



COURAGE COUNTY
Curves.

Kidnapped BY THE
MOUNTAIN MAN

MIA BRODY

KIDNAPPED BY THE
MOUNTAIN MAN

COURAGE COUNTY CURVES

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GINGER

I DIDN'T MEAN FOR ANYONE IN MY REAL LIFE TO DISCOVER that I run a sex podcast. Especially not my brother's best friend.

The reason he found out was my fault. It was my idea to buy those stupid matching tablet cases. It started this morning after I made breakfast for my mom and the boys. The boys are my brothers, and like me, they were adopted by Mrs. Maple and her late husband.

The diagnosis of multiple sclerosis two years ago finally gave us a word for why Mom has been growing progressively weaker. Last month, we convinced her to start using a wheelchair. She finds it easier to get around now, but it breaks all of our hearts to see her struggle.

"Can you help Mom at the shop today, runt?" Greer asks. He's my oldest brother.

The thing about Greer is that he was seventeen when I came to live here. He let me follow him around the farm while he did chores. He taught me how to milk a cow, how to muck a stall, and how to feed the chickens. He did it all with endless patience, never once growing tired of my constant questions.

He probably doesn't know it, but he was the first person to make me feel safe. The first one that showed me sometimes people are kind and good.

"I thought it was Barrett's turn," I answer. Today is my day off from the shop, and I have plans to edit my latest episode. It's about how to have more satisfying orgasms during self-

pleasure. I'm not gonna lie. The research for this episode was pretty enjoyable.

"Can't," Barrett says, shoveling more food into his mouth and barely looking up from his plate. "We're helping the Taylor brothers."

I turn to Noah. Out of all of us, Noah is the quiet one. He's the fearless second-in-command to my oldest brother. If he promises to do something, he can always be counted on to get the job done.

He shakes his head. "I'm going to the airport."

He's picking up our youngest brother from the airport. Zac is—well, Mom doesn't like us to say. She doesn't want anyone treating him differently just because he's a celebrity now. Besides, he works hard to fly under the radar. But eventually, someone in his fancy life is going to spill the beans about where he comes from. I just hope it doesn't ruin our quiet, small town.

"It's not a problem. I can help her then," I tell Greer brightly. He already takes care of so much. He took over the farm when Dad died.

When we didn't have enough money to give Dad a proper burial, our friends and neighbors stepped in. On the day of his funeral, Mom started making candles.

She wanted to thank our community for everything they'd done for us, so she made some candles. Then she kept making them, channeling all of her grief into intricate wax figures that she eventually turned into a business. Her candle shop is a good source of income for the farm now, but more than that, it gives Mom a purpose.

As she's getting sicker, we've been helping out more. She doesn't want to retire, and we don't want her to either. Not if she still loves doing this, so for now, we'll just trade days showing up at the candle shop.

"I'll send Grizz over to help," Greer says, naming his best friend.

The flannel-wearing lumberjack mountain man with his corded muscles and permanent frown is irresistible to me. Too bad he only sees me as his friend's little sister. If just once I could get him to see that I'm a grown woman. A woman who wants his big body covering hers.

But it's been years, and Grizz has never noticed me. I've accepted that he won't ever. That's why I own so many damn vibrators. Because the one man I want to feel between my thighs is never going to look at me that way.

"You don't have to do that. I'm perfectly capable of carrying the heavy boxes," I tell him. I'll never be able to think straight with Grizz at the shop. Thankfully, the scowling man isn't around very often.

"He'll be over by lunch," Greer answers with a note of finality to his voice. He's decreed it, and so it will be.

I want to argue with him, but Mom wheels into the kitchen, and I busy myself with helping her instead.

THREE HOURS LATER, I PAUSE TO PUT A HAND ON MY ACHING back. I could have waited for Grizz to arrive and help, but there were too many boxes. As it is, I've barely made a dent in all of the shipments that arrived today. The fifty-pound cases weren't supposed to be here for another two weeks.

"You should have called me," Grizz's words are quiet in the alleyway behind Mom's candle shop as if just my thoughts conjured him up. If I had that ability, he'd always be around.

For a mountain of a man, Grizz doesn't make much noise when he walks. I risk a glance over my shoulder. Instantly, I wish I hadn't. He looks too good today in his tightfitting blue jeans and old blue flannel that clings to his biceps. If there were a lumberjack calendar, Grizz would definitely be featured. Hell, they could make a whole calendar of this man, and women everywhere would line up to buy it.

Meanwhile, I scraped my wild hair back in a bun, and I know that my cheeks are probably bright pink from exertion. I've sweated off every bit of makeup I put on today, and I'm wearing an old farm T-shirt that's three sizes too big. Baggy jeans and black boots complete my working farm girl look. Ugh, why does he have to look like a model right now?

"Doesn't matter. The job had to be done," I answer lightly. This is one of the things about living in a ranching community. You get used to working hard early in life.

I reach for the next box to load it onto the dolly, but Grizz puts a hand on my arm. "Let me. You take a break. Get some lunch."

I should stay and keep helping. But I'm exhausted and in need of a rest, so, I give him a grateful smile. "I'll be back soon."

"Take your time," he answers easily as he reaches for a stack of boxes. For a moment, I'm rooted to the spot, transfixed by the sight of this strong man, lifting three of these boxes while barely breaking a sweat. He's so strong. I bet he could pin me against the alleyway wall and hold me there with his body while thrusting deep inside of my pussy.

The image creates a low pull in my belly. I want that. I want Grizz to show me how strong he is. I want to be held in his arms while he bounces me on his cock.

Shaking my head to clear the thoughts, I hurry back into the shop.

I take a working lunch, editing some of the audio for my podcast while mom plays a word game on her tablet. The matching hot pink cases were an impulse buy online. Mom and I might be farm girls, but we share a love of all things glittery.

When I'm done with my sandwich, I make two for Grizz and take them outside to him. My ovaries were not prepared for the sight that greets me. Grizz has stripped off his flannel, and he's in a ribbed, white tank. It's soaked from his sweat and clinging so tightly that it outlines his back as he works.

There's just something about watching his big broad shoulders that has me panting.

He turns as if he could sense my lust-fueled thoughts.

I make a squeak and thrust the paper plate at him.

He accepts it and takes a seat in the cargo area, his denim-clad legs dangling over the edge. He drains the first water bottle I pass him and wipes the droplets from his beard. His thick, red beard. I've always wondered what it would feel like beneath my fingertips. Is it soft and silky? It looks like it is. What would it feel like between my thighs?

No, bad Ginger. I can't be thinking like this.

"Take a seat," he growls at me.

I'm not taking a seat next to him. As it is, just being around him, tests the boundaries of my self-control. Because whenever I'm around Grizz, I want to touch him. I want to touch him all over. Why doesn't he have a girlfriend? It's been years, and I've never seen Grizz with anyone. Maybe he's more of the one-night stand type. The thought makes something in my chest hurt.

I have to get out of here before I say or do something stupid. "Mom needs to go home."

One of the hardest parts of multiple sclerosis is the exhaustion. She doesn't have the energy she used to, and even though she tries to push through, everyone can see it's hard on her now. "I'll be back later to finish up. You don't have to stay."

Grizz finishes his second sandwich and stands. "I'll help with her chair."

He follows me into the shop and stops to talk with Mom. "You look pretty today, Mrs. M."

She beams at him. When she learned that Grizz doesn't have a family, she unofficially adopted him. He's now a staple at all of our family gatherings including Thanksgiving and Christmas. Last year, I swear he got more gifts from her than the rest of us did. My brothers teased him, saying he was the

favorite son. “Ginger did my makeup before we left the house.”

I duck my head, embarrassed. I grab my tablet and shove it into my oversized bag.

“No, you’re a natural beauty,” Grizz insists to my mom.

She chuckles and shakes her head. “If you think that, then you’ve been spending too much time alone up there in that cabin of yours. You need a girl, son.”

“Only one girl has my heart,” he answers with a wink at her.

She chuckles and shakes her head as she pushes the joystick on her electric wheelchair and starts toward the door. I follow behind the two of them, half listening as they banter. It’s going to be a late night between editing my podcast episode and getting the shop inventory put away. Normally, this is something that my brothers would be there to help with. But the Taylor family helped us so much after Dad died that whenever they need anything, my brothers show up to help them.

I get Mom settled in the truck while Grizz loads her wheelchair into the truck bed and secures it. We’ll get a medical transport van soon, but we just now managed to get Mom comfortable with the idea of using the chair.

Mom is quieter than usual on the drive home, and I don’t work to fill the silence. I’m too busy thinking about Grizz. The last time I talked to him—really talked to him—was two years ago. After that, I realized I was being ridiculous. I’d never get Grizz to see me as anything other than Greer’s younger sister.

It’s not until we’re home that Mom opens my bag. She frowns. “There’s only one tablet in here.”

“I put both of them in there,” I explain and reach for the bag myself. But when I look inside, I realize she’s right. There’s only one tablet here. I open the case and quickly realize I took Mom’s, which means my tablet is still at the shop.

With Grizz.

A pit forms in my stomach. He wouldn't have opened it.
He wouldn't have looked at it. *Please don't let him have
looked at it.*

GRIZZ

LONGING. I FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE WORD FOR THAT FUNNY feeling I get in the pit of my stomach when I see Ginger.

Today, her curly hair is scooped up in a bun on top of her head. She brushes back her bangs from her eyes, letting me see a glimpse of those purple nails. She keeps them short, but they're always painted a pretty color. Makes me wonder what it'd look like to see her hand wrapped around my girth, to feel her tugging on my cock, and to hear her tell me how big it is.

I've never really noticed my best friend's little sister until that day two years ago. She showed up at the camping store with her thermos of hot chocolate and a plate full of sugar cookies.

I asked her in my barking way what the occasion was.

She wilted right in front of me and mumbled that it was my birthday. I still don't know how she knew that. But it was the day this chasm started in my gut.

I thought it was bad at first. Now though, two years of barely talking to her, and it's ripping me in two. It feels like my guts are all twisted up whenever I'm around her.

She always has a bright smile for me. A guy might read into it if he didn't know that she gives it to everyone in town. So instead of sweeping her into my arms and kissing those plump lips, I'm accepting a plate filled with sandwiches.

An uncomfortable silence falls between us. She used to chatter my ear off a mile a minute when she was younger. I

swear, it was like she saved up all the words she wanted to say for a week then spit them out at me in just a few minutes.

She doesn't do that anymore. She doesn't tell me all the things she's thinking about in that breathy tone of hers. How can a person miss conversations that never even happened?

Is she sharing her words with someone else? Does some other guy listen to her chatter and watch her cheeks go pink when she realizes she's babbling?

The thought has me crushing the paper plate in two. If it hasn't happened already, it will at some point. Can I let my sweet Ginger go when that happens?

"Mom needs to go home." She chews on the edge of her fingernail. She never used to be nervous around me. What changed? Did she realize that I'm always on edge, trying to hold back my animal instincts to knock her to the ground and rut into her?

"I'll be back later to finish up. You don't have to stay," she says softly. I'm not sure if she was saying anything else. It's hard to concentrate when she talks. Hell, it's hard for me to concentrate when she's in the same space with me.

I finish the food and stand, grunting out, "I'll help with her chair."

It doesn't take me long to help her mama, Mrs. Maple into the truck. The woman is warm and kind. Bet she'd never leave her fourteen-year-old son on his own in a strange city.

More trouble than you're worth. The stinging words from the past still echo in my head.

It's gotten better in the last couple of years. Ever since that day with Ginger. Fuck, she made me feel like I was somebody.

The high lasted for days. Never wanted to come down from that. Now I come around sometimes when I'm craving. A junkie in need of a hit. Pathetic.

