow sigh. Slowly nodding her head, she walked

back into the hallway. “All right. You got me back. Now, where are my things?”

“What happened to the please?” Brit teased her. “I damn sure gave you enough of them this morning.”

“Please.”

Brit pushed himself off the doorframe, twisted the knob on his door, and shoved it open. “They might be in there, but I’m not making any promises.”

Her luscious mouth worked as if she were chewing on a retort, but she didn’t bother to say it. Shooting another glance at Trey, she walked into Brit’s room.

Trey followed his friend inside, hooked his thumbs in the front pockets of his jeans when he stopped, and lifted a

brow. “Something wrong, sugar?”

She turned a small circle at the foot of Brit’s bed, then faced him and planted her fisted hands on her slender hips. “Should I look in the closet or under the bed?”

“You can,” Trey said. “Or you can save us all some time and strip.”

“That was my intention. Except, seeing as how the two of you have done something with the bag I brought, I don’t have my nightgown.”

Trey remembered her cock-teasing nightgown all too well. “Sugar, if that thing you were wearing last night is what you’re looking for, you might as well give up. I could see straight through it.

So could Trent and Bobby, though they were gentlemen enough not to stare.”

Her cheeks turned a beautiful shade of red at that. She shot a pointed glance down her front and shrugged. “Then I guess I’ll be sleeping in my clothes tonight.”

“Guess again, darlin’,” Brit drawled. “You’ll be taking those off for us now.”

She stared at both of them and didn’t move a muscle. Trey could all but see the wheels turning in her gorgeous head. “I’ve already stripped for you once today. I believe it’s your turn.”

Trey saw the muscle in Brit’s jaw jump once. He knew the man wasn’t getting angry with her, but there was only so much defiance Brit would take

from his woman before he resorted to discipline.

“Do you remember what I told you in the pond, sugar?”

She swallowed visibly. “I remember.”

Trey nodded once. “And you told me you understood what would happen tonight, what we would expect of you, and that you would obey without question.”

“I’m not questioning anything. I’m simply stating a point. I stripped for both you outside the pond. You stripped for me before you joined me. He chose not to get in the water even though the swim had been his idea in the first place.”

Damn, he loved her spirit. She would

do what they'd told her to do. He didn't doubt that, but he found himself enjoying her little show of disobedience. She'd submit in bed, but she wouldn't let anyone run her life.

“She's got a point, man,” he told Brit and bit back a grin at the ammo that shot out of the man's eyes when he looked at him.

“Meet me halfway on this one,” Lena cajoled. “Something tells me you're not going to be a good boy in this room tonight and I may not get a chance to look my fill once the two of you get your hands on me.”

She definitely had a point there. Trey had no intentions of blindfolding her tonight, but he did plan to make her feel



pleasures that would turn her sight hazy and cloud her mind with sheer ecstasy.

Brit wordlessly moved to the foot of the bed and sat to take off his shoes. When he reached for the tennis shoe on his right foot, Lena's hands fell to her sides and she took a step closer to him.

“Do you need some help?”

Brit pinned her with a look Trey had seen on the man's face plenty of times. It was the look he gave women when they engaged in playtime at the club, one that generally had any sub's gaze falling to the floor. “Back up, fold your hands in front of you, and look your fill.”

A flicker of surprise moved through her face, almost immediately washed

away by a wave of vixen anticipation. She obeyed, her attention focused on Brit as the man pulled off his shoes, then stood and stripped himself naked.

“Is that what you wanted, Lena?”

\* \* \* \*

Yes. Sweet mother of God, it was exactly what she wanted, every hard toned, deeply tanned, magnificently large inch of him.

Unable to find her voice, Lena nodded as her gaze dropped to his feet and slowly climbed back up. She drank in his body like a beverage that was too hot to guzzle down. Her hands tingled to touch, her mouth watered to taste, and

her pussy grew drenched with need.

“What are you doing?”

She froze, her gaze shooting up to lock with his when she realized she'd moved from where he'd told her to stand. She licked her lips as her heart pounded, wicked desires shimmering through her veins. “I want to taste you.”

“I suppose you think I owe you that, too, seeing as how I got my taste of you by the pond?”

Well, when he put it that way... “Come to think of it, yes.”

“Think again, darlin'. When I'm ready to shove my dick in your hot little mouth, I'll tell you.”

Disappointment made her frown, but

she decided not to argue. She'd likely get her way in any case. Letting him chose the moment would be more exciting anyway. She shifted her attention to Trey. "Your turn, lemon drop."

Trey held her gaze, his eyes flashing with a warning he didn't put to voice. Without show or design, he pulled off his clothes and tossed them to the floor.

Though she'd seen him naked mere hours ago, that memory did absolutely nothing to prevent the effect from totally devastating her system. In a word, he was gorgeous! They both were. Long and lean and muscular and so damn sexy everything inside her kicked into a mosh pit of lusty needs and unspeakable

wants.

Comfortable with his body, Trey stood there and let her stare until she was on the verge of panting, drooling, or begging. Hell, she figured it would be long before he and Brit would have her doing all three.

“Problem, sugar?” Trey’s lips quirked, mischief lighting his face as he cocked a brow and studied her.

Pure arrogance. God, she loved that in a man.

*Liked*, she quickly corrected herself. She liked arrogance in a man. No way could she allow herself to think any other “L” word when she looked at him or Brit.

“A couple of very big ones,” she admitted and let her gaze lock on his cock. Her cheeks heated, but she forced herself to continue. “You told me in the pond that both of you were going to make love to me at the same time tonight.”

“I told you that after you told me it’s what you want,” he reminded her.

She nodded, gulped, and shot a glance at Brit’s cock before meeting Trey’s gaze. “I did.” She couldn’t deny it, any more than she could deny the burning in her body to experience being with two men at once. “I just...”

“Spit it out, darlin’.” Brit’s order was equal parts commanding and gentle and

gave her the courage to go on.

“Will you both fit?” She’d had Trey inside her pussy, but not Brit. Trey’s cock alone was a thick wedge of supreme hardness that had stretched her pussy beyond her imagination. She’d had her fingers around Brit’s cock last night and had marveled at how she’d barely been able to make a fist around his shaft, let alone how gloriously long it had been.

She half expected them to laugh at her. She never expected Trey to close the distance between them and pull her into his arms.

“We’ll fit and you’ll love it. It’s our job to make sure you do.” He kissed the tip of her nose, lingered there for a long

moment, and then released her, taking a step back. “Strip.”

That command left no room for argument and she didn't bother to try. She removed her clothes with hands that shook, all the while tamping down the urge to fidget. It was far different than when she'd taken off her clothes for them by the pond. This time, she knew exactly what was in store for her. Well, not *exactly*, but she had a good enough idea that it sent her system into a riot of dark desires and wicked trepidation.

Though she was as comfortable with her body as Trey and Brit seemed to be, she found it harder to stand there while their heated gazes raked her naked flesh.



She wanted to squirm as her entire body flamed. She wanted to close her eyes so she wouldn't see them looking at her. She'd done this before, not with two men, but one. She'd been embarrassed then, too, but she didn't remember being this insanely horny.

“Finger your pussy.”

Her gaze snapped to Brit's and a retort started to roll from her lips before she stopped to think. “Isn't that—”

“I gave you an order, Lena.”

Her head spun and her pulse hastened even as Brit's harsh tone sent whips of wicked need slashing across her breasts, pussy, and ass. She took a deep breath, slipped a finger between her sodden folds, and closed her eyes.

“Eyes open, sugar,” Trey told her. “We want to see the pleasure you’re giving yourself.”

Pretending she was alone in her bed with her legs spread and eyes closed as she fantasized about being touched, she opened her eyes, met Trey’s gaze, and fingered her pussy.

“Damn, that’s fucking beautiful.”

Something about the approval in Trey’s rusty tone coupled with the look in his green eyes calmed her nerves. She got into it, delving her finger deep in her sodden channel, using the pad of her hand to apply pressure to her throbbing clit.

“Stop.” Brit softened the order when

her fingers obediently stilled in her pussy. “That’s enough for now, darlin’.”

Like hell it was. She wanted to give out an order of her own and demand one of them touch her. Her nipples throbbed, begging to be sucked and pinched. Her clit pleaded for more pressure. Her pussy screamed to be filled. But, instead of making any of that known, she eased her finger from her pussy and brought her hand to hang at her side.