The self-loathing drives me today. It forces me to work harder than normal. Faster too.

If she comes back here, we'll be all alone together. I could pick her up and sit her on the counter with the register. I could step between her parted thighs and taste her lips. Our tongues would tangle together as she ran her hands through my hair and moaned into my mouth.

A ding interrupts my fantasy. I pause in unloading the inventory here in the storage room and wipe my face with the hem of my sleeveless tank.

The ding sounds again, and I pull my phone from my jeans. There are no missed calls or new messages.

Frowning at it, I shove the device back into my pocket and keep sorting the inventory into the correct areas. It's shameful enough that I fist my cock to fantasies of Ginger every night. Now I'm daydreaming about her when I should be working.

I've just gotten the boxes in place, and I'm rolling the dolly toward the door when the ding sounds again. I glance around and spy it on the counter by the register. It's the sparkly case that holds the tablet where Ginger and her mom record transactions for the shop.

I should ignore it, but I know sometimes she and her brothers video chat. They leave each other messages about what's happening with her mom. What if it's important? What if something happened, and they're trying to get in touch with her?

Cursing under my breath, I stomp across the floor and reach for the tablet. It's so tiny in my big hands that it looks like a child's toy.

Flipping it open, I instantly suck in a deep breath. There's a video pulled up on the screen. Ginger is downstairs in the basement of her mom's place. She's got that sparkly blue curtain up that I saw last year when Greer called me over to help fix a busted pipe.

She runs a makeup channel or something online. At least, that's what he told me at the time. He didn't seem to care too much about that, seeing as we were knee-deep in water.

There was no way I could ask any questions about it. Not without tipping my hand. Didn't stop me from spending hours that night searching online. I searched every combination of her name I could think of. I never found her videos. Finally, I told myself it was for the best.

I know it's probably nothing more than a video of her showing girls how to do that sparkly shit on her nails that she likes so much. But still, curiosity gets the better of me, and I click play before I can stop myself.

Ginger

“LISTEN, I KNOW WE DON'T TALK A WHOLE LOT, AND I'M sorry for that. Really, I am. But if you could not let him find my tablet, then I promise to go to church more often than just Easter and Christmas. I'll even stop making change in the offering plate when it passes my way,” I pray out loud when I pull the truck up to the storefront. Mom was already deep in her nap by the time I left, and I got a neighbor to stay with her.

There's no audible answer to my request as I rush from the vehicle and into the store.

My heart stops the moment I see Grizz.

He's here.

He's standing behind the register, and he's holding my tablet.

My voice rings out from the video as I describe why self-pleasure is such an important thing for a woman. I mean, the title of the podcast is, *Sex and the Single Girl*.

I should be confident. I should stride up to him and calmly demand my stuff back. I should be that kick-ass girl who is unruffled by the fact that her brother's best friend knows she runs a sex podcast.

Instead, I'm the girl that's wishing she could sink into the floor. *New plan, Jesus. Just let me die right here.*

I clear my throat to get his attention. Actually, it's more of a squeak. Whatever.

He finally pulls his gaze from the tablet screen.

He blinks at me slowly. Those soulful eyes are pulling me under his spell. This is it. This is the moment when he finally realizes I'm a woman, and that he's crazy about me. He'll stalk across the floor and yank me against his body. Then he'll lower his head and give me the kiss to end all kisses.

I flick my tongue across my bottom lip and try to remember if I had onions on my chicken salad sandwich at lunch. Crap, is there still time to sneak a mint? I need a cool and sophisticated way to say, "Don't kiss me yet. I ate onions at lunch."

He frowns.

I said the words out loud.

Horror washes over me as my cheeks flame. I'm vaguely aware of the sound of my voice from the tablet. I'm discussing the different types of orgasms that women can achieve.

"Truck is empty," Grizz says. He pulls the keys from his pocket and places them on the counter. Then he turns and walks away, leaving my heart behind.

GINGER

I INHALE THE SCENT OF WARM COOKIES AS I SETTLE AT A sticky table in Courage Cookies. It's been three days since Grizz found out about my show. I haven't even told my best friend Mackenzie about what happened. It's too humiliating. Besides, she's just now finding happiness with her new boyfriend, Ace.

I take a sip of my latte. This is my favorite little place to get coffee with my friends. Today, I'm with Susie. She's only lived in Courage County for about a year, and I like her.

"I don't even know how I got roped into being an elf!" Susie exclaims as she takes another sip of her hot chocolate. She's always drinking one of those.

"The Kringles are pretty cool people," I tell Susie, thinking of the cowboy brothers that run the Christmas tree ranch. The oldest brother, West Kringle, and his wife usually play Mr. and Mrs. Claus at the holiday events around town. But sometimes, they do holiday events for charities too.

"If it weren't for Hale, I definitely wouldn't have agreed," Susie says, referencing her boss and the owner of the gym. She's loyal to the hulking mountain man who recently married the love of his life. I think Susie's loyalty goes beyond the fact that he gave her a job. There's more to the story, and I want to ask her about it, but then the bell above the door chimes.

Mackenzie joins us at the table, sending me a grateful look when she sees the coffee I ordered for her.

I expected her to be practically floating today. Three days ago, after my disaster with Grizz, I dragged Mackenzie to a nightclub in another town. Ace showed up and carried her out, insisting no other guy could even look in her direction.

My bestie should still be in that blissful, happy bubble that couples experience. That's when I remember her dad. Ace is best friends with Mackenzie's dad, and that's complicating their relationship. "Is your dad still mad at you?"

"I think he's furious with me. He won't even return my calls," she admits.

I drum my fingers on the table and swallow hard. It was my idea to go to Vortex. I dragged her there even though she didn't want to show up. She didn't even know what my big plan was. "Do you blame me for my ridiculous plan to make Ace jealous?"

She frowns. "That was your plan?"

I went to a lot of effort to make sure the word got out that we would be there. Getting the gossip train going in Courage isn't all that hard. But finding a way to keep that same gossip from getting back to my brothers was anything but easy. "Duh, that's why I took you there. How else would I get Ace to drag you back to his cave like a total Neanderthal?"

She laughs. It's not her usual full-bellied sound, but I'll take the win.

Beside me, Susie chuckles too. "You're devious."

"Maybe that's what it takes to get his attention," I muse to myself. Maybe if he thinks someone else wants me, he'll make a move. Is Grizz the jealous type? Does it make me a horrible person if I want him to be?

"Who?" Susie asks.

"You're not thinking what I think you're thinking," Mackenzie says with a clear warning in her tone. She knows how long I've crushed on Grizz, and she probably thinks it's a hopeless situation. Except maybe it's not as hopeless as I've been telling myself.

Sure, I haven't seen him for the past three days. It hurt when he didn't show up for our family's Thursday night dinner like he normally does. But then again, how would I respond if I found out the burly mountain man ran a sex podcast in his spare time? Maybe I'd feel awkward too.

Susie frowns, so Mackenzie quickly fills her in on the details of my crush on Grizz. Our new friend nods and asks, "Is he cute?"

"He's big and grumpy and so handsome," I sigh softly. "But he won't pay me any attention because I'm just Greer's younger sister."

Before we can talk more about my unrequited crush, the bell above the door for Courage Cookies rings. The three of us look up to see Mackenzie's dad striding toward the table. He keeps his gaze on her the entire time.

Beside me, I hear Susie's sharp intake of breath. Her cheeks turn pink, and she quickly glances away from the man. She's being anything but subtle about her fascination with the older mountain man.

Fortunately, Mackenzie is too busy to notice what's going on.

I gather the remnants of our food and gesture with my head toward the door. "We're going to go now."

The two of us leave the shop together, waving goodbye to Haley before we walk down the icy sidewalk. November is my favorite time of year. The weather is chilly, and the promise of winter hangs heavy in the air.

"For what's it worth, I think you should go for it," Susie says quietly before shrugging. "If you shoot your shot with him, at least you'll know where you stand after that."

"Or I could make a total fool of myself." I don't care too much about my pride. I've always been good at bouncing back from my disasters, like the time I tried to give myself a home perm. But this thing with Grizz is different. It feels so permanent, so final. Like my last desperate attempt before I finally give up.

“Well, when I want to try something new to improve the gym, Hale always says to mitigate the risk. You know, set things up so that if your plan fails, you can still salvage something from it,” she explains.

I think for a moment. What she’s saying makes total sense, and I have an idea that might just work.

“THIS IS NEVER GOING TO WORK,” I TELL MYSELF FOR THE sixth time as my car chugs up the mountain road to Grizz’s cabin. All day, Susie’s words have been bouncing around in my head. I finally decided to take her advice to heart. At least, I’ll know after tonight. I’ll know if there’s any hope for a relationship with Grizz.

Right now, the best way I could think to mitigate the risk was to pretend to be a little bit tipsy. I’m behind the wheel, so I haven’t had a drop of alcohol. But I may have splashed a liberal amount of beer on my dress. If a Grizz gets even one whiff of me, he’ll think I’m three sheets to the wind. Then if this ends badly, I can pretend it was all a drunken mistake.

I tighten my knuckles on the steering wheel, watching them turn white as Grizz’s cabin comes into view. The one thing I have going for me is that Grizz is not a blabbermouth. Even if this goes South, and not the fun South, then at least I know he’ll never tell another soul.

I park my car at the very edge of his driveway.

When I go live on my podcast, it’s like another part of my personality takes over. It’s not me talking. It’s Bold Ginger. She’s fun and flirty and takes whatever she wants. It’s that part of me that I call on right now as I force myself out of the car on shaky legs.

I grab my bag then think better of it. I reach for the case of beer instead. Popping the top, I force myself to take a quick gulp. I’ve never liked the taste of alcohol, but if I’m going to sell this, then the smell needs to be on my breath too.

Content that I've done the job well, I grab my bag and start up the driveway. Halfway through, I remember I'm supposed to be drunk and put an intentional sway in my steps. It's not easy to do in these heels. But the long pointy black stilettos and the tight purple dress that clings to every curve will help sell my story. Grizz will believe every word I say when I show up dressed like this.

The porch light activates as I navigate his wooden steps. He has a beautiful cabin, nestled here in the mountains of Courage County. But he's never taken the time to decorate it or make the front yard look pretty. It could be a welcoming, inviting space if he wanted it to be. But then again, Grizz doesn't strike me as the type of man who wants company.

I bang on the front door and giggle, hiccupping just right for effect. I spent hours online earlier, studying how drunk people act. I wanted to get it just right. It has to be, so Grizz believes me.

"Duke! It's me, open up!" Duke is the name of a local man who also lives on this mountain. He's busy raising his younger brothers and helping his sick mama. He's only a couple of years younger than me, so if my story is questioned, it's believable that I would have been looking for a fling with him.

For a moment, there's no answer. But I know Grizz. He's home. If he's not with my brothers or at his camping store, he's pattering around his cabin.

I laugh again, partly to cover my nerves. "Open up and fuck me!"

The door swings open, and I'm suddenly at eye level with Grizz's big, hairy chest. It's heaving, like he just ran a marathon. There's a wild, angry look on his face as he stares me down. *I think I've just awoken the beast.*

GINGER

MY MOUTH GOES DRY AT THE SIGHT OF ALL THAT RAW, masculine energy. I let myself take in his wide, barrel chest and that happy trail of hair that leads down to the waistband of his gray sweatpants. They barely conceal a prominent bulge. My fingers ache to cup it. What would he say if I touched him there? Would he drop his head back and beg me to keep going? Would he put me on my knees and demand I relieve him that way?

“What the fuck are you doing here?” He demands, fury emanating from him. I definitely didn’t expect this kind of welcome from the grumpy mountain man. Sure, he’s always a little surly but nothing like this. Is it because of what he saw on my tablet?

I remember to slip into character at the last minute. I frown and look around, pretending to be disoriented. “You’re not Duke!”

He snorts. “You got that right, sweetheart.”

“But he’s supposed to be here,” I feign a whine. “How am I ever going to get laid?”

A muscle in Grizz’s jaw clenches. “I’ll ask you one more time. What. The. Fuck. Are. You. Doing. Here?”

I’ve always thought that Grizz was sexy, but it turns out, I find Angry Grizz even sexier. There’s just something about seeing him all rumped and riled up that makes me want to climb him like a tree. “Not getting laid, obviously.”

“Are you drunk?” Grizz demands.

I must have doused myself in more alcohol than I realized. Then again, I'm standing so close to him that I can feel the heat from his naked chest. So very naked. What would he do if I licked him? What if I ran my tongue all along his hot skin?

I fake another hiccup. "Ish not your business."

"The hell it isn't." With that, Grizz grabs my arm and tugs me into his cabin.

I protest and try to pull away from him, but it's useless. Grizz is so much bigger and stronger than me. He barely even notices my resistance. Instead, he drags me through his home so quickly that I don't have time to glance around.

He shoves me onto his big king-size bed. I'm still reeling, trying to figure out what he's doing. Before I can make sense of this side of him, he grabs my wrists and secures them to the headboard.

I pull on the soft t-shirt that's restraining me. I don't think this is just a game anymore. It definitely doesn't feel like one. Still, my panties are wetter than they've ever been in my life. Something about having Grizz overpower me and tie me to his bed is making my nipples sharp points beneath my dress. "What the fuck is this?"

"This is me, keeping you safe," he answers, reaching down at the floor.

He yanks up my bag that I dropped next to the bed. It's just a prop. I never meant for him to look inside of it, so I squeal in protest, "That's my stuff!"

He pulls out a bottle of lube and snorts. "A real man wouldn't need this."

I scowl at him. Guys are so dumb sometimes. "An estimated one in five women experience vaginal dryness during intercourse and—"

"And that's unacceptable. A real man makes damn sure his woman is primed," he grunts again and reaches back into the bag. It's a collection of goodies that I've been sent since I started doing my podcast.

This time he holds up the nipple suckers in bright pink and shakes his head. He mutters something under his breath that sounds like, “Stupid motherfucker.”

I forget all about our game. I never imagined that Grizz of all people would be so judgmental when it came to sex toys. I jerk at the t-shirt holding me to the bed, desperate to end this whole embarrassing night. He’s tied it so tightly. Dammit, how did he do this? “It’s kidnapping to hold someone against their will.”

He produces a pair of red leather wrist restraints. That set is one of my favorites because it’s so pretty. The leather is soft with just enough give, and it comes with a matching ankle set. Not that I’ve ever had anyone to play with. “Don’t worry, sweetheart. I’m about to upgrade this kidnapping.”

Without waiting for me to respond, he climbs onto the bed. He pins me with a knee on either side of my hips. He’s careful to keep his body leveraged, not letting his groin anywhere near me.

“Let me go home,” I demand, my cheeks burning. I can’t believe I ever thought this was a good idea. Sure, I knew there was a possibility that Grizz could reject me. But I never imagined he’d open my toy bag and have a good laugh. *What a giant prick.*

He moves quickly, untying me from the shirt. I try to sit up, but Grizz only has to use his weight to stop me. He’s stretched over my body, his weight pinning me to the soft mattress. His erection is pressed up against my belly, and he makes a pained sound in the back of his throat.

“Lie very still.” Something about the command has me pausing to obey. He doesn’t sound like himself. He sounds like an animal that’s been starved for too long. Is it possible that he wants me too? That he’s just as horny and lonely as me?

After a moment to collect himself, Grizz reattaches me to the bed frame with the restraints. He nods at his work.

“I want to go home. Please,” I add the word quietly. With my arms above my head like this, my dress is pulled high on

my thighs. It's barely covering my pink panties. If I parted my thighs even a little bit, my brother's best friend would know my pussy is wet for him.

Indecision flickers across Grizz's face, but he shakes his head. He disentangles himself from the bed and stands. "Not when you've been drinking."

"You could take me home," I point out. I'm not going to argue the drinking point. I smell like I've marinated in a vat of alcohol. There's no way I can convince him that I'm sober right now, especially not with the way I acted earlier.

He sends me a look like I'm insane. "Yeah, I'm going to deliver your drunk ass home to your brothers with you smelling like a brewery and hand them a bag of sex toys. Sorry, sweetheart. You're stuck with me tonight."

He reaches for the bag again and dumps out the contents on the bed, pausing to finger the blindfold. It's a delicate, lacy black one. I've always wanted to be touched while wearing it, to have Grizz playing with my body while denying me sight.

He frowns at the small piece of fabric like it offends him. That muscle clenches in his jaw again, just like it did when I first showed up on his front porch.

I let out a small breath, suddenly exhausted. All I want to do is go home and pretend this night never happened. "You could drop me off near my house."

"Also not happening." He reaches for a leather paddle. It's bright purple with three hearts carved into it. He brings the toy down on his open palm, unaware that the sight of him holding it makes more moisture gush from my body. "How many times have you been with that stupid motherfucker?"

"Who?" I frown. That's the second time he's called someone a stupid motherfucker.

"Duke," he barely grinds out the name to me.

My cheeks flame. Sure, I'll show up here and pretend I was looking for Duke. But I'm not about to implicate him in some fake relationship. That's taking things a little too far. "I'm not talking about this with you."

He nods and moves to the headboard again. He fiddles with the wrist restraints and for a second, I think he's going to let me go. Hope and disappointment war in my chest. I don't know what I want at this point.

“That should be comfortable enough for you to manage some sleep,” he answers.

He gathers up all the toys again and shoves them back into my bag. “For the record, any man that's worthy of you should be too busy worshipping you with his hands and tongue and cock to even be thinking about toys.”

GRIZZ

I DON'T KNOW WHAT GAME SHE'S PLAYING AT. I WAS IN MY bedroom, on my way to the shower when I heard a car in my driveway. I grabbed the binoculars I keep for bird-watching and glanced out my window.

The sight that greeted me stole my breath away. Ginger was getting out of her too-small car in her too-small dress and trying to tug it down. She bent over to retrieve something from the car and I damn near came right there on the spot. All I could think about was bending her over and ramming deep into that soft, wet pussy.

Given that I've spent the last three days watching every one of her podcast episodes and rubbing my cock down to a nub, that's saying something. It's fuckin' torture to see her in her little low-cut shirts, talking to women about how to improve their solo sex lives. If I had my way, she wouldn't be solo anymore. That's what I was thinking when I saw her get out of her car.

The beer startled me. Ginger only took a swig and looked like she wanted to spit it out right there. She gathered her bag and started up the driveway. She didn't remember to sway until she was closer to the cabin.

By that point, I knew she wasn't drunk. I've spent enough time around alcoholics and addicts. It's damn easy for me to discern when someone is sober.

Technically, that means I should let her go. But if I do, she's likely to go chase down Duke with her bag of toys.

I clench my hands into fists. It was a dagger to my heart, hearing her call another man's name while she was looking for a fuck. That should be my job. I should be the one that fucks her sweet little pussy when she needs a man.

No, she's not leaving my cabin. Not tonight.

Maybe not ever.

The thought of leaving her tied to my bed as my captive holds so much appeal. I could keep her naked and dripping for me. I could have her screaming my name.

My cock surges at the thought. I want her so much that every cell in my body is aching. I'm nearly feral with need, but I know I'm not getting the relief I crave.

With a sigh, I turn on the shower water and yank off my pants. The cold water isn't doing anything to ease the situation. There's too much pent-up longing in me. Two years of craving Ginger's sweet sunshine has left me with a permanent hard-on.

I shower quickly, refusing to give myself the satisfaction of a quick tug. It doesn't matter if I do give in and seek relief. The fucker will be hard again in two seconds. That's the hold this woman has over me.

But she doesn't know that. No, the only thing she knows is Duke. The thought has a savage roar pulling from my throat. She's mine. I just have to find a way to convince her of that before she leaves my cabin.

I dress in another pair of sweatpants and skip the shirt. Call me a monster but I need her soft, silky skin against me tonight. It might be the only chance I ever have to hold her like this, and I'm determined to take it.

I leave the bathroom and move around my bedroom, turning off the lamps. The entire time I move, I can feel her gaze on me. It heats my body by a hundred degrees. If we were together, I'd let her look her fill before I climbed onto the bed and settled between those sweet thighs. For a moment, I consider pulling the ankle restraints from her toy collection.

What would it be like to have her spread eagle, her body offered up to me like a sacrifice to a king?

“Are you really serious about me staying here tonight?” She squeaks out.

I don’t answer her, not even a grunt. I just turn off the final lamp and let the room go dark. That’s a mistake. Because the first thing I notice in the dark is her short, panting breaths. Instantly, I feel like an asshole. She’s scared. Why wouldn’t she be? She’s trapped alone with a brute like me.

“You’re safe,” I tell her even as the mattress dips beneath my weight. A gentleman would take the couch. Fuck being a gentleman.

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” she sighs and turns over, facing away from me.

I don’t know what to make of that. I don’t understand Ginger or the game she’s trying to play. That doesn’t stop me from wrapping my arms around her and pulling her back to my front. I’m careful to keep my hips angled away from her, so she doesn’t feel the beast in my pants again.

“Does your mom know you’re here?” I finally ask after several moments of long silence. I hate this. I hate it when she’s not talking. There’s something about the sound of Ginger’s voice. It soothes me like nothing else, and one night, I want to fall asleep to the sound of her talking to me. It’s a strange feeling for a man who built his whole cabin around the idea of solitude.

“I texted her earlier. She thinks I’m staying with Mackenzie.”

“And Greer?” My heart is pounding so hard that she has to hear it. Blood pounds in my ears, and I send up a silent prayer that he knows where she is. Someone needs to know where she is. Otherwise, I might just act out the depraved fantasies I’ve had of Ginger.

“He also thinks I’m with her.” Fuck. Fuck, does this sweet thing have no sense of self-preservation? Can’t she sense how close to the edge I am?

“So no one knows you’re here?” My voice is strained, and I finally lose the fight with my body. I thrust against her panty-clad bottom, letting her feel my need.

“N-no one.” She arches into my pelvis, grinding that sweet little ass all over my cock. She yanks at the restraints and lets out a frustrated noise that only makes me swell even more. “I want to touch you.”

“That’s not how this works. You’re at my mercy now.” I remember those nipple suckers in her toy collection. My big hand skims up the side of her body, and I plunge inside the top of her dress. Her tits aren’t just warm and full. They’re big, so damn big. I run my thumb along her nipple, feeling it pucker at my touch. “You were looking for a quick and dirty hookup tonight, weren’t you? Well, you found one, sweetheart.”

“I have to tell you something,” she gasps out as my other hand finds the apex of her thighs. I shove my big fingers into her soaked panties. She’s slick satin, having made a mess of her thighs already.

I circle her tight entrance with the tip of my finger, just as her words register. “If you don’t want this, tell me no right now.”

She tries to arch into my touch, but her movements are too restricted. She makes a small moan of protest. “No, it’s not that. I want this. There was never...”

With her permission, I can breathe again. I’d fucking kill myself before I’d ever hurt Ginger. She’s the most important thing in my world, even if she can’t know that.

I breach her tight hole with the tip of my finger. I’ve always known I was a big man, but she’s so delicate down here. I’ll have to teach her how to accommodate my size. The idea sends a thrill through me.

I try to focus on her words. It’s not easy when I’m touching her pussy. “Never what?”