Trey retraced his earlier steps, drawing her into his arms once more. He hooked a finger beneath her chin, lifting her face and forcing her to meet his gaze. “I’m going to ask you something and I want complete honesty. Do you understand?”

She melted against him, absorbing the heat of his solid body against her more pliant curves, loving the way she fit so perfectly against him. “Yes.”

“You follow our orders well.” His expression softened with the pleasure she heard in his tone. “You have a defiant streak, but we like that in a woman.”

Lena couldn't help but smile at that.

“Submitting comes naturally to some women, but many have to be trained to obey their men.”

Her smile faded and, though she couldn't turn her head because he continued to hold her chin, she averted her gaze, fearing the impending question.

“Have you been trained, Lena?”

No, she wouldn't answer that. She couldn't. She didn't want to talk about that right now. “It's coming naturally.”

Brit moved in behind her, laced his fingers in the hairs at her nape, and tugged her chin out of Trey's hand as he turned her head toward him. “Look at me.”

She swallowed, opened her eyes, and found herself staring into a darkened pool of lust and more tenderness than she'd witnessed in his eyes before.

“You're fibbing again.” Though his tone held a gentleness, she didn't miss the outlining warning. “Don't do that now. Not about this.”

“Yes, I’ve been trained some.” Her heart ached at the admission even as he pounded rapid-fire against her breastbone.

Brit released her hair and his fingers danced over her nape to her shoulder.

“Did he hurt you?”

Trey’s question drew her attention back to him. “What do you mean?”

A bolt of amusement shot through his eyes. “Did he hurt you in ways you didn’t enjoy?”

“No.” She said the words without hesitation, but that didn’t stop the cloud of disbelief from darkening Trey’s handsome face. “I enjoyed everything he did to me for the short time we were

together.”

Brit's body stiffened behind her. “Are you still in love with this guy?”

Lena felt herself smile. “I was never in love with him to start with. Now, can we please drop this conversation and move on. I'm concerned I'm not going to be able to handle two men at once. I know I can't do it if I have a third shadow looming over me.”

She could tell by the look on Trey's face that he didn't want to let the subject go. He stared at her for so long she started to fear he might push it. Then he finally nodded once, his gaze shifted to meet Brit's over her head, and he jerked his head toward the bed.

The comfort and warmth of Brit's

body left her and she shivered in Trey's embrace as Brit moved away.

Trey kissed her forehead. "You belong to us now."

She did? Her eyes widened as she stared at him, the predatory possession in their depths causing her juices to flow faster even as her heart stilled. Surely he hadn't meant it the way it had sounded, as if she belonged to them for more than just tonight.

"Whoever you've been with in the past doesn't matter tonight."

There was the word she'd been waiting for. Tonight. Yes, okay, they were all on the same page.

He laced his fingers in the side of her



hair and cupped her cheek in his large palm. “Put all that out of your pretty little head and let us pleasure you tonight. Do you understand?”

She nodded and then, remembering how he always insisted she speak aloud, said, “I understand.”

The smile that stretched his kissable lips gleamed with satisfaction. “Good. Crawl on your hands and knees onto the bed. Brit’s waiting for you.”

Trey released her and she turned to find Brit stretched out in the center of his bed, his arms relaxed at his sides, and his delicious-looking cock laying thick and hard against his abdomen, the head reaching his navel.

Her knees wobbled as she moved to

the foot of the bed, her attention locked on Brit's cock like a homing beacon. She climbed onto the end of the bed, spreading her legs on either side of Brit's as she crawled on her hands and knees up his body. She stopped at his thighs, met his heated gaze, and slid a hand beneath his cock, lifting its heavy weight off his stomach. A bead of precum glistened in the slit of his cockhead, beckoning her to taste. She licked her lips, started to lower her head, and froze when he ordered her to stop.

“Unless you want me to tie your hands behind your back, you'll want to let go of my cock, darlin'.”

Lena huffed a breath, frowned, and

eased his cock back down to rest on his stomach.

He laced his fingers behind his head and cocked a brow at her. “Keep coming.”

She crawled closer, until her knees were on either side of his hips, then he gave her another command to stop.

He stared up at her, his gaze studying her face for a long moment before he spoke. “Did I tell you to suck my cock, darlin’?”

“No, s—”

He made a considering face as his lips stretched in a pleased grin. “Don’t stop yourself on that one, sweet thing. Sir works just fine for me, though Trey and I weren’t gonna require that of you just

yet.”

“I want to taste you.” She couldn’t remember ever wanting a cock in her mouth so badly. Her taste buds were zinging off the charts. Her mouth watered so profusely she had to keep swallowing to prevent it from filling.

“Not this time, darlin’.” He finally touched her. His hands closed beneath her dangling breasts, squeezed, and his thumbs raked over her hardened nipples. He lifted his head, used his hold on her breasts to pull her down, and gave one nipple a quick, pressured bite before licking away the sting.

Lena threw her head back as he gave her other breast the same treatment, the

pleasure-laced pain of the bites igniting a flaming path of pulsing need that traveled straight to her cunt. She lowered her hips, felt her folds glide over his shaft, and attempted to position her pussy in a way that would allow her to draw his cock inside her. The next bite coupled with the pinch on her other nipple drew a small scream from her throat even as juices coated her folds.

“Are you determined to make me punish you, Lena?”

“No, sir.” The shock of pain left a throbbing need in its wake that made her clit pulse in a begging unison with her nipples. “Please. If I can’t taste you, then let me feel you, Brit.”

Behind her, the bed shifted as Trey’s

hands closed over the cheeks of her ass. “Word that request correctly, sugar, and he might give it to you.”

Word the request correctly? For a moment, she didn't understand. Trey's hands massaged her ass, surprisingly in the same rhythm Brit's hands massaged her breasts. The double manipulation to two of her most sensitive areas made it difficult for her to think.

“Ask me for what you want, darlin’.”

She wanted so much she wasn't sure where to begin. Their touches electrified every erogenous zone in her body, short-circuited her mind, and awakened nerve endings she hadn't known she possessed. Trey made it worse when he pushed a

finger between her ass cheeks and pressed the tip against her anus.

“Oh, God.” She bowed her head as the pressure spread to mount in her womb. “Please.”

Trey massaged her anus, but didn't attempt to enter the forbidden hole. “Has anyone ever fucked you here, sugar?”

She shook her head as her ass trembled with anticipation. Mark had focused on teaching her to obey his commands by taking her to the teetering line between pleasure and pain, but their time together had been stolen before they'd made it to anal play. “No, sir.”

Brit's thumbs and forefingers latched onto her nipples, tugging and pinching and sending more bolts of electrified

needs ricocheting from her breasts, to her pussy, to her ass.

“I like hearing that.” Trey’s finger retreated and his callused palms caressed her cheeks. “I like knowing I’ll be the first to sink my cock in your virgin ass.”

Brit released one nipple, slid the hand up to cup her nape, and pulled her head down. His breath fanned her lips when he spoke, adding more fuel to the already raging fire in her system. “Trey will make sure that tight hole is nice and stretched before he fucks it, darlin’.”

She made a sound that might have been a whimper or a plea. Whatever it was got lost in Brit’s mouth as he kissed her.



He drove his tongue into her mouth, immediately assuming control and taking her breath away. One of Trey's hands left her ass and she thought she heard a soft click. Then the hand was back, the finger slipping between her cheeks again, this time bringing with it a cooling sensation.

“Think about it, sugar.” Trey's finger eased inside her ass a fraction of an inch.

Lena felt her muscles squeeze around his fingertip of their own accord. The alien sensation ignited a bittersweet burn that traveled straight to her flaming pussy.

“Imagine how it will feel when you have my cock in your tight ass and Brit's

dick in your hot pussy at the same time.”

Dear God, she wanted that. She wanted to be held helpless between them, completely under their control as they filled her with their cocks and fucked her until she didn't even know her own name. Her pussy was so wet she felt juices drip from between her folds to land on Brit's cock. She couldn't take it. The torment, the images in her mind their words had created, the feel of Trey's finger working its way deeper and deeper into her ass, was too much.

She dared to wrench her mouth from Brit's, her breath so ragged she feared she wouldn't be able to speak. “Please,

Brit. Will you please let me feel your cock in my pussy?”

Satisfaction sparked in his eyes as he moved one hand to her hip and pushed the other between their bodies.

Trey pulled his finger from her ass and she nearly protested before Brit stole her senses.

“Yes, ma’am.” He used his hold on her hip to pull her body down, impaling her with the full marvelously thick length of his cock.