“I’ve never been with Duke. I wasn’t...wasn’t even looking for him.”

The rock that's been sitting on my chest since she showed up on my front porch finally rolls away. She wasn't with him. She's never been with him.

"Lift your leg. Put it behind your body, resting on my hip. There's a good girl, giving me access to my pussy." This position opens her to me fully. Now I can touch her however I want, wherever I want. The knowledge that she's bound only fuels my lust.

She whimpers at my praise. "I've never been with anyone."

I add a second finger to her channel, her words ricocheting in my brain. The men in this town are completely braindead. It's the only logical explanation for why she's gone this long untouched.

"I'll make it feel good," I promise my sweet sunshine. I use my thumb to circle her clit at the same time my fingers find that spot in the front of her channel.

She comes with a soft gasp, surprised by the orgasm. She rides out her pleasure on my hand before collapsing back into an exhausted heap.

I pull my hand from between her thighs and lick her flavor from my fingers. "You taste so good."

She yanks again on the restraints. "I want to touch you now."

"Later," I promise her, pressing a soft kiss to her temple before I leave the bed in search of a cloth to clean her. By the time I return, she's already snoring lightly, and the sound makes me smile. I can't let her leave. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

GINGER

SUNLIGHT THROUGH THE BLINDS HAS ME BLINKING AWAKE slowly. It takes me a moment to remember where I am. Then the events of yesterday come rushing back. Driving to Grizz's cabin. Having him restrain me in his bed. The orgasm, that delicious orgasm.

It all has to be a delightful dream, something my lonely brain came up with to soothe my aching heart. But no, the slight twinge between my thighs quickly reassures me that everything that happened last night was real.

I move my arms, realizing they're no longer restrained. He must have released the cuffs last night after I fell asleep.

I sit up slowly and my eyes meet Grizz's serious gaze. He's leaning against the wall and holding my phone.

My mouth grows dry at the look on his face. I think I'm in trouble, and I don't mind one bit.

He stalks across the room and shoves the device at me. "This is the text message you sent Mackenzie, letting her know you're safe and to cover for you."

I barely glance at the message.

He snatches my phone back and swipes it again. "And here's the message you sent your mom, telling her that you're hanging out with Mackenzie for the next two days."

I swallow hard, my brain struggling to catch up with the conversation. "And why did I send these messages?"

He leans close, so close I can see the flecks of gold in his brown gaze. “For the next two days, you’re mine. If you want someone to explore these toys with, it’ll happen with me. Only me. Do you understand?”

I nod, barely believing my luck. Not only did Grizz give me amazing orgasms last night, but now he’s going to spend the next two days playing sexy games with me.

He puts a hand on my chin, his gaze blazing with intensity. “Say it. Say you understand I will spend the next two days fucking you.”

This is really happening. My brother’s best friend has just promised to fuck me. He’s promised to spend the next two days exploring my sexual fantasies with me. A shiver goes down my spine. “I understand.”

The tension eases from Grizz’s shoulders. For the first time since I woke up, he looks relaxed. He brushes a soft kiss on my forehead. “You’re safe with me. You’ll always be safe with me.”

The words fill me with warmth as I remember the first time I met Grizz. I thought he was the biggest, strongest man I’d ever seen. Instantly, my heart was his. It’s been that way ever since I was fourteen. But he was ten years older than me, so he never noticed.

He never realized that the awkward, gangly teenage girl thought he hung the moon. I still think that. But I can’t let him know all of these things. This is just going to be sex to him. Nothing more.

“I know you will,” I whisper from a throat that’s too tight, clogged with all the things I wish I could say to him.

“Good, because you’re getting a spanking.”

I make a noise of protest even as my stomach flips at the thought. “I don’t want one.”

Grizz chuckles. The sound is raspy from the years he spent smoking. He gave it up about a year ago. “You know that’s not true.”

I remember watching him smack the paddle against his open palm. Is he going to use that or his hand? Which one do I want? Is it going to hurt? Maybe I can still talk him out of this. “I haven’t done anything to earn one yet.”

He arches a brow, and damn, I love this. I love the way he’s looking so stern and tough, standing here in front of me. “You lied to me. You showed up here, pretending to look for another man. Now your ass will pay for your deception.”

My heart stutters in my chest. I hate the thought of really disappointing Grizz. I hate the idea that he might be upset by my lie. “Are you mad at me?”

The side of his mouth quirks up, and he gives me a wink before he furrows his brow again. “Naughty girls get spanked, Ginger.”

Why do I love the idea of being his naughty girl so much? Why does the thought of getting punished by my brother’s best friend make my panties so damp?

He folds his arms over his chest. “Now, bend over. Ass in the air.”

I hesitate. I’ve never done something like this. I mean, I’ve thought about it before. I’ve read books about it and even mentioned it on my podcast. That’s how I was sent the paddle in the first place.

Something flickers across his face then Grizz sits on the bed beside me. He helps me stand, his big hands propelling me up and off the bed. He guides me to stand between his legs. “Clothes off.”

The look in his eyes is doing something funny to my insides. It’s making me want this even more.

With a breath for courage, I unzip my dress. The material pools at my feet. Even though I’ve spent the past year teaching women the importance of not getting caught up in their appearance during sexy time, it’s hard not to feel self-conscious.

But then I catch the look in Grizz’s eyes. It’s pure fire, a raging inferno of lust threatening to consume me.

“All of them.” His voice is deep and gritty, promising a day of sensual delights ahead.

My hands shake when I reach for my bra, and I miss the clasp twice.

He crooks his finger, beckoning me forward. He reaches around me and flicks it open with ease. Then he pulls down the straps gently, baring my breasts to his view.

“You have gorgeous tits,” he murmurs and reaches to cup them both. He feels their weight in his big hands. “Going to fuck them later after I’ve spanked your ass and claimed your cunt.”

His words have me squeezing my thighs together. He doesn’t miss the gesture and reaches for my panties. He drags those down and taps on my foot. I lift my leg and step out of the thin material.

The air in the room is cool and my nipples are pebbled. I’m suddenly aware that I’m standing here completely naked in front of my brother’s best friend while he’s clothed. It’s a vulnerable feeling, and I’d be scared. Except I can see the lust and appreciation written all over his face. Grizz doesn’t just like what he sees. He loves it.

“Come here. Across my lap,” he instructs, guiding me where he wants me.

I put my hands on the floor to steady myself, my breasts swinging as I do. My feet are on the other side of his thighs. I’m draped over Grizz’s lap, completely at his mercy. He can see my ass. He’s touching my ass, running his fingertips across my sensitive skin. It feels so good that I could purr. “Such a beautiful bottom. Sad that it belongs to a naughty girl.”

I whimper at his words. I don’t know why I’m like this, why I like it when he calls me naughty and threatens me with punishment. But I love it. I love that he’s willing to play with me.

The first two swats of the paddle are soft and experimental. They’re more ticklish than anything. But the third one stings. He immediately rubs at the spot.

I push my bottom out, offering it to him again.

He delivers three more smacks in quick succession before he begins rubbing me again. I'm pretty sure I could orgasm just like this, draped over his lap with my stinging bottom in the air.

"You look so pretty with your pink little ass dotted with hearts," Grizz says as he trails his fingers lower and lower until he's lightly stroking my pussy. He keeps teasing me, coming so close to my entrance then moving away.

I wiggle, trying to force his fingers inside. I crave more orgasms like the one he gave me last night. I ache for his touch.

He chuckles, and it's a dark sound. "Are you going to lie to me again?"

"No, never," I promise as I hump his lap in earnest. I can only imagine what he's seeing. My pink ass squirms on his lap as he shoves his hand deep inside my pussy. Not that he seems to be minding the visual if that steel pipe digging into my side is any indication.

"Good girl." The appreciative rumble in his voice fills me with pride. I love knowing that he likes my body.

He finally pushes his big finger into my pussy. It's so huge, but it's still not enough. I whimper, begging him for more.

"Use your words. What do you want, my sweet girl? You want me to fuck you with two fingers?"

"I want your cock," I whine. I know it's big. I saw the outline of it this morning in his sweatpants. It won't be easy to take him, but I'm more than up for the challenge. I want to be split in two by this man.

"Soon," he promises, adding a second finger. He scissors them, stretching me even wider as he thrusts deep. "Now squeeze my fingers tight. Good girls have to earn my cock."

He twists his fingers and strokes my G-spot. Between his words and his featherlight touches, I clench around his thick digits as I chase my release.

Suddenly, I'm spiraling. Pleasure is flowing through me, every nerve in my body is lit up as the most powerful orgasm of my life consumes me. It's breathtaking and overpowering in its intensity. It robs me of the ability to speak or think or do anything more than take what this brutal man is giving me.

Grizz growls as if he can hear my thoughts and suddenly, I'm flipped onto the bed on my back. I grin up at him, still breathless from our encounter. "Did I earn it?"

GINGER

“FUCK, YEAH, YOU EARNED THIS COCK.” GRIZZ YANKS OFF HIS sweatpants. The monster between his legs is huge.

I swallow hard at the sight of his angry cock. It’s bigger than any of my toys, and I’m really glad I started that video channel last year. If I hadn’t, I might be intimidated by the long shaft I’m staring at. “Your dick is so big.”

“And it’s going deep inside of you,” he grunts. “And you’ll love every inch. Now kiss my cock and ask me nicely to give it to you.”

Holy shit, I had no idea that Grizz was such a filthy talker. I squirm, squeezing my sticky thighs together. I pucker my lips in an exaggerated kiss.

He steps forward rubbing his cock on my bottom lip. I open my mouth and swirl my tongue around the tip of him. His taste is warm, salty, and so very male.

“One day, I’ll fuck you while you’re wearing that pretty red lipstick you like so much. Mess up your makeup and have you go on your podcast looking freshly fucked. All those bastards who leave creepy comments on your videos will know you have a man that takes care of you.”

I moan at the idea of him fucking me moments before I turn on the camera.

It’s almost like he can read my thoughts because Grizz adds, “Hell, maybe I’ll wait until you start streaming. Let them see what they’re missing. They can all know whose dick you choke on.”

I put a hand between my thighs and rub my clit. I've never really cared for the idea of exhibition, never wanted anyone to see me in my most intimate moments. But with Grizz, it's different. I want people to know I belong to him, and he belongs to me. I want them to envy the girl he spansks, the girl he fucks.

The thoughts have me working him deeper, taking more of him as I cup his balls.

"Right there, that's good. See how heavy they are. All that come is in there, just for you," he says as he thrusts deeper. He's so big that my jaw aches and my mouth is sure to be sore later, but I want everything he's giving me. I want everything with Grizz.

When he touches the back of my throat, I gag around him. He pulls his shaft from my mouth.

I make a whimper of disappointment, and he puts a hand under my chin. "Gonna take your pretty cunt now."

I nod, too dazed to concentrate. I won't be able to focus until I get him inside of me.

He joins me on the bed, putting his big body over mine. His beard tickles my neck and my chest. I reach out and stroke it. I want to always be like this with him. Always be touching each other and spending our days wrapped in each other in his oversized bed.

He rubs his cock through my slick folds. "Fuck, all this sweet cream is for me, isn't it?"

"I like being naughty with you," I admit, a blush creeping up over my cheeks even as my hips wantonly seek his warmth. I keep rolling them, trying desperately to get him inside of me.

"Good thing I like the sight of your ass with those cute little hearts on it. Might have to paddle you every day," he says.

I wrap one of my legs around his hips, opening myself up to him fully. "Only if you promise to fuck me afterward."

“After, before, always,” he answers as he lines his body up with mine. He pushes into my slick channel and immediately, I feel so full. His cock isn’t just long, it’s thick. It feels like he’s invading me everywhere.

He pushes up against my barrier and pauses. For a moment, I think he’s going to stop but then he puts a hand on either side of my head, caging me in. “You’re going to get fucked, and you’re going to like it.”

“Yes,” I agree, my heart pounding and my hips rolling.

He shoves in the last few inches, breaking through my virginity.

I whimper at the sensation, the pain and pleasure bleeding together. I can’t tell what I feel anymore, and I understand now what that spanking was about. He was helping my body release every endorphin he could for me. “So. Big.”

He puts his forehead against mine, a shudder rolling through his body as he fights to remain still. “I know. You’re taking it so good.”

When more of the pain recedes and there’s only pleasure, some of the tension finally leaves my shoulders. I melt into him, into this moment with his cock buried inside of me. “Now, maybe move.”

He chuckles and experiments with a small thrust. Immediately, electricity dances along my nerve endings. It feels so good. I didn’t know that it could feel this amazing, that I could want him this much.

“There’s a good girl. Your pussy sucks me in good,” he murmurs as he presses little kisses all across my face while he continues to pound into me. Each thrust is faster than the last one, and he’s nearing the edge. Just like I am.

He leans close and whispers in my ear, “I own you. Your body, your cunt, your soul. You belong to me now.”

His words are exactly what I need, my pussy clenching around him. My body shudders and shakes as we come together in a sweaty, tangled mess of limbs.

When it's over, there's only silence in the cabin and the sound of my erratic heartbeat as I wonder if he's about to regret what he's done. Will he send me away now? Will he wish he'd never touched me?

But to my surprise, Grizz gathers me in his arms and pulls me close. His cock is still buried inside of me, his come still leaking from my channel.

I reach up and stroke his beard again. I don't know why I like playing with it so much, but I do. It feels intimate to be touching him this way.

He leans into my hand and rests his head over mine. The sigh he lets out sounds contented. Is he happy? Does he like what we just did?

"Tell me something," he says softly.

His soft command interrupts my thoughts. I love it when he does things like that. I love it when he bosses me around. "Like what?"

His hands are in my hair, twisting the strands around his fingers while I play with his beard. It's so domestic, so sweet and tender. I wish we could stay in this moment forever. "Why did you start your video channel?"

I think again about his promise to fuck me before a video. I could touch myself again just thinking about that.

"It's kind of a long story," I start. I can't exactly tell him that I started the channel because I was so tired of the way my pussy would ache whenever I was around him. I needed to feel something deep inside of me, something to ease the emptiness.

"Tell me anyway," he insists.

"A couple of years ago, I was looking to purchase my first vibrator. I didn't want to go to a sex store, so I thought I'd order online. But it turns out, there are like a million options. Some of them are body-safe, and some of them aren't. I finally ordered a good one, but I wanted to help other people who are new to adult toys. People shouldn't have to choose between safety and pleasure. You can have both."

“And that’s why you have the other toys? For the video channel?” He presses.

“Yes,” I answer, thankful when my voice doesn’t crack. They’re a pale replacement for him, but he can’t ever know that.

We’re both quiet for a few long minutes when he says, “Tell me something else.”

“Why are you so curious today?” I chuckle. He ignores me most of the time when he comes around the house or Mom’s candle shop. I mean, I get it. I’ve always been the girl who annoyed him, who followed around him like a lost puppy. He must think I’m pathetic.

“I love the sound of your voice,” he says.

“No, you don’t. You hate it when I babble.” I stop touching him and try to push against him. I don’t want to have this conversation when he’s still inside of me. When he’s still touching my hair and acting like he could be my boyfriend. “You hate me too.”

GRIZZ

“WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK, GINGER?” I DEMAND AS SHE pushes against my chest. She thinks I hate her, that I can’t stand it when she talks. Nothing could be further from the fuckin’ truth. All that time trying to keep my distance backfired in a big way. She didn’t realize I was doing that for a reason, trying to keep her safe. Fuck me, I hurt her.

“It’s fine. You don’t have to like me,” she sniffs.

“Don’t do this,” I pull her closer, not willing to let her go. “Let me explain.”

She doesn’t melt back against me like she did earlier, but at least now she’s stopped trying to get out of my embrace. I don’t know what to say, how to tell her that she owns my heart. She’s owned it for the past two years. “You showed up at the camping store. Knew it was my birthday.”

“You were so grumpy that day,” she says, her voice tinged with a note of sadness.

I squeeze her hips, wishing I could absorb her pain. I’d rather walk on a bed of rusty nails than ever hurt her, but that’s exactly what I did.

“I only knew because you left your wallet at our house a few weeks earlier. I may have, um...gone through it.”

“You did?” I don’t even remember losing my wallet, but I’m not surprised that she found it. Before that day at the store, she was always around. My bubbly girl, my sweet sunshine.

“It’s not my fault. I wanted to know if you had condoms, if there was a woman you liked.” Her voice quivers on the last word.

“There’s never been anyone but you,” I promise her fiercely. I’ve spent my life celibate, always thinking no woman deserved to be saddled with me. I’m still not sure if I deserve anything good, if I’m worthy of Ginger. I doubt I’ll ever be. That won’t stop me from spending the rest of my life trying to spoil her.

“Really?” She finally looks up at me again.

“You’re my first, my only.” I brush a soft kiss to her mouth, relieved when she opens to me. I sweep my tongue inside, only pulling away when she’s panting. She’s curled up against my chest again. My dick is still wedged firmly between her thighs, his new home. “You noticed that something was wrong. You called me on it back then, remember?”

“You kept insisting that everything was fine, but you seemed so disconnected,” she says. “Well, more than usual.”

Somehow, I’m not surprised that my sweet girl noticed my pain, the darkness that’s always been around me. “My mom had died a few months before.”

She makes a noise of sympathy. “Grizz, I’m so sorry. I didn’t know.”

“No one did,” I explain. “She was a junkie, and even though she abandoned me, I still had this idea in my head. I thought that one day she’d want me back. Spent sixteen years waiting for the day she’d care.”

She reaches for my face, cupping it in her tiny hands. The look she sends me is filled with affection. Affection that I don’t feel worthy of. “She missed out on getting to know an incredible man.”

“I thought it was my fault. I kept blaming myself for not saving her. It took over a year of cognitive behavioral therapy to realize she needed help,” I admit and brace myself. No one knows I went to therapy, not even Greer. I know there’s

nothing wrong with it, but it was in the back of my mind that everyone would know I'm broken.

She gives me a small, encouraging smile. "I had a great therapist when I was a teenager."

I didn't know that about her. I file it away to ask about later. "Seeing the therapist also made me realize it was time to give medication a try."

"I'm really proud of you for that, Grizz." I don't know how she always knows what to say, but her words are just what I needed.

Clearing my throat, I continue, "I thought I'd only be on them while I sorted through the shit with my mom's death. I wanted to be...the kind of man you could be with. Wanted to be worthy of you."

"You don't have to earn me. I'm not a prize to be won." Her voice is soft and gentle despite her words. She doesn't sound angry, more like she's mystified I could think that.

"I tried twice to stop them. My doctor and therapist knew. I did everything right, even tapered the dose. Both times, things got bad again. It's not a feeling of sadness for me. It's...what was the word you used? Disconnected, that's a good one for it. I just go numb sometimes. I don't want to be numb. I get in this fog that I can't get out of on my own."

"You're back on the meds again," she supplies quietly. She can tell the difference when I'm on them and when I'm not. For some reason, this doesn't surprise me.

I let out a deep breath. It's time to tell her the worst part. The truth that might drive her away forever.

"After the second attempt, I finally accepted that my brain chemistry is fucked. I think...it might be genetic. My mom was a junkie, but looking back as an adult that's healing, I think maybe she was self-medicating. She went through a lot of trauma, and she never got help. She was just another troubled teenager, written off by society. The day I realized that, I finally forgave her for abandoning me and myself for not saving her. We were both sick and didn't even know it."

“It’s OK. I’m here,” she whispers.

She’s not getting it. She doesn’t understand what I just told her. I have to make her see. “I said it’s genetic. It’s not going away for me. And if I’m—fuck, if I’m lucky enough to breed you then there’s a chance, my kid could be just like me.”

I’m telling her this stuff, fully aware that my cock is still in her body and my come is still smeared between her thighs. It’s the conversation I should have had earlier, but I was too far gone to think about it. Too far gone to consider the implications.

She makes an indignant sound in the back of her throat. “You mean our baby could turn out to be kind and caring and a good friend? Is that what you’re saying?”

She’s breaking me, offering me kindness that I don’t deserve. “Our kid might have fucked up brain chemistry too. This stuff runs in families.”

“And so do dozens of other health problems! So where do we draw the line, Grizz? Should I love our baby less if she has epilepsy or multiple sclerosis or diabetes? Does that somehow mean you’ll have less room in your heart? Or do we just love and accept any child we’re blessed with?”

Wonder and awe fill my heart. She can’t be saying what I think she’s saying. She can’t be telling me these things. “You’d love a kid like me?”

“Of course, I would, you big doofus. I’d love our kid just as much as I love you.”

Her words hit me in the chest. She loves me. This incredible woman loves me, and it’s time I show her how much I love her too.

GINGER

GRIZZ ROLLS OVER MY BODY AND STARES ME DOWN, A FIERCE expression on his face. “Say it again.”

I swallow hard, suddenly aware that he didn’t say it back. But he has to feel it too, right? This incredible connection between us.

“Ginger,” he growls my name and wiggles his hips. The motion drives him deeper into my pussy.

I moan around his girth. “When you started talking about breeding me, I got so wet again.”

His fingers find my clit, playing with my sensitive nub. “You want that, sweetheart? Want me to do this every night? Spank your ass then breed your virgin pussy?”

I close my eyes, loving the mental image of him turning my ass red then rutting into me again and again until I’m full of his come.

A stinging smack delivered to my mound has me opening my eyes and scowling at him. “Not fair. I was so close.”

He glares down at me as he continues to thrust into me. He’s not touching my clit anymore, and I ache for it. Ache for him to play with me. “I asked you a question. Do you want me to breed this pussy? Make it nice and full of my come so you can have my babies?”

“Y-yes,” I admit, my cheeks growing warm.

“You’re always wandering around town in those cute little dresses, knowing damn well just how fertile you look. How

these hips were made to carry my babies.” He squeezes them tight in his big hands.

“When I’m playing with my toys, I imagine you’re there with me,” I admit. “You’re telling me you’re going to bend me over and fill me with your come.”

“Damn right I am,” he says and finally reaches for my clit again. “You’re going to come now. You’re going to be a good girl and take your man’s seed. Every drop of it. If you waste any, I’ll punish you then fuck you again.”

His words fill my brain with even more dirty ideas and the moment his fingers brush my clit, I’m exploding again, another delicious orgasm rocking through my body. He fucks me through it, playing with my clit and calling me his good little breeder. I love the idea of being used by him, of carrying his children.

I feel the moment he gets close to the edge, the way his muscles tense, and how he clenches his jaw. I squeeze my channel around him and bite down on his ear lobe before whispering, “I love you.”

The words have him slamming into me and filling me in long, powerful spurts. Every time I think it’s over, he just keeps coming. The entire time, he’s murmuring things under his breath. He’s talking about how big my belly is going to get, how large my tits will be, and how my milk is going to come in.

He keeps saying these things until I’ve sucked him dry. He finally pulls out of me, and instantly, I feel empty. I miss him. I miss his weight and his hot breath on my neck. I miss his harsh commands and his glittering gaze.

“Hey, come here.” He pulls me into his arms and cuddles me close to his chest. “What’s going on?”

I shake my head. I don’t even know how to put it all into words. I wasn’t prepared for how intense sex with Grizz would be. How deeply it would make me feel things. How much it would make me long for everything with this man.