The sound that left her throat was one she’d never before heard herself make as her body stretched to accommodate the size of his dick. He filled her, deeply and completely, reaching a part of her she didn’t want to think about as he

stopped with his cock buried balls deep in her pussy.

“Christ, Lena, look at me.”

She opened eyes she hadn't realized she'd closed and gaze down at him. His lips were drawn tight, intense concentration and arousal turning his eyes a fathomless shade of brown.

“I wasn't thinking, sweet thing.” Guilt moved through his handsome face and the muscle in his jaw twitched. “Trey didn't use a condom with you in the pond. I don't have one on now, darlin'. It's a little too late I guess, but should I get one? I'm clean. I can even produce papers if you want them.”

Lena didn't know where she found the

strength when every molecule of her being was focused on getting him to move his glorious cock inside her, but she laughed. “It’s okay. I’m on the pill and I believe you when you tell me you’re clean.”

Maybe she was stupid, but she trusted them without proof. She wanted to feel him inside her as she’d felt Trey today in the pond, with nothing blocking the spectacular sensations of his cock sliding in and out of her pussy.

Brit’s lips tilted in a cocky grin as he released her hip and laced his fingers behind his head once more. “Then by all means, sweet thing. Ride me.”

She blinked at him, surprised he was actually going to let her assume control.

She flattened her hands on his chest, loving the way his muscles flexed beneath her palms, and started to ride.

“Slow down, darlin’.”

She shook her head, slammed her eyes shut, and increased her tempo, lifting her body up and slamming it back down on his cock in a rapid succession that had her galloping straight to the edges orgasm land.

“Lena.”

Brit made her name a warning, but she didn’t listen. Her body demanded hard and fast and he’d been the stupid one to relinquish control.

“Feels. Too. Good. Can’t. Stop.” It felt so good each word she spoke came

out sounding like its own sentence.

“Let me help you with that.”

She dimly heard Trey’s words before the cool sensation returned to her anus. The bittersweet pain was more intense this time, ceasing control of her muscles, and stealing her sanity. She froze as the nerve-laden tissue of her ass sucked in the object he eased inside her. Not his finger. Her sex-crazed mind realized that through the fog clouding her thoughts. It was something else, something denser and less giving, but not as thick or as long as his cock.

“Trey.” His name left her on a mewling cry as her ass erupted in a fit of pain-laced ecstasy that intensified her body’s awareness of Brit’s cock in her

pussy and emphasized the pleasure.

“Shush,” his rusty tone softened as he gently caressed her ass. “Let it feel good, sugar. Concentrate on the pleasure. Let it override the pain.”

His instructions helped. The bittersweet pain exploded through her ass, but it was almost immediately dulled by a pleasure that rocked in with a mind-numbing bliss.

“That’s it, darlin’.” Brit’s tone had lost all evidence of the lazy drawl she was used to hearing. “Just relax.”

Her muscles gave only a little, leaving a trace of stinging discomfort as Trey worked the object inside as deep as he could reach.



“Fuck, that’s amazing.” Trey growled. “Your ass is sucking it inside. I can’t wait to feel it do that to my cock.” He spread more lube on her rear, worked it into her anus, and then backed the object out again.

“Please, no.” Her pussy flamed, the pressure in her womb morphing to an orgasm that held steady and firm and just beyond release. It kept her mindless and wanting more. “Don’t stop.”

Brit chuckled and lifted his head nip her chin. “He isn’t done, sweet thing.”

“I’m going to fuck you with it while Brit fucks your pussy. Is that what you want, sugar?”

“Yes. No.” She moaned as he pushed

the object into her ass again. “I don’t know.” Despite the rapturous feeling, a trickle of fear slipped through. Whatever he’d inserted in her wasn’t his cock, nor was it as large. Her body burned to experience the wonder of his cock inside her ass at the same time Brit’s filled her pussy, but she feared the bittersweet part would get overcome by tremendous pain if it happened.

“It’s okay to be confused, sugar.” He wriggled the object in her ass, stroking the sensitized walls of her anus, stretching her further and magnifying her chaotic thoughts. “I know what you want, but your tight ass isn’t ready for it yet. What you feel inside you right now is a butt plug. It will help to stretch your

muscles and prepare you to take my cock inside you when it's time. I'll fuck you with it now while Brit finishes with your pussy. Then I'm going to leave it inside you for a few hours."

Her thoughts circled around that statement, but stopped when Brit's hands closed on her hips and he started to move. He knew exactly how to control her movements to deliver optimal pleasure. Using his hold on her hips, he held her with his cock buried deep in her pussy and pulled her body forward, then rocked it back, grinding her clit on the base of his groin as he stroked her channel. Trey mirrored the rhythm Brit set, working and wiggling the plug in her

ass until pleasure, unlike any she ever felt before, ripped through her, destroying her common sense.

She felt impossibly full with the plug in her ass and Brit's cock in her pussy. No amount of rational thought could survive a monumental rise to the peak of Orgasmic Mountain like this. Brit lifted her body, thrusting his hips up to ram his cock in her pussy at the same time Trey pistoned the plug in her ass, and she started to come undone.

“Are you about to come, sugar?”

Trey's question sliced through the sexual bliss in her mind and her eyes flew open. Quick, she better ask quickly or they would stop. “Please. Can I please come?”

“That’s our girl,” Brit said through clenched teeth. “Yes, baby. Come for me now. I want to feel your juices bath my cock. I want to feel every muscle in your body tighten and shake. Scream for me, Lena. Let us know how good it feels.”

They increased their rhythm in unison, sending her straight over the edge. A soft scream left her throat as electricity sparked, exploded, and sizzled through her head with a dazzling display of color as pleasure tore through her system and spilled out of her.

Somewhere in the sated recesses of her body, she felt Brit’s cock ease out of her pussy as Trey’s body settled behind her. His hands flattened on the backs of

her shoulders and skimmed down her flesh in a loving caress.

“You aren’t going to sleep on me, are you, sugar?”

She’d collapsed on Brit’s chest, her ass high in the air, her heart hammering, and breaths coming in ragged spurts. She’d closed her eyes, too, and knew, if she was given another nanosecond, she’d fall into a deep sleep.

She forced her eyes open, surprised by the growing sizzle in her pussy at the feel of Trey’s touch. “I don’t want to, but I’m not sure my body is going to give me much choice.”

“Your body doesn’t get to make the choices tonight, Lena.” One of Trey’s hands moved to her hip and she felt the

other one between her legs. The backs of his fingers grazed her inner thigh as he positioned his cockhead against her drenched opening. “We’ll tell your body what it can and can’t do.”

Without giving a chance to comment, he rammed his cock into her pussy and immediately sent her system climbing right back up the truly blissful mountain.

# Chapter Seven

Awareness brought Brit from sleep in a finger's snap. He didn't move a muscle as he listened harder for the sound he thought he'd heard. His extensive training as a SEAL and years of experience in the field brought all his senses online. He saw darkness, which he'd expected, seeing as how he hadn't yet opened his eyes. He was laying on something soft. His mind catalogued that right along with the warm temperature of the air. He felt a presence beside him, heard the soft sound of breathing. Okay, so the body was alive. That was good. No screaming, he realized next. That



was also good. It meant he wasn't having another episode. More soft sounds drifted to him and he opened his eyes to slits. He battled the smile that wanted to form on his lips as Lena moved through that small line of sight.

The full world of reality came to him as he opened his eyes fully and pushed himself up. He was in his bedroom and that was Trey still sleeping beside him, and the woman he loved was...

“What are you doing?” His voice sounded gruff from his recent sleep, even to his own ears. She startled at the sound of it, her surprised movement helping his mind to push away the thought that had fluttered through it just before he'd spoken.

The woman he loved? Oh, hell, no. That was definitely something he didn't want to ponder this early in the damn morning.

Her gaze flicked to Trey's sleeping form and she whispered, "Getting dressed."

Indeed she was. Damn it. Next to him, Trey's breathing rhythm changed, letting Brit know he wasn't asleep. Brit studied the shapely moon of her gorgeous ass as she bent over and pulled something from the floor. "I see you found your things."

She shot him a grin that didn't hold as much of the dazzle as he'd gotten used to as she straightened. "I guessed you would've put it in the closet."

“Well, good. Now that you know where they are, you can crawl back in bed.” His cock, already semi-hard with a morning woody, sprang to full attention as his attention locked on her pert breasts. His dick sighed in disappointment a nanosecond later when she covered those pert breasts with a bra.