He rubs my back in a soothing circle. “I am your safe place.”

“What are we going to do about Greer?” I blurt out.

“I’ll handle him,” he answers smoothly. He doesn’t sound worried at all. “Now, come on. We’re going to soak your pussy and have a big breakfast. Do you want my famous French toast?”

“Your French toast isn’t famous,” I reply as he carries me into the bathroom. If he wants to carry me around everywhere, I’m not going to complain.

“Not true. I won the contest for best breakfast in Courage County.” His chest puffs out as he tells the story.

I roll my eyes even as he sets me carefully down on the bathroom counter. “That’s because Greer accidentally set the entrants’ table on fire, and the extinguisher destroyed the other entries.”

“I still won,” he insists before he leans over to start the shower water. “And now my French toast is famous in Courage.”

I shake my head, fighting a smile. I watch the way his naked body moves. I’m barely able to believe that this man I’ve loved for seven years is finally mine. Or at least, he will be. Once he talks to Greer. *Please, let that go well. Let him understand.*

“WHAT IS THIS?” I ASK AS HE CARRIES ME THROUGH HIS living room. He’s aiming for the kitchen, but I wiggle in his arms until he sets me down. He has a lot of different lenses and some other equipment strewn on the oak coffee table. There’s even a digital photography book for beginners open.

He waves his hand, his ears turning the cutest shade of red. “It’s dumb. My therapist said to start a hobby. Apparently, he doesn’t consider pining for you a real hobby.”

I chuckle and reach for his camera. “What are you trying to capture?”

“Nature photos, I guess.” He shoves his hands into his pockets. “Like I said, it’s dumb.”

“Do you care?” I ask before I press the history button. Some people are very sensitive about sharing their work before they’ve had a chance to clean it up and edit it.

He shrugs. “They’re all coming out pretty blurry.”

I flick through a few of the photos. I’ve spent hours learning about how to take photographs and shoot videos thanks to my work on my podcast. When you’re responsible for every part of production, you have to become an expert in a lot of things. “Your shutter speed is probably off. Have you adjusted it?”

It only takes me a moment to realize my mistake. I probably overstepped. I put the camera down and say softly, “Sorry, I spend a lot of time taking pictures of the products for social media promotions, and—”

“How about after breakfast you can show me some stuff? My famous French toast in exchange for your photography expertise.”

My stomach growls, and I grin at him. “I’m pretty sure I’m getting the better end of this deal.”

After our breakfast, we spend the next few hours in the woods outside of Grizz’s cabin. I teach him how to adjust his camera settings, and he takes a few dozen photos including a few of me.

“Do you like photography?” He asks. “You said you do it for the products.”

I shake my head. “No, but it’s one of those skills that I need to have for my business. I’d like to outsource it when I have the funds. Right now, a lot of what I earn goes back into advertising and marketing, getting the word out about my show.”

He reaches for a different lens in his bag, but I stop him. I hand him a different one, and he grins at me. “Most businesses don’t make a profit for the first three to five years. It was hard as fuck to keep the camping store going at first.”

“And now, look at you, a successful entrepreneur,” I tease.

His ears turn red again, and it’s so adorable to see him blush. He can say the filthiest things to me in bed, but the moment I compliment him, he turns the shade of a tomato.

I hope that he did knock me up this morning because I want to carry my brother’s best friend’s baby.

He captures another shot of the flowers in the meadow before his phone dings. He pulls it out of his pocket and frowns at the display. “It’s the security system for the store. Something must have set it off. I need to investigate.”

The last time it went off, a black bear was prowling in the area. It tried to get into his shop and while it didn’t succeed, there was some minor damage to his outdoor displays. “I’ll go with you.”

He pauses. “You know what this means, right?”

I nod and try to muster up my most confident look. “I know. Greer will be waiting for us at the shop.”

GINGER

GRIZZ TAKES MY HAND ONCE WE'RE IN HIS TRUCK. HIS THUMB traces soothing circles across my skin. Somehow, he can sense my anxiety without a word. "Tell me what's on your mind, my pretty girl."

I stare out at the overcast sky from my window. "I don't want him to be mad at me."

"He's not going to be mad," he answers.

Greer is the only one who's always been there for me all my life. He taught me how to throw a punch and drive a stick shift. He got me into therapy when the anxiety started. He listened to my petty girl drama in high school. Through it all, he never once judged me. Will he hate me once he finds out I'm sleeping with Grizz, that I'm in love with his best friend?

My throat grows tight as I think about it, and I struggle to swallow around the lump. "What if he hates me? He told me I belong there at the ranch. He can't take that back, can he?"

Grizz guides the truck onto the side of the mountain road and turns off the ignition. Then he's sliding me across the bench seat and pulling me into his lap.

I don't even realize how much I needed him to do that until I'm burying my face into his flannel shirt as the tears come fast and hot. I don't know how long I cry for but when the tears finally pass, Grizz cleans my face with the sleeve of his shirt. "Tell me."

I hiccup softly. "I was one of the New Kingdom kids."

“The cult that’s around the state border?” He asks.

It was a big scandal about fifteen years ago. A religious cult living on the border of North Carolina. The state came in and seized most of the kids from the place because of the neglectful conditions.

I nod. “They believe the kids are just everyone’s. You know, it takes a village and all. Except that nobody looks out for you then. It’s a compound. Half of the adults there are high, and the other half have crazy religious ideas. You end up dirty and hungry and lonely.”

“I kept having nightmares about having to go back there. That’s why I ended up in therapy. It helped some with the anxiety, but I never got adopted by the Maples. Not officially. Greer could send me away.”

“The fuck anyone will send you away,” Grizz says fiercely. “You’re not alone anymore. You belong to me now, and I love you.”

I search his face, barely daring to hope. “You love me?”

“You’re everything to me. You’re the whole damn world. I’m never letting you go, Ginger. You’re my girl.” He wraps his arms around me and hugs me tight while he brushes kisses along the top of my head. “My sweet girl.”

“I love you, too,” I murmur against his shirt, feeling contentment go through me. I belong to someone now. I have a home, and his name is Grizz. He’s the grumpiest man on this mountain, and he holds my heart.

His phone dings again, but neither of us move for a long moment. Finally, he glances at it. “Greer is there. You ready to face him now?”

I nod, feeling stronger than I ever have. Being with Grizz, it feels like all the pieces of my heart have slotted into place. Things that were missing are now there.

“We’ll face him together. I always have your back,” Grizz reassures me, smoothing back my hair from my face. “You don’t go through anything alone. I always have your back.”

I give him a shy smile. “OK. After we’re done at the shop, I want to go back to your place. Maybe try out some of those other toys.”

AS SOON AS I STEP OUT OF GRIZZ’S VEHICLE, I EXPECT TO feel so nervous. But strangely, I don’t. All I feel now is peace. Especially when my big, hulking man takes my small hand in his and threads our fingers together. We walk into the shop, noting the damage as we do. The outside has been ransacked, the only question is what or who did this.

My brother is already inside on the phone. He’s leaning across the counter, not paying attention to us. “Yeah, that’s the direction he ran. See if you can round up some of the rangers and get him the help he needs. Thanks, Rogue.”

When he ends the call, he says, “That black bear again. It’s injured this time, so Rogue will get some guys together. They’ll track it, and try to get it medical care. Might relocate it depending on how close it is to town.”

He pockets his phone and finally looks up. His gaze narrows. “What’s this?”

Grizz’s voice is deep and raspy, booming with authority. “She’s mine now. I’m keeping her forever.”

Greer looks between the two of us, scrutinizing his friend’s expression. “Is this a joke?”

“I love her.”

He folds his arms over his chest. “That’s not how this works. I don’t give two shits about what you want.” He focuses his attention on me. “I do however care about what you want.”

I take a deep breath and remind myself that I belong to Grizz. That Greer has always loved me and wanted what’s best for me. “I want him. I’ve always wanted him.”

Greer studies my expression for a long moment before he yanks off his Stetson. He runs his fingers through his thick hair. “Are you fucking with me?”

I shake my head. “I love him too.”

“Oh, and I’m marrying her,” Grizz adds as if it’s an afterthought.

“Grizz, you can’t just say that!” I protest. “You didn’t even ask me.”

“I was planning on getting around to that. Figured we’d negotiate the terms later.” He gives me a wink to let me know we’ll be negotiating in his big bed. I can hardly wait, my panties already growing damp.

Greer frowns and waves his hand at his friend. “Get out of here for a minute. I need to talk to my baby sister.”

My burly mountain man glances at me, waiting for my instructions. I nod to let him know I’m OK with this. He presses a soft kiss to my forehead before he goes outside to continue surveying the damage to the shop.

Greer grunts at the gesture and scowls at me the moment my boyfriend is gone. It’s still so crazy to me to call him that, although I think given our conversation, he’d probably prefer the term fiancé. The thought makes me giggle.

“What’s going on here?” Greer asks. His voice is calm, and I know that whatever I say right now could tear their friendship apart. Greer would never hesitate to burn a bridge for me. He’s spent his whole life protecting me and everyone else.

“I’ve been in love with him since I was fourteen,” I admit, my heart pounding to finally be talking about this with my brother. “Ever since that day he saved me from the runaway horse. His arms were the first place that ever felt like home.”

“Is that when this started?” His eyes narrow.

I’m quick to shake my head. “It was two years ago for him. Seven for me.”

“He’s a lot older than you,” he warns, thinking of the decade that separates the two of us.

“You’re a lot older than the pretty receptionist at the doctor’s office,” I counter. I’m not sure of her name, but I know she’s pretty. More than that, there’s something about her. I think maybe she has a secret. If anyone will carry the weight of her pain, it’s my older brother. I just hope he’s willing to take a chance with her.

“I’m not talking about marrying her,” he grumps.

“But you’re thinking about it,” I counter, reading between the lines.

My brother doesn’t say much which makes his subsequent silence so much louder. After a long moment passes, he finally sighs, “Do you want to marry him?”

I hesitate. It’s only a split second but Greer steps forward. He puts a hand on my shoulder.

“Look at me, kiddo,” he calls me by the nickname he gave me when I first arrived at the farm. “Tell me the truth. Whatever it is—bad, good, or ugly—we’ll face it together.” He’s said those same words since I was young. No matter what happened, I could always come to him.

He never chastised me. He never judged me. He just showed up in the middle of my messes and loved me, just as I was. I hope the receptionist he likes knows just how special he is.

“I want to marry him, and I want your blessing. You’re the...the closest thing I’ve ever had to a dad,” I sniff as I admit the words.

“Aww, hell, don’t cry,” Greer hugs me, the same way he did when I was little and in need of comfort. “You can marry the bastard if you want.”

Relief fills me. Grizz was right. My brother wasn’t mad, not like I thought he’d be. Still, I can’t help pushing my luck. “With your blessing?”

“With my blessing. I’ll even give you away.” When he pulls away from our embrace, he blinks away a sheen of moisture from his eyes. “But I’m still going to give him shit.”

GINGER

“IT LOOKS LIKE THE PERFECT GETAWAY,” I TELL MACKENZIE as she flicks through the photos on her phone, showing off the mountain resort. She and Ace are going on a weeklong stay to Big Sky in Montana.

“It does have beautiful views,” Susie agrees when she sees the same photos.

“I’ve never been skiing, but Ace promised to teach me,” she sighs in the dreamy way only a woman in love does. “We’ll only be going for a few days. We’ll be back in time to celebrate Christmas with my dad.”

“Do you normally celebrate it with him?” Susie asks softly as she wraps another tendril of my hair around the curling iron. I don’t know how she’s done it, but she’s made my hair look amazing today.