“No can do, cowboy.” She bent at the waist again and came back up with a shirt. “It’s Monday. Horace might let the two of you get away with taking another day off, but my other clients won’t. I have appointments to keep.” Her gaze flicked to the clock on the bedside table. “As a matter of fact, I have one in two

hours. It'll take me nearly that long to get back to the city.”

Trey sat up next to him, raked a hand down his face, and stretched. “When are you coming back?”

Her bottom lip disappeared thoughtfully between her teeth as she bent again. The more she did that, the more Brit had to restrain himself from leaping out of the bed, grabbing her from behind, and sinking his cock in her lovely pussy. She was wet. He could see a thin coating of juices on her feminine lips as her ass pointed to the ceiling. He doubted she realized the stupendous view she was giving them and he damn well didn't see the need to point it out.

She held a pair of barely there panties

between her hands as she straightened again, turned them when she found the tiny tag, and lifted one foot into the leg hole. "I'm not exactly sure."

Brit exchanged a glance with Trey. Was it just him, or was there really something different about her this morning? Sure, she was carrying on the conversation just fine and, though she wasn't wasting a second in getting dressed, she wasn't rushing as if she were about to bolt for the door either. Still, he sensed something in the air, saw something in her eyes when she dared to look at him and Trey, and felt the churning in his gut that told him something was definitely off.

“You’re not exactly sure?” Trey repeated slowly. “Why not?”

She shot him a teasing smile. “Because I’m not a walking datebook, lemon drop.” A skirt rose to cover her hips and those cock-torturing lace thongs she’d put on beneath and Brit felt himself start to pout. “I have other appointments this week, but I don’t remember what days I’ve scheduled them.”

“You’ll call when you get to your datebook, then?” Brit purposely put a questioning inflection in his tone, though he really wanted to make it an order. “That way I’ll know when you can pencil me in for another session.” That

was an inspired idea, he decided. He was, after all, supposed to be one of her clients. He didn't care for the uncertainty that passed through her eyes when she looked at him.

“How did you sleep last night?”

“Better than I have in months.” It was true. It might have been the wee hours of the morning before any of them had fallen asleep, but he felt completely rested, fully energized, and ready for a repeat of last night.

Her smile turned warm and pleased. “You're making excellent progress. And, yes, I'll call when I can schedule us another session.” Fully dressed now but for her shoes, she climbed onto the foot of the bed on her knees and crawled

between them. She touched them both, a delicate hand to one side of their faces. “Thank you, both of you, for last night. It was amazing.” She leaned into Brit first, brushed a kiss to his lips, and then did the same to Trey’s. “Now I’m off. I’ll swing by the kitchen and say good-bye to May on my way out. Please tell Horace I’ll see him soon. I’m sure he’s out on the ranch by now.”

And with that, she gathered up the rest of her things, slipped her feet into a pair of heels, and swayed her sexy ass straight out the door, closing it behind her.

Brit didn’t know how long he sat there staring at that closed door before Trey



broke the silence.

“What do you make of that?”

“She’s lying.” He couldn’t quite peg which part of what she’d said had been a lie, but his gut told him not everything had been the truth.

“Thought she fibbed, not lied.”

Brit shot him a withering look. “Really, man? It’s the same damn thing.”

“Doesn’t mean I can’t give you hell about it.” Trey swung his legs over his side of the bed and got to his feet. “What are we going to do, just let her go?”

“For now.” Brit looked back at the door as he leaned against the headboard and laced his fingers behind his head. “We’ll give her a bit of space, see how long it takes her to get in touch, and go

from there.”

Trey pulled on his jeans and sat down on the edge of the bed to put on his boots. “She refused to talk payment with Horace yesterday, told him she wouldn’t take his money seeing as how the relationship between the two of you hasn’t exactly been the normal counselor-client kind of thing.”

Brit lifted a brow at Trey’s back. “She tell you that or Horace?”

“Horace, while you were up here hiding her things.”

Brit mulled over that for a long moment. “I’m not too sure what to make of that.”

“I’ll tell you what I made of it.” Trey

snagged his shirt off the floor and turned to face him as he pulled it over his head. “Taking money for sleeping with you would’ve made her feel like a prostitute.”

Brit scratched his chin as he considered that. “Makes sense, I guess.” His gut twisted as another possibility occurred to him. “She could be planning on dropping me.”

“And you’d be worried she might drop you as a client or a lover?” Trey’s movements turned slightly jerky as he tucked his shirt in his jeans and buttoned and zipped his fly. “We broke some serious rules with that woman last night. We like for the subs we go for to have some spunk and defiance. Hell, it makes

the whole game-play more fun. What we did last night was let her have her way far too much. That isn't like us and you damn well know it.”

Brit cocked his head and studied the man who had been his best friend for nearly half his life. “You’re wanting me to be the one to say it, aren’t you? You want me to spell out the reason so you don’t have to.”

“Fuck, I’ll say it then. I’m already Stetson over cowboy boots in love with that woman. Don’t ask me fucking how after a damn weekend with her, but she’s the one I want, and I’m damn sure not going to let her get away.”

“Even if I tell you I’m not looking to

settle down with her?”

Trey's glare turned hard and a dart of suspicion shot through his eyes. “Yeah, even if.”

Brit snorted and crawled out of bed. “Well, hell. It's about damn time you did something without worrying about me.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“It means,” Brit drawled as he turned to face his friend, “that you're finally realizing after all these damn years that you can cut it without me. I ain't stupid, Trey. I know what's been eating at you since that damn op. Everybody else on this blasted ranch has been so worried about me they ain't bothered to take a good look at you. You've been beating

yourself up for following my order. I fucking told you to hold Bravo's coordinates. I didn't get cocky thinking Alpha could take that group of tangos and not blow the mission. We could've done it. The whole goatfuck was that kid that none of us saw until it was too late. Even then, if I'd given the order to silence that boy, we wouldn't be hashing out all this shit now."

"No, we'd be hashing out different shit because your conscience would be eating you to death just like it was doing over Snake and Cheez-It's deaths before Lena came to the ranch."

"Probably." Brit slowly nodded. "The point is you did what you were trained

to do same as me. You didn't fail me or whatever fucking insane shit's been going through your whacked head since we got back. I might've bought you a couple loaves of bread and talked Horace and Hank into taking you in, too, but you don't owe me shit, Trey. I did it because we were brothers, same as we've been since. You're a SEAL because you've got what it takes. Not because I bought or talked your way into the damn teams. Whether or not I go back is irrelevant to your place with Team Five. You're still gonna be Lieutenant Junior Grade Trey Berke, with or without me in the Navy."

Trey stared at him for a long moment, his eyes and expression hard, his

shoulders rising and falling in heavy, rapid breaths. “Did you ever stop to think maybe it’s been eating away at me because we were brothers, just like you said? Being a SEAL is a part of you, just as much as it is me.”

“I’m going back.” His statement calmed the heated atmosphere that had started to blanket the room. “I likely won’t be with Team Five much longer, but I’ll still be a SEAL.”

Trey’s brows etched together. “You thinking of requesting a transfer?”

“Naw.” Brit rubbed the back of his neck, stalling before he put voice to the decision he’d come to. Once he said the words, he’d feel like he’d written them



in stone. He knew himself well enough to realize that. “I’m leaving enlisted, making the leap to officer.”

Trey raked a hand over his head and puffed out a hard breath. “You’ll still be in the field awhile before they shove you behind a desk. You sure you want to go that route, man?”

Brit shot a pointed glance at his leg. “The knee feels better and better every day, but it ain’t ever gonna be like it was before. You know as well as I do I shaved years off my career in the field the second I fucked it up. I figure I’ll go through officer’s school and training, maybe focus on Dive Supervisor or, hell, Sniper would be cool as shit.”

Trey slowly nodded. “You’d be good

at either one.”

“I’ll tell you something I ain’t good at.” Brit moved to the closet, pulled out a pair of cargo shorts, and slid them on. “Letting you have a fantastic woman like Lena to yourself.”

Trey barked a laugh. “I knew that would never happen.”

“Damn right it won’t. I ain’t wore a cowboy hat in a while even if the woman’s taken to calling me cowboy now and then.”

“Better than lemon drop,” Trey muttered.

Brit snorted. “Point is, that shit you spouted out earlier about Stetsons and boots fits me, too. I’m crazy about her.

We'll give her a little time, but there ain't no way in hell we're gonna let her get away."