“Every year,” Mackenzie beams as she blends my foundation into my face.

I’m worried that she’s going to be alone for the holidays. I let my mom know, and Susie will get an invite to our family’s annual Christmas gathering. Grizz and I will be at the farm on Christmas morning too. Of course, we’ll be there as a married couple.

Just the thought of my upcoming vows has me glancing down at the huge diamond ring on my finger. Grizz insisted on a huge engagement ring during our negotiation. Apparently, all of our negotiations must always start with me sitting on his face. A girl can’t complain about that term.

It's been two weeks since Grizz told my brother that he's marrying me. My fiancé offered to throw me the biggest wedding in the state. He told me I could have anything I wanted, and that no expense would be spared. His only other condition than the huge rock on my finger was that he wanted the wedding to happen immediately.

Since I couldn't wait to be married to my soulmate, I agreed. I called Mackenzie and Susie. Between their help and my mom's, we've managed to pull together what's sure to be a beautiful ceremony.

Earlier this week, my brothers even finished moving all of my things into Grizz's cabin. He's talking about making it bigger and adding more rooms so we can eventually have kids. Turns out, our sexy breeding talk was more than just a kink thing. We both want a family. A big one with lots of kids to dote on.

"How's your costume coming along?" I turn my attention to Susie, wanting to distract her from what Rogue is doing this holiday. I think Mackenzie would be supportive if her dad found a woman. But what would she think if that woman were Susie? Has Rogue even noticed her?

I know that he and some of the rangers rounded up the injured black bear. Their best guess was that something woke the bear from hibernation, possibly an attack from another creature.

One of the rangers tried to insist the bear was too badly hurt to survive, but Rogue called in every favor he could. Now the bear is recovering and if he continues to do well, he'll be released back into the wild soon.

"I just finished the costume," Susie announces and shows me a picture on her phone. Her elf costume is cute and modest and yet still somehow sexy.

"You have a gift!" Mackenzie squeals when she sees it. "You should get into costume design!"

"Maybe I'll do that," Susie muses just as Mom rolls into the room. We're here in the back bedroom on the farm. While

Grizz offered to marry me anywhere in the world, there was only one place I could see tying the knot—on my family’s farm. The Maples were the first people to take care of me, the first to teach me about love.

Mom presses a hand to her face for a second, her eyes filling with tears. “You look beautiful today.”

I blink at her, trying not to mess up the work Mackenzie is doing. “I’m so happy. I’m getting to marry the best man, and he loves me, Mom. He really loves me.”

She reaches for my hand and gives it a gentle squeeze. “And you’re going to have a wonderful marriage together.”

Grizz

I’M TRYING TO CHALK MY CUE STICK, BUT I END UP DROPPING the damn thing because my hands are shaking so badly. It’s not my fault. The most beautiful woman in the world agreed to marry me. In less than an hour, I’m going to stand before our family and friends and let them know she’s the only one for me.

I’m not nervous about the crowd or standing in front of everyone. I’ll proudly claim my woman. I just want everything to go right for her. It’s important to me that this moment goes perfectly.

Noah grabs the chalk holder from the floor and passes it back to me without a word. He’s always quiet, working behind the scenes to get stuff done. Like the way he arranged to make sure the pergola was built that I’m about to be married under.

“Did the Taylors talk to you about their plans yet?” I ask Greer. He’s still pissed off at me. He’s not mad that I wanted to date his sister, but he insists that I didn’t have to convince her to marry me so quickly.

She’s my soulmate though, and I’m ready to start our life together. I spent long enough convinced that I wasn’t worthy of her. But I know the truth now. The depression doesn’t make

me any less worthy. If anything the thought of being married to Ginger only highlights the importance of taking care of myself even more. I want to be there for my wife. I want to walk with her through all the seasons of life together.

“What project?” Barrett asks as Zac sits in a corner strumming on his guitar. He’s making notes on a yellow pad. He writes a few words down then crosses everything out, sighs in frustration, only to start strumming again.

Before I can tell them anything, my phone dings. It’s a notification for us to get our asses to the front of the pergola where the preacher is.

Greer glances at his watch and nods to himself. He starts for the door so he can go to Ginger. He’s walking her down the aisle today. He pauses on the way out and crosses back to stand in front of me. “Always thought of you like a brother. Today just makes it official.” He reaches for me, giving me a quick hug.

After over a decade alone, I finally realized I have a family. It doesn’t look quite like I thought it would back when I was a lonely teen, but that doesn’t make it any less special.

Once Greer leaves, the guys and I walk to the pergola. I take my place next to the preacher who claps me on the back, exclaiming it’s a perfect day to get married.

The five minutes that I wait for my bride to appear are the longest ones of my life. My palms are sweaty by the time she finally steps down the end of the aisle.

The moment her gaze locks on mine, all of the air leaves my lungs. I can’t believe she’s mine. She taught me that love accepts where we are, as we are. With no conditions or limits.

Now I get to spend the rest of my life, giving her back that same love and acceptance. I’ll never stop loving, protecting, and cherishing my beautiful woman.

GRIZZ

“WHAT DID YOU ORDER, WIFE?” I ASK GINGER AS I PULL THE truck to a stop in front of our cabin. There’s a nondescript brown cardboard box on the front porch. We’ve only been married all of six hours, but I’m already loving married life. Especially that part where I pulled her into the bathroom during the reception to give her an orgasm.

She finally pulls her gaze from that gold band around her finger. She hasn’t stopped staring at it since the moment I put it on. It’s engraved with four simple words. *You belong to me.*

She teared up when she read the inscription. She’s spent her life trying to find her place. She doesn’t have to wonder anymore. Her place is right beside me. It always will be.

“Maybe the new throw pillows arrived early,” she murmurs.

I insisted on the two of us living together as soon as possible. Her stuff has already been moved in, and we unpacked the last boxes two days ago.

She’s spent the past two weeks adding new touches to the place. I told her it’s no longer my cabin. It’s ours now, and she’s taken that to heart.

Thanks to her, there are an array of colorful rugs on the hardwood floors, knick-knacks on every available surface, and lipstick stains on my favorite mugs. We even have something called doilies, which are scraps of lace that go on nearly every surface and serve no functional purpose other than making my girl happy. I wouldn’t trade this stuff for the world.

“I couldn’t decide between the beige, the off-white, or the cream color,” she explains. She worries her bottom lip with her teeth.

I lean over and gently set her plump lower lip free. I could give two shits about the color of our decor, especially today of all days. No, there’s only one thing I’m thinking about right now.

“What if I picked the wrong color?” She looks at me. I’d be tempted to laugh, but she sounds so serious.

“Then we’ll try a different color.” I cup her head in my hands. Wonder fills me as I stare down at her. This woman is my wife now.

She moans my name, and the sweet sound is nearly my undoing. With a growl, I press my lips to hers and sweep my tongue into her mouth. I tease her, showing her just what I plan to be doing to her with my cock later.

By the time we break apart, she’s fisted my dress shirt, and she’s staring up at me with a dazed expression. I can’t help chuckling. “I need to get you inside before we give all the woodland creatures a show.”

“I don’t think I’d mind that,” she murmurs.

Even if she wouldn’t, I would. I’d much rather spread my beautiful bride out in our bed and make love to her for the rest of the week. I offered to take her on a honeymoon anywhere in the world. She told me she’d rather just have a week cuddling together in our cabin in front of the fire. That sounded like heaven to me too.

I carry her inside, pausing to nudge the box inside with the toe of my Oxford shoe. The box seems too heavy to be filled with throw pillows. She’s obsessed with making our cabin cozy and homey. As far as I’m concerned, the fact that she’s here makes it cozy and homey.

I carry her straight to our bedroom, setting her down on the bed. I bend over her to press a soft kiss to her lips. “Are you hungry, cold, tired?”

Fuck, I'm aching to get inside my new bride again. But her needs will always come before mine. Besides, there's something primal about getting to take care of my woman. It soothes some savage need in my chest.

"No, no, and no. Horny as hell though." She reaches for my shirt collar and pulls me back to her. I let her tug me down until I'm over her. We're here together in this bed, still in our wedding clothes.

I smooth a piece of hair away from her face. "You're the prettiest bride in the whole world."

She rolls her eyes even as her cheeks pinken. "You haven't seen every bride in the world."

"I don't have to see every bride to know I got the prettiest one." I put a hand on her leg and guide it over my hip. The thigh-high slit in the dress had me wanting to spank her for showing so much skin. It's a good thing that only a few men were present. I would have lost my shit had the whole town been there.

She groans, and I can't help grinning. This is my favorite position with her, when we're lying face to face, and I can watch her expression as she comes again and again.

"You're such a flirt," she chastises.

"Only with one woman," I quickly reassure her. Other women don't exist to me. There's only my girl. That's how it's been for years, that's how it's going to be for the rest of my life.

She reaches for my hand, touching the wedding band on it with reverence and tenderness. "This means we belong to each other."

"It means forever," I promise. If she needs me to reassure her every hour of every day for the rest of our lives, I'll do that. I'll do whatever she needs to make her feel safe and secure in our relationship. "I'll love you forever."

She takes my hand and guides it underneath her dress. "I misplaced my panties after our rendezvous in the bathroom."

“You sat like this through the reception?” I growl at her even as my fingers dip into her wet channel. I swirl her moisture around before bringing my digits to my mouth and sucking off her flavor. I love my woman’s taste.

Her eyes sparkle, and she moans. “Get inside me now.”

My wife doesn’t have to tell me twice. I help her out of her pretty dress carefully before ripping at my clothes. Then I’m sliding into her slick heat, and we’re both groaning. It’s only been six hours since I was last inside of her, and yet it feels like it’s been a lifetime.

“You feel so good,” I tell her as I take her nice and slow. I love fucking her hard and fast like we did in the bathroom earlier. But I also love moments like this when we make love to each other at an unhurried pace.

“It just gets better and better,” she moans as she writhes around me. “You’re always so big.”

I smirk down at her. “That’s your fault, my pretty girl.”

“Stop flirting, and fuck me properly,” she complains.

I chuckle. It’s amazing to have someone I can laugh with, in and out of the bedroom. Those years of waiting for each other were worth it. I know that every time her tight heat is wrapped around my cock, every morning I wake up to find her cuddled up in my arms, and every time she whispers my name, like she’s doing right now.

“I love you,” I whisper right as we come, shuddering in each other’s arms as we chase that high together. It’s messy and loud and perfectly us.

“I love you, too, my big mountain man,” she says with a sated smile on her face.

We lie together for hours in bed, alternating between making love and just holding each other. It’s midnight when we finally leave the bedroom to seek our dinner. She pauses in the living room. She’s wrapped up in my shirt and her hair is messy. She gestures toward the box. “I just want to see if the pillows match. Do you mind?”

I grab a letter opener and reach for it, pausing only briefly when I see the return address. I'm pretty sure this isn't the home décor she's expecting. I open the cardboard and step back so she can go through the contents.

"This is a product box from one of the show's sponsors. I wasn't expecting it to arrive for another two weeks." With a delighted expression, she pulls out something lacey. "I don't know that I'm hungry anymore."

My cock goes hard when I see the beautiful lingerie. Never realized I was the kind of guy that cared about lingerie until I got with Ginger. "Oh, no. You're eating a hearty meal then you're modeling that cute little outfit for me."

She giggles. "You're so bossy."

"And you love it," I answer as I scoop her into my arms and carry her into the kitchen. The first order of business is feeding my beautiful woman. The second is opening up that new box of toys and exploring it with her.

EPILOGUE

GINGER

“HOW LONG ARE WE AIMING FOR?” I ASK GRIZZ AS HE GENTLY cups my face. We’ve been married for a year, and he has a fascination with photography. His knowledge quickly surpassed mine, and he’s considering taking some photography classes from the college in Asheville.

I’ve already asked him to take over the feeds for my social media accounts, and he’s more than happy to photograph anything for me. Of course, the photography sessions usually end in mind-blowing sex.

I’ve changed the videos, and the focus of my channel. It felt strange to me to be talking about single sex when I was married, so I went to Grizz. I asked him how he felt about a shift in the content. He was incredibly supportive of it, the only caveat is that I’m careful about details that might identify one or both of us.

He worries about a creep finding me online and trying to track me down. Which is crazy because my man is now the one who monitors the comments on my videos and in my online group. He’s quick to filter out anyone who’s inappropriate or makes group members feel unsafe. He’s my big bulldog, watching over all of us.

“Three minutes,” he answers, placing a gentle kiss to my lips. We’re experimenting tonight under the moonlight with some erotic photographs. He wanted to capture us together. He got excited, saying something about the shutter speed and exposure that he’d recently learned. I couldn’t deny him. He never asks me for anything and lives to make my life easier.

The two of us now manage my video channel together while juggling his camping store and helping out at my mom's candle shop. But we don't mind. Our lives are busy and full, but very fulfilling.

Soon, they'll be even busier, but Grizz doesn't know that quite yet. He doesn't know that I threw up my lunch today for the third time this week or that I took a pregnancy test. Mom was right there with me when I got the results. I'm carrying my husband's child, and I can't wait to tell him.

I lean into his touch, feeling my naked tits rub across his bare chest. The moonlight is the only illumination out here in the backyard.

Nearby owls are hooting and the creek is bubbling. The wind whispers through the tall grass, and the few leaves still clinging to the trees shake with anticipation of their coming fall.

"Think you can come for me in three minutes?" He asks as his cock nudges my entrance. I'm already so wet and soaking that I'm dripping. He's been teasing me all day, sending me sexy text messages while I worked at the shop with Mom. Then he made my favorite meal for dinner and said the filthiest things as he fed me.

"It's you. I could come in thirty seconds." We're sitting on a blanket in the grass. We're in the lotus position because it's my favorite one. I love the intimacy of it and how it allows us to bond with each other.

My arms wrapped around his neck, my fingers tugging lightly at his hair. It feels like we're touching everywhere, connected everywhere, and I love that.

He rocks against me, his cock seeking my warmth. He grunts against my hair, "You look so beautiful naked under the moonlight."

I groan at his words and bounce up and down. "I love moments like these with you."

He growls and ducks his head, pulling one of my breasts into his mouth. He circles my nipple with his tongue and sucks

on the stiffened peak before moving to give the other breast the same careful attention.

He slips one of his hands between our bodies and swirls the pad of his thumb around my clit, whispering, “Come for me.”

I ride his hand, crying out my pleasure into the night as he gives one delicious orgasm after another. When it’s over and I’m finally spent, he flips me onto my back and stretches over me. I’ve forgotten all about the camera and the photos. I don’t care what it captures at this point. All I know is I need my man’s cock inside of me right now.

He lines up our bodies. “Now, you’ll take my cock like a good girl, and you’ll give me babies.”

Without waiting for a response, Grizz thrusts into me in one smooth glide. I’m already primed from my earlier orgasms so all I feel is pleasure as he fills me up. “So fuckin’ good.”

I nod, barely trusting myself to speak. It’s always so good with him. He makes every touch, every moment, every orgasm even better than the last.

“I need one more,” he tells me as he rolls his hips, grinding against my clit. “Give me one more, so I can make you a mommy.”

“Grizz...” I call his name, about to confess that we’ve already made a baby when the orgasm rolls through me. It comes suddenly with the force of a tsunami and steals the breath from my lungs, leaving me panting.

He comes just as I do, grunting into my ear and telling me how much he loves me, how precious I am to him, and how he’s so proud to be my husband.

When it’s over, he collapses onto the blanket next to me and pulls me onto his chest. I listen to the sound of his heartbeat. It’s my favorite sound in the world, the one that reassures me my man is strong and healthy.

He runs his fingers through my hair and for a long moment, neither of us say anything. Finally, I lift my head. “About what you said...about the babies.”

“What about it?” He frowns at me.

We’ve had conversations about babies, about wanting them whenever they come into our lives, so I’m not nervous. More than that, I know that Grizz will make an amazing father. Even now, he’s still in therapy and on his medication.

He used to think his mental health would make him a terrible husband and father. Then I pointed out to him that his battles make him a stronger husband, just like I suspect they’ll make him a stronger father. Because of his depression, he has deeper empathy for others. He understands how to be there for them, and he knows the warning signs that someone might need help.

I don’t know where to start with what I’m about to tell him. He doesn’t even know that I’ve been getting sick to my stomach. We’ve been apart each time it happened, and I just assumed that I caught whatever stomach bug was going on around. “Well, I was at the shop with Mom today, and I kind of threw up. Again. So I thought—”

His expression shifts to one of alarm. “Fuck, sweetheart. Are you sick? We can—”

“I’m not sick,” I rush to reassure him and take his hand. I put it on my bare stomach. “But I am carrying your baby.”

He pulls me close, wrapping an arm around me. “Thank you.”

“I didn’t do it by myself,” I chuckle softly.

He chuckles too and presses a soft kiss to my forehead. “I can’t wait to meet our little bundle and build a family together.”

I nod, feeling my own heart well with emotion. I never realized I could be this happy. Now I have a handsome husband and a beautiful baby on the way.

Want a bonus scene with Grizz and Ginger? Sign up for my weekly newsletter and [get the bonus here.](#)

READ NEXT: JINGLED BY THE MOUNTAIN MAN

*Santa is going to be extra naughty with the sweet little elf
he's claimed as his own!*

Susie

Santa just kidnapped me. No, seriously.

I'm not drunk on the eggnog. I was at the hospital's annual Christmas party when the bearded mountain man scooped me up and put me on the back of his motorcycle.

He says I'm his, and he's keeping me.

Forever.

Rogue

I saw her.

I wanted her.

I took her.

Susie is a perfect little elf, handing out presents to the children. But I have a present for her, and it's going to jingle ALL of her bells.

This Christmas, get ready for a possessive mountain man who is over the top, ridiculously hot, and all in for his shy little elf. One click for a story so sweet you'll get a toothache!

[Read Susie and Rogue's Story.](#)

COURAGE COUNTY SERIES

Welcome to Courage County where protective alpha heroes fall for strong curvy women they love and defend. There's NO cheating and NO cliffhangers. Just a sweet, sexy HEA in each book.

Love on the Ranch

Her Alpha Cowboy.

Pregnant and alone, Riley has nowhere to go until the alpha cowboy finds her. Will she fall in love with her rescuer?

Her Older Cowboy.

Summer is making a baby with her brother's best friend. But he insists on making it the old-fashioned way.

Her Protector Cowboy.

Jack will do whatever it takes to protect his curvy woman after their hot one-night stand...then he plans to claim her!

Her Forever Cowboy.

Dean is in love with his best friend's widow. When they're stranded together for the night, will he finally tell her how he feels?

Her Dirty Cowboy.

The ranch's newest hire also happens to be the woman Adam had a one-night stand with...and she's carrying his baby!

Her Sexy Cowboy.

She's a scared runaway with a baby. He's determined to protect them both. But neither of them expected to fall in love.

Her Wild Cowboy

He'll keep his curvy woman safe, even if it means a marriage in name only. But what happens when he wants to make it a real marriage?

Her Wicked Cowboy

One hot night with Jake gave me the best gift of my life: a beautiful baby girl. Will he want us to be a family when I show up on his doorstep a year later?

Courage County Brides

The Cowboy's Bride

The only way out of my horrible life is to become a mail order bride. But will my new cowboy husband be willing to take a chance on love?

The Cowboy's Soulmate

Can a jaded playboy find forever with his curvy mail order bride and her baby? Or will her secret ruin their future?

The Cowboy's Valentine

I'm a grumpy loner cowboy and I like it that way. Until my beautiful mail order bride arrives and suddenly, I want more than a marriage in name only.

The Cowboy's Match

Will this mail order bride matchmaker take a chance on love when she falls for the bearded cowboy who happens to be her VIP client?

The Cowboy's Obsession

Can this stalker cowboy show the curvy schoolteacher that he's the one for her?

The Cowboy's Sweetheart

Rule #1 of becoming a mail order bride: never fall in love with your cowboy groom.

The Cowboy's Angel

Can this cowboy single dad with a baby find love with his new mail order bride?

The Cowboy's Heiress

This innocent heiress is posing as a mail order bride. But what happens when her grumpy cowboy husband discovers who she really is?

Courage County Warriors

Rescue Me

Getting out was hard. Knowing who to trust was easy: my dad's best friend. He's the only man I can count on, but will we be able to keep our hands off each other?

Protect Me

When I need a warrior to protect me, I know just who to turn to: my brother's best friend. But will this grumpy cowboy who's guarding my body break my heart?

Shield Me

When trouble comes for me, I know who to call—my ex-boyfriend's dad. He's the only one who can help. But can I convince this grumpy cowboy to finally claim me?

Courage County Fire & Rescue

The Firefighter's Curvy Nanny

As a single dad firefighter, I was only looking for a quick fling. Then the curvy woman from last night shows up. Turns out, she's my new nanny.

The Firefighter's Secret Baby

After a scorching one-night stand with a sexy firefighter, I realize I'm pregnant...with my brother's best friend's baby.

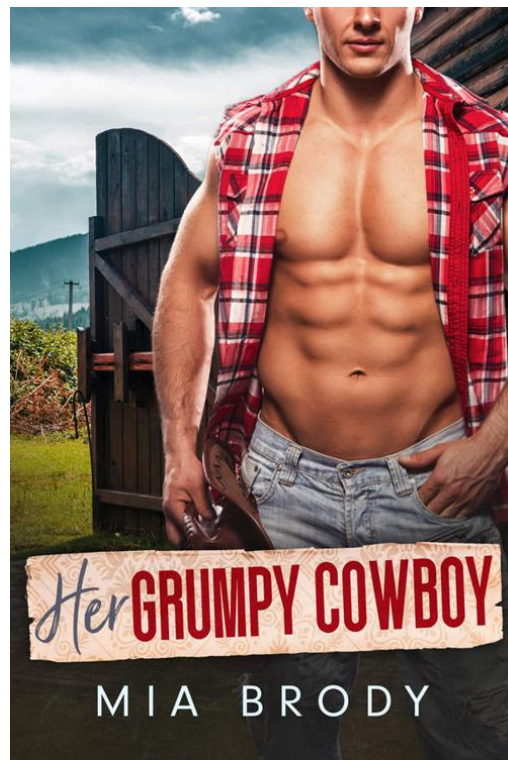
The Firefighter's Forbidden Fling

I knew a one night stand with my grumpy boss wasn't the best idea...but I didn't think it would lead to anything serious. I definitely didn't think it would lead to a surprise pregnancy with this sexy firefighter.

GET A FREE COWBOY ROMANCE

Get Her Grumpy Cowboy for FREE:

<https://www.MiaBrody.com/free-cowboy/>



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Of course, you can also share your thoughts with me via email if you'd prefer to reach out that way. My email address is mia @ miabrody.com (remove the spaces). I love hearing from my readers!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mia Brody writes steamy stories about alpha men who fall in love with big, beautiful women. She loves happy endings and every couple she writes will get one!

When she's not writing, Mia is searching for the perfect slice of cheesecake and reading books by her favorite instalove authors.

Keep in touch when you sign up for her newsletter: <https://www.MiaBrody.com/news>. It's the fastest way to hear about her new releases so you never miss one!