\* \* \* \*

The margarita the Spanish waitress served Lena looked big enough to offer a smashing hangover to a person that rarely drank. She thanked the waitress, pulled the enormous glass closer, and leaned over to take a sip rather than lifting the big thing to her mouth. She eased back, felt the liquid slide down her chin, and reached for her napkin. That's when she saw the way her father and Barbara were looking at her.

She felt her eyes widen as she wiped

the drizzle away. “Sorry. Did I slurp? It’s so big. I was afraid, if I picked it up, I would spill it.”

Barbara smiled and her margarita closer. “That’s why I use a straw.”

Lena frowned at her drink. “But then you can’t get to the salt around the rim.”

“Ah, but watch this.” Barbara pulled her straw from her drink and buried the wet tip in one side of a salt-covered saucer. Then she put her straw back in her drink, took another sip, and smacked her lips. “Works like a charm.”

Lena laughed. “I wondered why you asked for a saucer of margarita salt. Now I know.” She unwrapped a straw and did as Barbara had shown her.

Her father propped his elbows on the table and studied her. “Are we celebrating something Barbara and I don’t know about?”

“Not that I know of. Why?”

Her father shook his head. “I was just wondering. We rarely see you drink unless it’s a special occasion.”

Lena held up a finger. “Come to think of it, this lunch could be considered a special occasion. Not only is Barbara joining us for our weekly Friday date, but you brought me to a Mexican restaurant instead of holding me to the Thai food promise I made you when I missed last week.”

He chuckled. “Okay. I guess I’ll buy

that. So, are you headed to Rescue Ranch for the weekend again?”

“No.” Lena abandoned her drink and reached for the menu. “I think I’ll try something different today. I always get the same thing, chicken chimichangas with Spanish rice and a mountain of refried beans.” She chewed her bottom lip as she pretended to study the menu, purposely attempting to evade any questions about her time on Rescue Ranch. “Maybe I’ll try the fajitas.” She looked at Barbara. “That’s what you always get, isn’t it?”

“You fell in love with them.”

Lena blinked at Barbara’s statement, noting the swirl of knowledge and happiness in her step-mother’s eyes. She

pretended not to know what the woman was talking about. “I haven’t had them before. How could I have fallen in love with them?”

Barbara’s lips stretched. “Oh, you had them, and now they’ve got you scared.”

Realizing she wasn’t going to be able to pull one over on her step-mother, Lena straightened and sighed. “I’m not scared. I’m just...taking a step back to reevaluate the situation.”

She was giving herself time to calm down, to sort out the feelings and sensations Trey and Brit had awakened in her, to realize what they’d shared had only been sex, before she dared to talk to them again.

“You’re letting what happened to Mark shy you away from a relationship with this...these men,” Barbara told her, quickly correcting herself.

Sometimes, Lena really hated the fact that the counselor who’d helped her through her grief had married her father. “That’s not what’s happening. However, I will give you this. I’m letting that experience keep me from making a mistake with Trey and Brit. A Navy SEAL is the last kind of career I want my husband to have, let alone both...of...them.” The look on her father’s face had her dragging out the last of her sentence. “What are you smirking about?”



“I’m just wondering if you’re hearing yourself. Husband? Better yet, husbands?”

Her cheeks flamed. Dear God, was that really what she’d said?

Barbara was grinning like a loon. “I repeat, you fell in love with them.”

“I did not...I couldn’t have...I was only with them for a weekend,” Lena finally managed to spit out. “You can’t fall in love with someone in two and half days. It breaks all the rules of the heart, not to mention the head.”

“Honey.” Her father stretched an arm across the table, covering her hand with his. “There are no rules governing the heart and the only ones over your head

are the ones you put in power.”

Lena closed her eyes and sighed. “I knew before I ever went to that ranch I was getting in over my head. Why didn’t I listen?”

“Because you took one look at the first guy...Which one was it? Trey, right? And your heart knew even if your mind didn’t want to admit it,” Barbara said, her tone full of compassion. “And you can’t tell me there’s no such thing as love at first sight. Not when I know in my own heart there is.”

Lena opened her eyes to find her step-mother and father staring at one another with their hearts in their eyes. She remembered the moment Trey had walked into Kelly’s Diner, the way her

senses had exploded at the sight of him, and the way they'd done the same when she'd first seen Brit. Lust didn't equal love, but time spent together could certainly turn it that way.

She pulled her drink back in front of her and stared into the glass, not seeing the pale green beverage, but a table surrounded by men, boys, and two women talking and laughing through dinner. She saw Brit's handsome face, the muscle in his jaw ticking as he struggled to keep his anger in check when she'd asked the boys to hide his exercise equipment. She saw Trey's green eyes darken with arousal and promises when he'd pinned her to the

wall that first day. She saw both of them smiling at her as they took her on a tour of the ranch and the amusement that had danced in their expressions as they'd waited in the hallway for her to realize they'd taken her things.

They may not have shared many memories in those two and a half days, but she'd never forget the ones they had made. And she'd never stop longing to make more.

Knowing she was toast, she drank her margarita and resigned herself to the fact that she couldn't avoid what she felt in heart another day. It was time to face the facts and return to Rescue Ranch.

\* \* \* \*

Lena moaned, her breath hitching as something satiny soft and blissfully warm swiped lightly over her clit. The sensation tingled down as the same something glided between her pussy lips with a mirroring featherlike caress before delving inside her channel. Her hips bucked, her eyes flying open as the object probed deep, slithered along the walls of her cunt, and drew back.

“Good morning.”

Trey’s rusty voice drifted to her on a gentle breeze of mounting sensuality. She lifted her head off the pillow to find her legs draped over his broad shoulders. His hands were beneath her, gripping

her ass, and a devilish grin spread his lips glistening with the moisture of her pussy.

She blinked at him, shock and a lightning bolt of fear shooting through her as every ounce of sleepiness morphed into lucid reality. “What are you doing?”

“Having breakfast.”

“Having—” She started to repeat his answer inanely, but broke off when she attempted to move her arms and realized she couldn’t. She turned her head and saw he had bound her wrists with leather straps he’d attached to her headboard. Identical straps were fastened to her ankles at the ends of what appeared to be leather ropes that

provided more slack than the wrist restraints.

Slack Trey had tightened by placing her legs on his shoulders and lifting her ass into the air.

“You tied me down.” Sheer astonishment had her gaping at him, wide-eyed. “How did you get in my house?”

“I’m a SEAL, sugar. I’m trained to get into places where I’m not supposed to be. Thanks for making it easy on me by sleeping naked.”

He dipped his head, burying his face in her pussy again, and stole her breath right along with any words she might have said to that. The coarseness of his

slightly stubbled jaw grated lightly against her sensitive flesh as he drove his questing tongue into her opening and straight through her sanity.

Lena let her head fall back, closing her eyes as electricity sparked, exploded, and sizzled through her head. Ecstasy rained through her body in a dazzling display of colorful pleasure that tore through her system. A whimper escaped her, morphing into a cry of sheer pain-laced pleasure as he pulled his tongue back, rolled one side of her labia between his lips, and nipped. The darkly erotic sensation leapt from her pussy to her breast as a quick dart of pained pleasure shot through her nipple.

“Open your eyes, darlin’.” Brit’s lazy



drawl was husky and thick with his own arousal. “Keep them open. I want see what you’re feeling while he’s eating your cunt.”

Lena forced her eyes open and found Brit on his knees beside her on the bed. Trey and his actions between her legs had commanded so much of her attention she hadn’t realized Brit had crawled up beside her. She hadn’t felt him bend down to draw her nipple into his mouth until he latched onto the bud with his teeth and sent her senses screaming. Christ, how could she not have realized he was there? More, why wasn’t she yelling at both of them? They’d invaded her house, tied her up when she’d been

sleeping, and proceeded to have their dirty ways with her.

And, God, it was exactly the kind of thing she'd been fantasizing about them doing since the moment she'd driven away from Rescue Ranch.

“Help me.” The strangled plea rolled from her lips as raking fingers of fiery bliss continued to manipulate her essence. Trey's tongue plunged inside her channel once more, settling into a rapid rhythm of fucking that drove her straight up Orgasmic Mountain.

Brit's hands were on her breasts, his thumbs and forefingers rolling her nipples to aching solid points. “We are, darlin'. You apparently needed some help coming back around. We're

here to give it to you.”

“No.” She said the word without a thought, her head lolling from side to side on its own accord as sexual confusion and stupendous awareness mixed a crazy concoction in her bloodstream.

“Do you want us to leave?” Trey’s hot breath fanned her pussy as he spoke against her sensitized flesh. “All you have to do is say the words and we’re gone, Lena.”

“No. God, no. Don’t leave.”

Brit dipped his head, brushed a kiss to her nose, and eased back grinning. “That’s all we needed to hear, darlin’.”

Trey returned to his work, holding her

steady as he imprisoned her lower body with his hands more effectively even than the bindings on her ankles, and dominated her very soul. His hand on her ass gripped tighter, spreading her cheeks as he slipped one finger of his other hand between them. The callused pad of the digit grazed over her anus, and she froze, no longer straining against her bindings, no longer thrashing from the intense pleasures that were driving her out of her mind.

She remembered the feeling of his finger in her ass, remembered more the ecstasy he'd shown her with the butt plug, and had desperately longed to feel it all again.

“Trey!” Even as his name gushed from

her throat, Brit's attention to her breasts sent her senses whirling anew. His thumbs and fingers twisted her nipples in pressured squeezes that had her back coming off the mattress beneath her despite the bindings on her wrists holding her arms securely straight above her head. Lightning surges of painful pleasure bolted from her breasts to her pussy to her ass, only to retrace the path over and over again.

“What is it you want, darlin’?” Brit's tone held a tenderness his fingers didn't as he worked her nipples and molded his wide hands to her breasts.”

“More. I. Want. More.” Her struggle to breathe made each word a sentence of

its own.

“Do you want more of this?” Brit released his hold on her nipples and bent forward, drawing one breast in his mouth.

“Or this?” Trey chimed in, driving his tongue in her pussy as the pad of his finger pressed firmly over her anus.

“Both. Oh, God. All of it and more.” Helpless, mindless, she fought to no avail for a control they masterfully stole from her. Somehow, she managed to lift her head, to peer down her body. The vision of two men, men she loved with every ounce of her being, ruling her body only made the moment more wickedly erotic. Perspiration gathered along every inch of her flesh as the

pressure in her whom built. Her heart raced, her breaths coming in short bursts as their mouths, tongues, and hands threw her higher.

Her head fell back once more, her eyes closing despite Brit's order to keep them open. She screamed as the orgasm ripped out of her. Mother of God, no man had ever given her an orgasm that made her scream until them.

Working in tandem, they kept it going. Trey's tongue lapped at the cream pouring from her pussy as Brit's mouth moved from her breasts to cover her lips. His kiss, coupled with Trey's eager drinking, kept her body riding the wave of the orgasm until violent quivers

weakened her muscles and she surrendered, boneless and spent to exhaustion.

\* \* \* \*

Trey licked his way up Lena's body, waited for his friend to finish the soul-stealing kiss he was giving her, and then moved in to take one for himself. They stretched out on either side of her, propped their heads on their hands and gazed down at her until her eyes slowly fluttered open.

She looked at him, then Brit, and slammed her eyes shut again.

“Lena, look at me.” She was breathing hard, her flesh flustered and coated with



a thin layer of sweat, but the expression on her beautiful face left him no doubt he was staring down at one very satisfied, highly nervous woman.

Her lips parted, the tip of her tongue peeking out to lick away the dryness, and his already-aching cock jumped in his pants. "I can't."

Brit brushed a few strands of her hair from her forehead. "Why can't you, darlin'?"

"Not possible," she whispered, the words wobbling with fatigue and nerves. "Muscles no longer operational and you're only going to fuss at me anyway."

Trey exchanged a look with Brit. They had a whole lot more in mind than

fussing at her, but first they had to be sure she understood that she belonged to them. “Now, what makes you think we’d fuss at you, sugar?”

“You’ve both been calling me since Wednesday.” She still didn’t look at either of them. “I didn’t answer and I didn’t call you back. I didn’t return to the ranch either.” Her eyes finally flew open, the look in them imploring her to believe him. “I was coming back today. That was my plan when I got up.” She turned her head to Brit as if to make sure he knew he was included in the conversation. “I was going to call you on my way out.”

“Were you now?” Brit drawled. “Well, I guess we can take that into

consideration in a few minutes.”

She didn't have to be looking at Trey for him to see the trepidation and anticipation that shuddered through her. “What's in a few minutes?”

“That all depends on how the conversation we're about to have goes, sugar.”

Her throat worked as she gulped and glanced at him. “What conversation?”

“The one where you're gonna tell us why you've been ignoring our calls and staying away until today,” Brit told her.

“How is your knee? You were sitting on it a few minutes ago.”

Trey bit back a grin at the patient look Brit gave her.

“It’s great. Better than ever. And, before you ask, I ain’t had any more episodes since the one you walked in on your first night at the ranch.”

“That’s fantastic.”

Something in her tone set off Trey’s warning bells, but he didn’t interrupt.

“I’ve got two weeks of leave left to make sure it and my head get back to normal.” Brit nodded. “I think I’m gonna make it after all.”

She closed her eyes briefly and then asked, “Then you’ll both be going back to the Navy, right?”

And there it was. It had to be. The deep breath she’d taken before she’d asked that question, the way she’d

closed her eyes as if preparing herself for the answer said it all.

“Is that why you’ve been avoiding us, sugar?”

She met his gaze and then dragged her attention up as she wiggled her wrists. “Can you untie me, please?”

Trey glanced at Brit, saw his friend’s almost infinitesimal nod, and ignored it as she shook his head. “Maybe after you answer me.”

Her temper sparked. He saw the flash in her eyes. Damn, the woman was sexy as hell when she got frustrated.

“Fine. It’s part of it. Now, untie me, please.”

“Is the guy you wouldn’t tell us about the other part?”

She inhaled a startled breath at Brit's question, her head whipping on the pillow to face him. "I don't—"

"No fibbing, darlin'. You lie to me right now and the spanking I plan to give you when we're done with this talk will be more pain than pleasure."

"You're not going to spank me." Her tone was half squeak and half temper.

"We'll see about that, sugar. Who is he?"

She slammed her eyes shut and whipped her head from side to side on the pillow. "No. It doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" Trey asked. "He's the one that put the pain I see in your eyes almost every time you submit to one of

us. He hurt you and you're damn well going to tell us how."

"He died, okay!" The words exploded from her on a cracked rush.

"Jesus," Brit whispered.

Trey stared down at her, the single tear that snaked down her temple tearing at his heart. "Who was he, baby? How did he die?"

She pushed a hard breath from her lungs and slowly opened her eyes to meet his gaze. "His name was Mark. I met him about a year after my mother abandoned me and my father. I didn't love him, not in the boyfriend kind of way, and he didn't love me that way. We were best friends. We shared everything and explored everything together."

“Including BDSM.” Brit’s tone rang with a sudden understanding. “He’s the one who started training you.”

She nodded, but her gaze remained locked with Trey’s. “Neither of us really knew much about it. We watched movies, read books, and that sort of thing. You said submitting comes naturally to some women. Apparently, domination comes naturally to some men. He seemed to know what to do, to be able to read my responses, and give me what I wanted without any instruction from anyone.”

“No one ever trained us to be Doms,” Brit told her.

A small smile tilted her lips as she



turned her head to look at him. “Then you understand what I mean.” Her head turned again, but, this time, she stared at the ceiling rather than either of them. “He was killed two months after we started experimenting. He went out without me one night and got hit by a drunk driver. He died on impact.” She lifted a shoulder and another tear leaked from her eye. “Then I was alone again. My father has always been there, of course, and we’ve always been close, but I’ve never been able to really open up to him. I don’t know why. I couldn’t even explain it to Barbara.”

Trey wiped the tear away with the back of his finger. “She’s your stepmother, right?”

Lena nodded, but still didn't look at him. "My stepmother and the counselor my dad found to help me get through my mother's abandonment and Mark's death." She gave a watery half laugh. "Tell her about my relationship with Mark...God, you can just imagine how crazy that was."

"You told me in the pond it had been five years since you'd had sex," Trey reminded her. "Is that how long it's been since Mark died?"

She shook her head. "He's been gone longer. I tried to move on, tried to date, but it didn't feel right." Her cheeks turned pink. "All the guys I met were too vanilla after what Mark and I had done.

They were boring and too much of a pushover.” She shrugged again and finally looked at him. “I guess he kind of spoiled the evil girl in me.”

Trey chuckled. “You know that’s exactly what Brit and I want to do, too, right?”

She swallowed visibly and licked her lips. “You mean until the two of you leave, until the day comes when...”

“We don’t come back?”

Her eyes closed at Brit’s words and Trey realized his buddy had it the proverbial nail on the head.

“That’s what this is all about, isn’t it?” he asked softly. “You’re afraid you’ll give yourself to us, we’ll go back to the SEALs, and neither of us will

come back alive.”

“I don’t want to ever feel that lost and lonely again,” she admitted, her voice cracking. “That part of me Mark discovered, I feel lost when I have to lock it away and being with someone I can’t show it to makes me feel lonely.”

“Darlin’, we can’t promise you nothing will ever happen to one of us, or hell, even both of us. What we can promise is to love and cherish every part of you until our dying day.”

“Can you accept that much, Lena?” Trey asked, his heart in his throat. “Can you let us give you that much?”

She gave another watery laugh and tried to reach for him, but the bands on

her wrists prevented it. She shot a narrow-eyed glance at them and growled. "I don't have choice."

Trey pushed himself up and reached for the straps, intending to untie her.

"No," she said, stopping him. "I meant I have to accept it because I'm feeling more lost and lonely without the two of you. That's why I'd decided to come back to the ranch today. I've been going crazy forcing myself to stay away."

"Oh, baby." Trey gathered her in his arms as much as the restraints they'd put on her allowed. "You're not the only one who's been going crazy."

"Then make love to me," she said against his mouth. "Spank me, torture me, do whatever you want to do to me,

but make love to me, now.”

\* \* \* \*

Anticipation made Lena shake as Trey lowered her to lie back on the bed. She watched him as he slid to the floor, straightened, and made quick work of stripping off his clothes. Movement at the foot of the bed drew her attention to Brit, who had already stripped and was reaching for the straps binding her ankles.

“Damn, I love the way you two get naked so fast.”

Both men chuckled. Trey leaned over the bed, his marvelously thick cock fully

erect and nearly in her face as he reached for the strap on her right wrist. She licked her lips, hoping she'd finally get the chance to taste him, but not asking this time. Brit had denied her the other night. Maybe if she kept her desire to herself, she'd get what she wanted.

Trey crawled onto the edge of the bed, leaned over her to reach the strap on her left wrist, and she couldn't resist. His cock was right there. She needed only to lift her head, angle it a bit, and stick out her tongue. She did just that, smiling as she swiped the tip of her tongue over his engorged cockhead, and came away with a bead of pre-cum to taste. It was all he allowed her before he quickly unstrapped her wrist and moved away.

“No fair,” she pouted. Now able to move, she sat up and attempted to reach for him. The authority that darkened his eyes thrilled her. She was taking liberties and he was about to put a stop to that.

“I’ll tell you what’s fair, sugar.” He looked at Brit and lifted a brow. “You wanted to do the honors, I believe.”

“You’re damn right I do.”

Brit was on the other side of the bed, hooking an arm around her, and lifting her into the air before she knew what was happening. In the next moment, he was spinning her around and draping her over his lap.

“Brit, your knee.” Worried she might



hurt him, she battled the urge to kick and flail on his lap.

“Darlin’, there ain’t a bit of pain going through my knee right now,” he assured her, one strong arm sliding over the back of her waist to effectively hold her in place.

Though she knew it was coming, the first smack to her ass made every muscle in her body tense, the sting traveling a direct course to her pussy. The second slap to her other cheek intensified the sensations, igniting a fire in her clit set for almost immediate detonation.

“Do you know why I’m spanking you, Lena?” His hand flattened on her ass again, and she tensed, waiting for the next strike that didn’t come. “Beside the

fact that you told me to.”

She would've thought that in itself would've earned her this. “No, sir.”

“Trey wants your pretty ass all nice and red before he fucks it this time.”

The palm of his hand connected with her ass again, followed by two more smacks in rapid succession that sent her to a dizzying state. A comment to that had been forming on her lips, but before she could gather her senses to remember what it had been, more smacks rained on her ass. His hand finally stilled, his palm lovingly caressing her smarting cheeks and soothing the burn. The flames licking her inner core compelled her to wiggle her bottom in a futile attempt to get his

hand between her legs, his fingers inside her, and his thumb pressing against her throbbing clit.

Instead, his hand slid to the small of her back, his other gripping her waist as he lifted her once more, flipping her in his arms to sit on the bed next to him. The stings spread anew, proving sitting would be uncomfortable for a while, but not unbearable.

He buried a hand in the side of her hair as he leaned over and claimed her mouth in a passionate kiss. “That should do,” he said as he pulled back. “I got the feeling you were wanting to ask something, darlin’.”

She frowned at him. “I was about to, but you spanked the question right out of

me.”

He chuckled as he laid back on the bed and scooted until his back was resting against the headboard. “I’m sure you’ll remember it eventually.” He held out his arms. “Come here, darlin’.”

She hesitated and looked at Trey who hadn’t moved from where he stood near the head of the bed. “I remember what I was about to ask now.”

He lifted a sexy brow. “And that was?”

She had to swallow before she could push the question out. “Are you really going to make love to...to...” Damn it, she was stumbling over the words and the look in his eyes told her he wasn’t

going to help her. He wanted her to say it and he'd stand there until sundown waiting to hear it if he had to. She took a deep breath and let the rest spill. "My ass?"

"It's my intention. Although, it's been almost a week since I played with your tight hole. You may not be ready for it yet."

"I'm ready," she said quickly and silently pray it didn't turn out to be a lie. "I want it, Trey. I want you and Brit inside me at the same time." Remembering how he always required her to ask for what she wanted, she added, "Will you please make love to my ass this time?"

"Go to Brit, sugar. I'll see what I can

do.”

Holding out hope that what he decided to do was grant her wish, she crawled onto the bed and went straight into Brit’s arms. His hands closed on her hips in a firm, but gentle grip as she straddled his waist, preventing her from lowering herself onto his cock. Her pussy was drenched, burning with the need to feel his magnificent length inside her, and she wondered how the juices weren’t dripping to bathe his cock.

“Stay just like this.” He squeezed her hips, emphasizing what he meant before slowly letting her go. “Give me your hands.”

She held them out for him, excitement

zinging through her as he reached behind his head, found the straps, and bound her wrists again. He guided her hands to flatten on either side of his head on the wood behind it.

“That should make it more comfortable for you.”

His hand returned to her hips as she felt the bed dip behind her. She looked over her shoulder, her attention locking on Trey as he settled in at her back.

“Angle your sexy ass more toward me, sugar.”

Trepidation shivered through her at the sound of the cap being flipped open on the tube of lube in his hand that he seemed to have produced out of nowhere. Brit's hands returned to her

hips, his hold positioning her the way Trey wanted. With her wrists bound and arms stretched on either side of Brit's head, she was helplessly under their control. God, it felt amazing.

Gazing into Brit's eyes, she sucked a breath through clenched teeth when Trey dragged a well-lubed finger between the cheeks of her ass, stopping to press the pad of his fingertip over her tight anus.

“Remember to relax, darlin’.” Brit's thumbs lightly massaged her hips as he softly coached her. “You loved it when Trey played with your ass the other night.”

She did and she wanted so much more. She forced herself to relax, to take slow



and even breaths, and let herself ride the mounting waves of pleasure as Trey breached the small hole of her anus. She felt a slight pinching sensation that almost instantly morphed to a bittersweet pain as he pulled his finger back and probed again. The ecstasy of being fingered there had her trembling with need. The knowledge that Trey's cock would hopefully soon replace his finger intensified her trembling until pleading sounds escaped her throat.

“Does it feel good, sugar?” Trey twisted his finger in her ass, stroking the ultrasensitive walls, and sending electric sparks of wicked heat straight to her already flaming cunt.

“Yes.” The word left her on a

strangled gasp that instantly morphed to a moan when Brit used his hold on her hips to lower her drenched pussy onto the head of his cock.

“How about that?”

She closed her eyes, but not before she saw the devilish boyish grin unfold on Brit’s lips. “Oh, God. That’s almost better. More. Please, Brit. More.”

He entered her far slower than he had the other night, inching the full length of his cock inside her, and impaling her until the bases of their bodies met. “Fuck, you feel so good.”

“Tell me about it.” She opened her eyes and grinned at him. “I feel so good because you’re inside me.” As if he

feared he might be left out, Trey pulled his finger from her anus, adding a second well-lubed finger and then a third as he worked the nerve-laden tissue of her ass until her body sucked all three digits inside. “Trey, please.”

Delirium threatened as he pumped all three fingers in and out of her ass, stretching her, filling her. At the same time, Brit controlled her movements on his cock, lifting her hips and easing her back down, spreading the frenzy through her body until she teetered on the brink of insanity.

“Please what, sugar?” Trey’s tone was raspy, hot, and tight with his own arousal.

He wanted her to beg and then ask for

what she wanted. It hadn't taken him long at all to train her to do that. She didn't have any qualms about doing both, especially when she knew he would reward her with the pleasure of his thick, long cock in her ass.

“Make love to my ass, Trey. Please. I'm ready for it. I need to feel you inside me. I need to feel both of you inside me. Will you please make love to my ass now?”

Trey made the sound of a wounded animal as he pulled his finger free of her ass and placed his hands below Brit's on her hips as he positioned his cock to enter her. “Yes, my love. I'll give you what you want.”

Her smile turned to an *O* of sheer pleasure-laced pain as the head of his cock breached her tender hole. Rather than take it easy as she'd expected him to do, he pistoned his hips forward, driving the full length of his enormous cock into ass in a single thrust that buried him inside her to the hilt.

Lena screamed as the movement drove her body down onto Brit's cock. She closed her eyes and allowed every spark, every bolt, and every sensation of ecstasy to consume her as completely as her men claimed her. And they were *her* men. She felt that in every thrust, every touch, and every brush of their lips to her flesh as they moved in a perfect

tandem with one another. Surrender proved her only option as they fucked her and drove her past the brink of spectacular pleasure to the edge of paradise. She couldn't fight her body's needs to take, couldn't suppress her body's desires to give, and caught herself in the nick before coming.

She forced her eyes open and stared down at Brit as the breathless plea left her lips. "Please, Trey. Please, Brit. I need to come. Please, can I come?"

"I love you, Lena." Drake's thrusts didn't slow despite the near-growled declaration that spilled from his throat. "Damn it, baby. Don't you ever try to stay away from us again."

Emotions filled her, forming a knot in

her throat and bringing tears to her eyes as she stared at Brit. “I won’t, Trey. I promise.”

“I love you just as much, darlin’.” Brit’s handsome face contorted as he obviously struggled to hold onto his release. A glimmer of devilish mischief flashed through the love she saw clearly in his eyes. “And if you ever do try to stay away again, I promise you I’ll spank your pretty ass until you can’t sit down for a month.”

Somewhere, she found the ability to giggle. She wanted to touch him, to reach back and touch Trey, too, but all she could do was continue to look at him and hope Trey would hear her, too. “I love

both of you. I've never loved anyone else. You will always be the only men for me."

She knew as the words left her mouth they were not only the truth, but, if she ever lost either of them, she'd simply have to spend the rest of her days feeling lost and lonely. Neither of them could ever be replaced in her heart.

"Come for us, Lena," Trey ordered, his voice so tight it sounded more animal than man.

Holding Brit's gaze though her eyes wanted to close, gave herself over to the passion, and exploded in a screaming, blinding release that shook her to her toes.

"Damn, hearing you scream like that is



too fucking sexy.” A guttural growl rumbled from Trey’s throat as he pounded his cock into her ass and found his release.

Brit didn’t say a word. He didn’t have to. Lena watched him, thinking he was too fucking sexy as his expression turned strained. His lips thinned, his eyes squinted to slits, and his head tipped back as he grunted his release.

Breathless and utterly spent, she collapsed on top of Brit, laughing when Trey fell over her back. She felt his heart and Brit’s drumming in time with the rapid beat of hers. Somewhere in her fading consciousness, she heard both of them whisper again that they loved her

and finally gave into the need to close her eyes.

# Epilogue

*Two weeks later*

Lena hooked her thumbs in the front pocket of her blue jean shorts and rocked back on the heels of her new cowgirl boots, her heart heavy with equal parts love and despair as she watched Trey and Brit load the truck in the driveway. The whole Rescue Ranch family and crew was behind her, but none of them spoke. For the first time since she'd stepped foot on their land, she felt a melancholy blanket stretch over the ranch.

Brit was the first to swagger away

from the truck, his long legs brining him closer to her in even strides. His doctor had given him the all clear to return to the Navy where he would spend another month getting back in shape before taking his PT exam that would allow him to return to the teams. She'd given him the all-clear, too, knowing he'd never rid himself of the memories of that horrible op, but that he'd finally found a way to process the emotions and sensations he'd experienced and release them rather than keeping them bottled up inside.

His gaze heated and full of emotion, he hooked an arm around her waist and yanked her against the hard wall of his body. She wound her arms around his

neck, smiling as she tipped her head back and looked up at him.

“When I get back, I’m gonna throw you over my shoulder, carry you up those stairs, and make love to you until the cows come home.”

The saying amused a laugh out of her. “I hope the cows don’t come home for a very long time.”

He grinned. “I’ve been wanting to do that since the moment I laid eyes on you.”

“I’ll be waiting for it, sir.”

His grin faded and the heat in his eyes flamed higher at that. A low growl rumbled from his throat as he crushed his mouth to hers in a bruising kiss. “I

love you, darlin’.”

“I love you, too.” A chill moved through her as he slowly released her, but Trey immediately warmed it away. He nuzzled his face against the side of hers and whispered hot and huskily in her ear.

“You keep that ass trained and ready to take my cock when I get home.”

Her ass flexed as if giving him its own agreement. She knew where he’d put the plug and he’d showed her how to use it. “Anything you want, lemon drop.”

He pulled back, his brows etching together and a small frown marring his lips. “How come he gets a sir and I get a lemon drop?”

She giggled and cupped the side of his

face. “Because I can’t wait for you to get back so I can cover you with my sugar.”

His lips kicked into a grin she knew she would see every night when she closed her eyes. “I love you...sugar.” He winked at her and then claimed her mouth in a kiss that made her melt in his arms. He seemed to feel it because he took extra time letting her go, making sure she was steady on her own feet before he stepped away.

Cold all over again and knowing neither of them would be here for a long while to take it away, she folded her arms beneath her breasts and hugged herself as she turned to watch them say good-bye to their family. Minutes that

felt like split seconds later, she turned again to watch them back out of the driveway.

“They’ll be back.”

She startled at the feel of a young man’s arm as it slipped around her waist and looked to her left to find Dillon standing next to her. “It can’t be soon enough.”

“You’ll love it here,” he predicted. “Everybody does.”

“Do you?”

He lifted a nonchalant shoulder. “I’ve been stuck in worse places. Besides, old man Horace tells me you’ve got a new job to do.”

Unsure what to say to that, she pursed her lips. “He didn’t happen to tell you



what that job might be?”

Dillon snorted. “Course he did. You’re supposed to be working with me now. He seems to think I got issues you can cure.” A devilish grin unfolded on his lips. “Too bad for me you can’t cure them the way you did Brit’s.”

Lena half gasped and half laughed. “Dillon Stokes!”

“Hey.” He shrugged. “Can’t blame a man for wishing.”

She rolled her eyes and let the laughter come full force. “I hate to break it to you, kid, but you’re not a man yet.”

He sobered way too quick and a rush of guilt washed through her veins. “I’ve seen and done a lot of shit most men

ain't.”

Feeling for him, she slid an arm around his shoulders and pulled him closer. “Do you want to go for a walk and tell me about some of it?”

He made a raspberry sound with his lips. “Are you mental? I’m not gonna give in to you that easy.” He spun himself out of her embrace and was off in a flash.

Lena stared after him, shook her head, and smiled. She’d get him to talk. She had plenty of unconventional methods she’d never used on clients that she was thinking would be perfect for a boy like Dillon. She turned to find Horace and May still waiting for her at the foot of the porch steps. Everyone else had

apparently gone about their daily business. Her smile widened as both of the opened an arm. She went to them, May's arm finding her waist as Horace's wound around her shoulders, and walked with them to the door, realizing Brit, Trey, and the rest of their boys weren't the only ones these wonderful people had helped in their lives. They'd saved her, too, by sending Trey to bring her to Rescue Ranch.

**THE END**

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tonya Ramagos is a best-selling author of erotic romance series such as The Heroes of Silver Springs, The Service Club, and The Heroes of Silver Island, as well as many single title romances. She also writes old west novels under the name Bonnie Parker. She is a full-time author writing exclusively for Siren Publishing, in her opinion, the absolute best publishing company in the business. An avid reader, hiker, and dart thrower, she lives

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